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PRESS RELEASE

Summary Status Report on Unemployment Relief Program

Belmopan. October 13, 2020. 5:00 p.m.

As of 4:00 p.m. today, October 13, 2020, Phase Two of the Unemployment Relief Program is closed to further applications. Applications that have already been made will continue to be processed and applicants can continue to check the status of applications at <https://payment.covid19.gov.bz/paymentstatus>.

A total of 67,555 applications were received and, of these, 42,890 have been approved and sent to the National Bank of Belize for payment. A total of 14,899 applications were excluded because applicants were recipients of other government programs or had applied as Long Term Unemployed in Phase One. There were also a few applications from persons whose names are in the Social Security database as deceased persons. Persons who believe they have been erroneously excluded can send information to unemployment@covid19.bz so their applications can be reviewed.

The financial commitment to all approved persons totals \$38.6 million. Of this, \$14.3 million has been paid out so far. Cabinet today confirmed that all six payments of \$150 each to all approved applicants will be paid by the beginning of November at the latest. After the upcoming General Elections, the new government will be able to give consideration to a Phase Three, taking into account the economic and fiscal outlook and the continuing needs of unemployed persons.

Over the next four weeks, all efforts will be made to ensure that applicants who need to make corrections to bank accounts are reminded to do so and all corrections will be processed. Of the 1,817 payments that have been returned because of incorrect banking information, 938 applications remain to be corrected. If applicants check their status and get a message that payment has been rejected, they are asked to please follow the steps to send in the corrected bank account information so that they can receive payment.

The completion and distribution of TopUp Cards is being given high priority and cards are being delivered to those in need. Delivery of TopUp cards has been affected by staff movements, by contact of staff with persons who may have been in contact with COVID-19 infected persons, and by the sheer number of cards being produced. The number of cards requested by applicants who have been approved amounts to 12,709 so far.

Ends