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PRESS RELEASE

Update on Unemployment Relief Program

Belmopan. September 14, 2020. 10:30 a.m.

The total number of applications received under Phase 2 of the COVID-19 Unemployment Relief Program (URP) as of this morning, September 14, was 62,363. Of these, 20,197 applications have been approved and 18,364 payments were sent to National Bank of Belize for disbursement up to the end of last Friday. The remainder, which were approved during the past weekend, will be sent this morning.

In Phase 2, the National Bank of Belize has replaced the Social Security Board as the paying agent, so payments are now being made directly from bank to bank. Payments are now totally electronically processed, and the level of rejected payments has declined significantly. A total of 652 payments have been rejected so far and over a hundred have been rectified.

Applicants who have received a text message indicating that their deposit was rejected are reminded to follow through on the process for rectifying their banking information so that payments can be properly processed. Applicants should ask their bank **how to set out their bank account number, including any transit codes that may be needed, in order to receive electronic payments.**

Payments are normally credited electronically to applicants' bank accounts on the same day the payment instructions are sent to National Bank. Payments to credit union accounts are also sent on the same day; however, it may take a few working days for the credit unions to manually post deposits to their members' accounts. In the case of TopUp prepaid cards, it takes up to three working days to prepare the cards, and an additional three to four working days for the cards to be taken to the location nearest to the applicant for pick up. Persons who received Unemployment Relief Payments via TopUp cards in Phase 1 are reminded that, if they are approved again in Phase 2, the same TopUp card can be re-used. Please hold on to your card.

As of this week, delivery of Phase 2 TopUp cards will be done through the Labour Department offices across the country. Approved applicants will be notified when the card has been prepared and it is available for pick up at the Labour Department office that is in the district in which you live.

Recipients of TopUp cards are reminded that they will need to present a valid identification card in order to collect their TopUp card. They will also need to use

the same telephone number they provided on their application to send a text message to Heritage Bank and receive their PIN to activate their TopUp card.

The public should note that there still remain about 1,000 TopUp cards at Social Security Board offices for persons approved under Phase 1 of URP that have not been picked up. Efforts are being made to reach each affected person individually so that they may pick up these cards from Social Security Offices by the end of this month. Only these last cards remaining from Phase 1 are at Social Security Board offices. No Phase 2 cards can be picked up from Social Security Board offices.

Over 11,000 applications have been excluded where applicants:

1. Are BOOST recipients;
2. Receive Government or Social Security Pension;
3. Applied as “long term unemployed” in Phase 1 – that category is not available in phase 2;
4. Are below the age of 18;
5. Appear in Social Security Board records as deceased persons; or
6. Have identified an employer that says they do not, or have never worked at their business establishment.

Applicants are reminded that if they receive a message that they have been excluded and feel that this is an error, they may provide additional information by sending an email to unemployment@covid19.bz so that their application can be reviewed.

The public is also reminded that Government of Belize’s [covid19.bz](https://payment.covid19.gov.bz) website allows all applicants to check on the status of their application by following this link: <https://payment.covid19.gov.bz/paymentstatus>. Applicants are invited to use this platform to check the status of their application at any time.

Ends