

**Opening Remarks delivered by**

**Senator Dr. the Hon. Esther Byer Suckoo**

**Minister of Labour, Social Security and Human Resource Development**

**at the start of the**

**Competency-based Training Fund's (CBTF)**

**First Information Workshop**

**on**

**Monday, March 31, 2014**

**8:30 a.m.**

**at the**

**Accra Beach Hotel**

**Rockley, Christ Church**

Commercial Director, The Crane Resort, Michael Phillips

Executive Director, TVET Council Barbados, Henderson Eastmond

Manager, Competency-Based Training Fund (CBTF) Management Unit,  
Anderson Lowe

Programme Director, Skills for the Future Programme, Ministry of  
Education, Science, Technology and Innovation, Paul Murphy

Other Council members and staff of the TVET Council

Representatives of the Barbados Accreditation Council (BAC)

Representatives of the training providers, employers and businesses  
gathered here today

Other specially invited guests

Members of the media

Ladies and gentlemen

Good morning.

When I spoke in Senate last week on the Appropriation Act 2014 I used the occasion to speak on what is happening in MLSD especially what is relevant to growth with jobs. And so I focused on training in the ministry and I noted there that TVETC is where most of the action is in the ministry this year. What with CVQs, NVQs, PLAR, ETF, World Skills and now the CBTF, it really is a very "happening" place. My compliments to Mr. Eastmond, Mr. Lowe and all at TVETC.

I find it heartening to witness the progress that is being made in the implementation of the Barbados Human Resource Development (HRD) Strategy which is being done through funding from the European Commission (EU). In particular, I applaud the progress that is being made with the implementation of Pillar Three which is one of the five pillars which form the HRD Strategy. Pillar Three speaks to the **Development of demand-driven professional development and training services**. The benefit of this particular strategic activity will be enormous since it is intended to help restructure Barbados' workforce training system - or as we refer to it, **the national technical and vocational education and training (i.e. TVET) system** – from a supply-led to a more demand-led and outcomes-based one.

What that means is:

1. **You** employers and business persons will identify your companies' or organisations' business growth needs;
2. **You** will identify the skills needs on the basis of those business needs; then
3. **You** will partner with a training provider who will provide the training needed to equip a group of persons with those needed skills;
4. **You**, with the assistance of the TVET Council and the Competency-Based Training Fund, will ensure these trainees are assessed and certified to recognized occupational standards as competent.

In other words these workers – or prospective workers - will earn **competency-based certification** such as the National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) and Caribbean Vocational Qualifications (CVQs) which will help to prove their ability to perform their job roles effectively. That is what a demand-led, outcomes-based training system is supposed to achieve.

It is for this purpose that the Competency-Based Training Fund has been set up under the TVET Council Barbados, whose **mission** is *“To develop a competent, certified and competitive workforce in Barbados and the region through the promotion and coordination of demand driven technical and vocational education and training”*.

This workshop today is therefore another step meant to achieve that mission; a mission that is a key part of the Barbados Human Resource Development (HRD) Strategy because **TVET is education for the world of work**. And, **competence-based TVET** means that emphasis is being placed on the **practical learning** and **the relevant practice** that is needed for Barbados’ workers to meet approved standards.

The benefits of the Bds\$13 million Competency-Based Training Fund will be enormous. Successful implementation of the CBTF can help businesses **and** Barbados become more competitive nationally, regionally and internationally:

1. the CBTF can help businesses become more competitive by improving employees’ performance;
2. aligning training to the needs of the market can improve the performance of businesses and the wider economy;

3. the CBTF provides opportunities for employers and training providers to create new, **sustainable** business opportunities across their sectors.

I mentioned Pillar Three (3) of the HRD Strategy (**Development of demand-driven professional development and training**). This is being executed through the establishment of the Skills for the Future Programme which is being funded by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). The Skills for the Future Programme is designed to support Government's HRD strategy to improve the quality and relevance of secondary education and the effectiveness of Barbados' national TVET system.

In addition to the Competency-Based Training Fund, the Skills for the Future Programme will also support execution of the HRD Strategy by seeking to enhance the relevant skills and qualifications of youth transitioning from secondary school to the labour market. Activities include the **A Ganar** Pilot Project which will focus on the use of team sports to build life skills and the Barbados Vocational Training Board's (BVTB) curriculum reform of its skills training courses and Apprenticeship Programme.

Of course, progress is also being made on the implementation of the other four Pillars which form the HRD Strategy. These other Pillars are:

1. creation of an enabling environment for human resource development through institutional strengthening and capacity building;

2. development of an internationally-recognised national qualifications framework;
3. rationalisation of knowledge management systems and improved information access; and
4. enhancement of research to improve innovation, entrepreneurship, and development capacity.

So far a Project Implementation Unit has been established with a Programme Coordinator and Human Resource Development Specialist leading the day-to-day activities supported by an administrative and technical team. Working Groups have been formed for each of the pillars to develop and facilitate execution of the action plans in each of the respective target areas. And these groups are working!

As part of the development of a demand-driven education and training system, and, ultimately a more competitive Barbados, it is important that there be consistent labour market needs assessments which will support the development of demand-driven educational services. All employees in the public and private sectors should also be afforded the opportunity for life-long learning through ongoing professional development and education.

A key area of focus will therefore be second-chance education and tracking the enrollment of persons in these programmes. Also important will be increasing efforts in the areas of career counselling and establishing a framework for career planning services.

Through collaboration with the Barbados Association of Guidance Counsellors (BAGC), over 9000 students have been afforded the opportunity to take advantage of Career Counselling services.

Finally, a Labour Market Information Advisory Committee has been re-constituted with a mandate to improve on the efficiency and effectiveness of data collection and information dissemination. Skills needs assessments are being undertaken under the Barbados Labour Market Information System which will give a clear indication of the skills demands and skills gaps which exist in the labour force.

This series of workshops – running until this Thursday, in the first instance – being organised by the Competency-Based Training Fund - represent an excellent opportunity which I strongly urge employers and businesses to take advantage of. Opportunities such as this one are few and far between in this current economic environment.

.....being ML in 2014 with IR and retrenchments. ..but I think it's exciting.....building the workforce that will give us the cutting edge, the competitive edge....it's "happening!" . ....We are ready. ....we need your input on where you are going and what your HR needs are and will be. We have the tools and the funds. We are ready! Are you? The time to act is now.

I thank you!