

## **Statement by**

**The Hon Jennifer Baptiste-Primus, Minister of Labour  
and Small Enterprise Development**

### **Media Conference**

**Friday May 31<sup>st</sup>, 2019: 3.00 p.m.**

**On the Job Trainees exceed Six Thousand:  
Programme gets \$87 Million Boost**

Members of the Media,

Good Afternoon

Thank you very much for accepting our invitation to be present at this special Media Conference.

The purpose is to share with you, and by extension the population at large, the good news that the On the Job Training Programme, introduced by the PNM Administration for the benefit of the young people of Trinidad and Tobago since the year 2002, is going from strength to strength.

Members of the Media,

The good news is that the number of young people presently benefitting from what is now familiarly known as the OJT Programme, is about to be extended to the six thousand (6,000) placement mark.

This figure represents an increase of 1,168 or approximately 25% additional Trainees who are due to be recruited into the Programme during the next four (4) months: June to September 2019.

Encouraged by the keen interest displayed in the programme since its inception, recommendations by the Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development to boost the initiative in several respects were readily approved by Cabinet on Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> May, 2019.

Cabinet's decision to allocate an additional Thirty-Nine point Two Five Eight Million (\$39.258Mn) for payment of Trainee Stipends and for reimbursements to Private Training Providers for the period July to September 2019 is a show of confidence in the effectiveness of the OJT Programme as a major

component of national development especially as it enhances prospects for the future welfare and wellbeing of the nation's young and aspiring citizens.

The increased intake of trainees will be undertaken at the rate of two hundred and ninety-two (292) per month. At this rate it is estimated that as at September 30, 2019, a total of six thousand, (6000) Trainees would have been engaged compared with a total which stands today, May 31<sup>st</sup>, 2019, at four thousand, eight hundred and thirty-two (4,832).

The projected increase in Trainees is one thousand, one hundred and sixty-eight (1168). The Intake for May 2019 is three hundred and twenty-four (324) Trainees.

Members of the Media,

It will be of interest for you to note that the total number of Trainees exposed to the Programme fluctuates, as is expected, in keeping with the traffic of intakes and exits from day to day. For example, as at 30<sup>th</sup> April 2019, the total intake of Trainees stood at five thousand and thirty-three (5,033). However, over the monthly breakdown of the Trainees who exited the Programme January 136, April 138 February 129 and March 128. Total, five hundred and twenty five (525)

Trainees exited the Programme having completed their 2-year placement or having found sustainable employment. This brought the total trainee placement as at April 30<sup>th</sup> to four thousand five hundred and eight (4508).

Let me remind you that one of the principal reasons for introduction of the Programme was the problem generally encountered by our young citizens who lacked the experience criteria and therefore could not respond positively to advertisements to fill numerous vacant positions.

The Programme was therefore established as a pre-employment initiative which offers young people between the ages of 16-35 an opportunity for introduction into the world of decent work focusing their attention on intelligent acquisition of practical occupational skills and experiences within both Public and Private Sector Organisations.

Members of the Media,

The Programme provides for the placement of trainees for a maximum of twenty-four (24) months at five (5) clearly defined qualification levels starting from Level 1 which pays a

stipend of \$2,750 per month at the lowest entry level of CXC plus Craft

Level II - \$3960. - CAPE / Diploma

Level III - \$4950 - Associate Degree

Level IV - \$6875- - 1<sup>st</sup> Degree

Level V - \$7920 - Masters/ Post Grad. Degree

You must be reminded that just exactly two years ago, on May 31st, 2017 the On the Job Training Programme was transferred from the National Training Agency of the Ministry of Education to become an integral Division of the Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development.

Members of the Media,

Permit me to say just a few words, this time on the Upgrading of Office Accommodation for the OJT Staff.

Cabinet also approved the allocation of 20 Million dollars (\$20Mn) for the relocation to upgraded accommodation for the staff of the On the Job Training Programme.

The reality is that, over time, the OJTP's Head Office located at the corner of Connector Road and Main Road Chaguanas which the Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development inherited in May 2017, continued to be challenged by several health and safety issues.

This exercise is expected to be completed on or before the end of September 2019.

### Members of the Media

In my capacity of Minister responsible for the successful execution of the OJT Programme for the benefit of our young people, I am making a special appeal to Private and Public Sector Employers to register with the OJTP. In particular we are keen on attracting the interests of institutions in the medical, engineering, financial and accounting, information technology and other professional persuasions to partner with the Ministry so that we may jointly encourage graduates in these disciplines to come in and register and take advantage of the benefits derived from placement in the programme.

In particular, I urge all the Graduate Medical Doctors to also register with the Programme

Ladies and Gentlemen,

So this is the good news: 25% increase, 1168 additional OJT Placements for our young citizens starting between June to September 2019; upgraded office accommodation for the hard working staff and the aspiring trainees and 39.258Million dollar increase in allocation to ensure that it all happens.

We call upon the employers of Trinidad and Tobago to rally to our call and partner with us

I thank you for the opportunity to bring you up to date on these development and invite your questions.

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