

FEATURE ADDRESS BY

SENATOR THE HON. ARNI B. WALTERS

MINISTER OF STATE

MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND IMMIGRATION

**AT THE CEREMONY TO AWARD THE
NATIONAL VOCATIONAL QUALIFICATION (NVQ)**

On

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2009

AT 2:30 P.M.

THE HILTON HOTEL

Mr. Master of Ceremonies:

Mr. Trevor King, Executive Director, TVET Council.

Mr. Carston Simmons, Permanent Secretary(Labour)

Ministry of Labour and Immigration

Dr. Hensley Sobers, Chairman, Technical and

Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Council,

Mrs. Paulette Dunn-Smith, Executive Director (acting)

HEART Trust/National Training Agency (NTA), Jamaica

Other specially invited guests

Ladies and Gentlemen:

On behalf of the Government of Barbados I take this opportunity to congratulate the Technical and Vocational, Education and Training (TVET) Council, the organisations that have partnered with the Council in the pursuit of its mandate to enhance

workforce training and development and you, the first of Barbadian employees to complete a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) – whether a full NVQ or units of an NVQ. In so doing, you have demonstrated your occupational competence and now have proof of your ability to perform your jobs to internationally benchmarked standards.

I also congratulate you the second group of local Assessors to be regionally trained and certified, for taking this important step to become part of a programme to provide workers with a qualification that certifies not just knowledge and skills - as is the case traditionally - but also performance. As you know, the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) will certificate each individual's ability to perform a

particular task or job role to a nationally recognised level of competence, which will enhance their value whether as an employee, or an entrepreneur, in the labour market.

The fall out from the global economic meltdown is being increasingly felt in the region. As regional and local companies search for ways in which to survive the current downturn in the global economy, I urge you to remember that the businesses which will withstand these tough times will be the ones that endeavour to adhere to business best practices. That is, best practice as it relates to all aspects of business whether it be management, operations, sales and marketing, and, in particular, human resources development. Companies that seek to

enhance their workforces through training and development will not only cushion the long-term effects of the economic downturn but will in fact be preparing themselves to capitalise on the eventual rebound in the economy. And if history has taught us anything, it is that after the downturn **must** come the upswing.

Companies that are seeking to develop their human resources do not have to go it alone. The TVET Council was created solely for the purpose of encouraging and supporting the growth of workforce training. Through its **Employment and Training Fund** (ETF), companies can apply for grants to train workers whether as part of providing new skills or upgrading old ones. Through the provision of

customised training to employees, employers are in a better position to tie training to business objectives and company needs.

The TVET Council has also sought to ensure that all workforce training - whether institution-based or on-the-job - is valid, recognised and in keeping with best practice. This is being achieved through the introduction of a workforce development model that is internationally benchmarked, and CARICOM approved. This workforce development model is based on the concept of competence and occupational standards, in the same way as the NVQ, or its regional equivalent, the Caribbean Vocational Qualification (CVQ).

Developed by the Caribbean Association of National Training Agencies (CANTA) – of which Barbados' TVET Council is a member - this workforce development model, which is being adopted by Barbados and the rest of CARICOM, stipulates that all workforce training, whether in an institution or on-the-job should:

- be competence-based;
- use occupational standards specified by industry;
- use occupational standards to guide the development of curriculum materials;
- grant certification to individuals who demonstrate performance of the knowledge, skills and attitudes to meet the occupational standards.

The NVQ programme, for which we are all here to give public support today, represents a paradigm shift in certification aimed at taking workforce development to the much needed next level. Through it, Barbados will seek to build on its much lauded educational system making it more flexible so that it embraces all learners and places emphasis not just on the transfer and acquisition of knowledge and skills, but also on the **demonstration of competent performance** in a work role, whether at the senior management, supervisory or entry levels. This approach to workforce development is in keeping with the goals of the International Labour Organisation's **Decent Work Agenda** and **ILO Recommendation 195 on Human Resource Development**.

The TVET Council, with the Government's support, is working to make the National Vocational Qualification the Human Resource Management tool of choice for employee selection and development. This is being done on the basis of its recognised strength as a human resource tool which assures job competence and enhances competitiveness at the individual and organizational levels.

Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) is the principle engine of workforce development. It can be used as an arm of economic policy to support business competitiveness and growth. It can also be used as an instrument of public policy to address equity concerns about disadvantages in the labour market.

Government understands that while TVET alone cannot produce economic growth or social equity, it is a fundamental enabling factor.

As a workforce development tool, TVET has a crucial role to play in:

1. preparing the economy for the future;
2. helping to close Barbados' productivity gap with its competitors; and
3. contributing to social inclusion.

My Government, with the support of the TVET Council, is seeking to ensure that Barbados' vocational education and training (VET) system, continues to meet the needs of the country. In this regard, the TVET Council has recently completed an

in-depth strategic planning exercise aimed at ensuring that its goals and objectives match the education and training needs of the workforce. A key plan of this strategic focus will be:

1. to increase the number of trainers – both institution-based and on-the-job - who are trained to use the competence-based education, training and assessment approach;
2. to increase the number of NVQ-based training programmes;
3. to substantially increase the number of workers who are certified with NVQs; and
4. to increase the number of persons trained through the Employment and Training Fund.

The TVET Council will seek to achieve these objectives within the framework of a National Training Plan which will be developed in accordance with national priorities and economic needs. The National Training Plan is intended to outline the specific types of knowledge and skills needed in Barbados for the next five years.

The TVET Council will also seek to achieve the aforementioned objectives through its continued collaboration with its tripartite stakeholders; the Barbados Employers' Confederation, the Barbados Hotel and Tourism Association and the Barbados Manufacturers' Association, which represent employer interests, the Congress of Trade Unions and Staff Associations of Barbados which represents

the interest of workers, and the Barbados Community College, the Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic, the Barbados Institute of Management and Productivity, the Barbados Vocational Training Board and the Ministries of Labour, Education and Human Resource Development which all represent the interests of the education and training sector.

In terms of increasing access to NVQs and other competence-based training programmes, the TVET Council is working closely with the Barbados Community College, the Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic and the Barbados Vocational Training Board as well as private training assessment centres, to increase the number of training programmes based on occupational standards and leading to the

National Vocational Qualification award. The Ministry of Labour fully supports this effort and will be encouraging the support and involvement of related ministries and departments.

In the trying economic times ahead, all other stakeholders of this country's vocational education and training system must also do their part for workforce development by eagerly seeking to avail themselves of the TVET Council's services.

In fact, I would like to stress that the Council will be placing greater emphasis on using the funds of the Employment and Training Fund to encourage training to local, regional and international occupational standards.

The TVET Council is working both at the national and regional levels to assure a strong TVET system. CARICOM's Council for Human and Social Development (COHSOD) has accepted over 125 occupational standards as regional standards, which will form the basis of the Caribbean Vocational Qualification. Included among these are Barbados' customer service Level 2 and the Amenity Horticulture Level 1 occupational standards.

The Council is also collaborating with the Ministry of Education to introduce Level 1 CVQs to secondary schools. It has provided the occupational standards from which the curricula will be designed and against which assessment will be conducted. Schools have been provided with facilities standards, as well, to

ensure that students are trained and assessed in a realistic work environment. In addition, the TVET Council has been assisting with the training and certification of teachers as assessors, four of who will be rewarded for their commitment and hard work today.

In conclusion, I want to reiterate the call for all of Barbados' stakeholders in workforce development to join with the TVET Council in ensuring that our workers have the necessary knowledge and hard and soft skills including service excellence measures working to meet the needs of a 21st century in a dynamic economy. In so doing, we will ensure that Barbados is better positioned to overcome any social and economic challenges, now and in the future.

I would like to once again congratulate you the awardees on your achievements, and, to thank all stakeholders – especially Jamaica's **National Council on Technical and Vocational Education and Training** (NCTVET) - represented here today by Mrs. Paulette Dunn-Smith – for the invaluable role that you are playing in improving workforce development in the region.

Thank you!