

PRESS RELEASE

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GSD criticisms on unemployment figures irrational

The comments made by the Opposition, on the recent announcement by HM Government of Gibraltar on the level of unemployed Gibraltarians reaching a record low figure of 164 as at 31 August 2015, are a nonsense and do not do justice to the actual state of affairs that this Government has achieved in terms of employment levels in Gibraltar.

The Opposition seems merely to look at the Unemployment figures through blinkers. Whilst the Future Job Strategy has an important role to play, in terms of its size by reference to the number of the total jobs in the economy, it represents a mere 0.5%. The GSD, therefore, fails to realise that the economy is much broader and much more diverse. The reality is that under this Government, the economy has grown strongly. At the moment, GDP is growing at over 10% each year. As a result it is hardly surprising that growth in employment in Gibraltar has never been higher, whilst the number of unemployed Gibraltarians has never been lower. This is great news, as the more our economy grows, the more demand there will be for employees. In addition, systems and mechanisms have been put in place in order to facilitate job allocation as well as to match jobs to the right applicant. For instance, the computer software currently being phased in is replacing one that is over ten years old. This new system will surely help to reduce unemployment levels even further.

No matter what the Opposition says with regard to the employment statistics announced by the Government, the figures speak for themselves and reflect an excellent achievement by this Government in finding employment for the unemployed, as a result of the expanding economy. Examples of details of measures aiming to help boost the local economy and therefore, job creation, are the freezing of electricity and water rates, significant rates discounts, including to new business start-ups, reduction in import duty on a whole range of goods and the Gibraltar Business Nurturing Scheme loans to name but a few notable instances.

The reality is that the employment statistics truly put to shame the abysmal record of the Opposition whilst in Government. During their 16 years in office, the GSD Government saw the employment of fewer full-time Gibraltarians than the present Government has been able to achieve in just one year.



Further, the Government will continue to invest in training and to provide the necessary education to enable people to develop and improve and better themselves with a view of enhancing their employment opportunities.

As at 30 September 2015, the current rate of unemployment in Gibraltar is 1.35% which is the lowest unemployment rate in Europe.

Commenting on the above, the Minister for Business and Employment, the Honourable Neil F Costa MP, said: "It goes without saying that Her Majesty's Government of Gibraltar is absolutely committed to ensuring that every Gibraltarian who wants to be employed is employed. The actual record breaking statistics demonstrate that this is being achieved and is a true testament to the hard work of my Ministry and the Department of Employment. To say otherwise, is to totally undermine the excellent efforts of the staff. The GSD cannot fail to notice that, with the expansion of the economy under this Government, the level of unemployment has fallen dramatically. Unlike the GSD, this Government did not consider the hundreds of unemployed as "unemployable", (a more offensive term is hard to imagine), and therefore not worthy of their efforts when in office. Indeed, as far as we are concerned, we still have room for improvement. On this, as on so many important subjects, we will not take any lessons from the GSD.

Further still, the opposition makes the extraordinary statement that the statistics are misleading, which clearly is not the case, as our figures are compiled and prepared by the competent and professional Statistics Office. Further, if this misconceived argument were true, the GSD has systematically lied to the electorate for 16 years, as we continue to use the same officials and formulas adopted by the GSD in calculating unemployment.

The electorate can look at the facts and assess which administration has made finding job opportunities for the unemployed a political priority. As ever, I am happy to submit to the good sense and judgement of our community."