



PRESS STATEMENT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 16, 2020

Update on NIB Administered Unemployment Programmes

The National Insurance Board (NIB) wishes to advise on the progress of the National Insurance Unemployment Benefit (UEB) programme and the two Government-Funded Assistance programmes which NIB has administered since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

To date, under the **Government Self Employed Assistance Programme**, NIB was able to pay some 7,183 customers and pay out \$15.5 million. This programme is now closed.

NIB's Unemployment Benefit programme has paid some 36,813 claimants a total of \$84.2 million since 23rd March 2020. At the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis, the National Insurance Board innovated and for the first time allowed unemployment payments via direct deposit. Previously, all NIB Unemployment payments were made via cheque. NIB's Director, Nicola Virgill-Rolle noted that "The process was very manual with the claimant having to first register with the Department of Labour and then proceed to NIB with the Labour Card (B81) to verify that they had satisfied all of the conditions to continue to receive the Unemployment Benefit. Recognizing the realities of COVID-19, NIB changed its process to allow for direct deposit payments and payments through employers. However, some claimants did not provide banking information or their banking information was incorrect and so cheques had to be prepared. We were seeing far too many returned payments which then needed to be reissued to customers."

NIB took great care to choose a location where there was adequate space with wide aisles and to ensure that there were distance markers and sanitization stations. NIB also engaged the Royal Bahamas Defence Force, who has done a wonderful job, to maintain order. For the most part, customers have observed