

**Press Conference Statement**

**The Hon. Diallo V. Rabain, JP, MP**

Minister of Education

**2021/22 Budget Statement Highlights**

Wednesday, March 3rd, 2021

Good Morning and thank you for coming.

Today, I am pleased to give an overview of the Ministry of Education’s 2021 – 2022 fiscal year budget.

The Ministry of Education’s 2021-2022 budget allocation was reduced by just over $9 million from the originally budgeted sum last year. However, the budget is $3.6 million less than the revised budget resulting from the impact of the pandemic.

Although this figure may seem large, it is important to note that **ALL** primary programmes and services will continue to be funded. The bulk of this reduction, roughly 90% or just over $8 million: $3 million is attributed to the reduction in salaries due to the Government’s 10% austerity measures agreement with the Unions that will expire later this year, and $5 million deduction in salaries due to the removal of funding for vacant posts of which the hiring could be delayed for the next fiscal year. The balance of the reductions will be achieved through operational efficiencies.

Since 2018, the Ministry has consistently looked within its current budget to identify areas of efficiencies and savings. This is even though the cost of salaries and wages accounts for close to 70% of our current expenditure. This exercise was continued this year in preparing the 2021-2022 budget. All Departments, inclusive of Bermuda College, have submitted lower budgets, understanding the Government's fiscal position. As already noted, the majority of savings were sourced from vacant funded posts in the Department of Education after first ensuring that critical staffing needs in schools would be met for the current upcoming year. Operational grants for Aided Schools were mostly retained at the previous year’s budget levels, while the remaining cuts were in operational expenditures for Departments.

**HIGHLIGHTS OF REDUCED OPERATIONAL EXPENDITURES**

* **Ministry Headquarters** – The value of external grants awarded were maintained at the COVID revised amounts used for the last fiscal year
* **Department of Education** – Travel costs, electricity costs, staff uniforms, external services
* **Department of Libraries** – Travel costs, books and periodical subscriptions
* **Bermuda College** – Salaries & wages, travel costs, marketing.

The Ministry has been careful in its efficiency exercise not to sacrifice the delivery of critical programmes with reduced spending. We have been very intentional and focused on continuing the delivery of services and programmes that support the education of our children and adults. Additionally, it was important to honour the agreed salary adjustments that will be given to our Paraeductors and Educational Therapist Assistants, scheduled for September,

**BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS**

I would now like to provide a brief snapshot of our proposed initiatives for the upcoming fiscal year.

**Bermuda College** - the merit-based “College Promise” programme for public school graduates to attend Bermuda College tuition free will still be offered. The College will still receive the annual tuition assistance grant of **$300,000** to assist students with financial need which goes a long way to ensuring that no student is prohibited from attending Bermuda College due to limited household incomes.

**Department of Education** – will continue to execute adaptive and technical strategies in Plan 2022 that align with Education Reform. These include:

* continue the implementation of a Standards-Based Education System
* strengthening the literacy programme to focus more on student’s reading skills
* continue Foundation Year training for the Lower Primary Years
* review the system curriculum.
* updating the Social Studies curriculum to be more culturally relevant
* Review of other curriculum subject areas such as PE and Visual Arts
* Improving the delivery of mathematics curriculum
* introduce foreign languages at the preschool level.
* continuing professional development and training for teachers

**Department of Libraries & Archives** - several innovative new services that stemmed from the impact of the pandemic will continue and include:

* Curbside / Walk-up Pickup
* Virtual Programmes
* Webinars
* STEAM – Grab & Go Kits at the Youth Library

**Ministry of Education** – the scholarships and awards offerings have been maintained at the pre-pandemic levels and are currently being advertised with a deadline in April are still in train. Education Reform will advance with work continuing in all four domains of Reform:

1. investigative work on the development of an Education Authority.
2. completion of the consultation process on the proposal to introduce parish primary schools; and,
3. the execution of the Learning First Programme focusing on the six national core priorities for education; and,
4. establishment of legislation to change the structure of the public school system from a 3-tier to a 2-tier system; that is, the removal of middle schools and the introduction of signature schools.

**SUMMARY**

The global pandemic has required this Government, like Governments around the world, to rethink its approach to budgeting to adjust to the new fiscal realities we are facing. While this budget was extremely difficult to arrive at, I want to thank the technical officers for their hard work. We truly sharpened our pencils and found the necessary efficiencies to achieve our fiscal goals without sacrificing service to our students.

Thank You