



GOVERNMENT OF BERMUDA
Department of Communications

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

26 March COVID-19 Update from Premier David Burt

Good afternoon.

I apologize for the delay in today's press conference. What is most important is that I am providing full and accurate information to the people of Bermuda. There are a number of moving parts and I wanted to make sure that I am fully briefed so that I could answer any particular questions and that the Minister of Health, the Chief Medical Officer, and the Minister of National Security were all in the loop as to the latest development. So again, I apologize for the delay.

The fact is, that there are a lot of persons that are working around the clock, and every time I stand at this podium I give tribute to our health care workers who are on the frontline, those persons who are essential services, and I think that the Chief Medical Officer and her team are doing a significant amount of work to make sure that this public health emergency is managed in the proper and appropriate way.

I would like to commend the Chief Medical Officer who has certainly been putting in excellent service for the past few years.

Sharing critical information with the public is an essential element of staying on top of this pandemic. With the necessary information people can prepare for the impact of this rapidly changing situation. Our commitment has been to consistently share as much information as possible, whether about prevention, business operations or results of the testing we have been doing since this crisis started.

Earlier today I was informed that out of the 40 tests received today by the Ministry of Health today, a further eight tested positive tests for COVID-19. Four of these cases were imported, three are limited local transmissions, that means contact with known travelers or

contact with those who already been confirmed positive as this is part of the contact tracing steps that the Ministry is undertaking. One is yet to be determined.

This is a significant increase in the number of positives and confirms what I stated earlier this week: the more we test, the more we will know.

Here are the limited details of the latest confirmed cases.

Two of those who tested positive arrived on the British Airways flight on March 15th.

One of those who tested positive arrived on the British Airways flight on March 17th, which already had a confirmed case, and another arrived on March 20th.

Here's what you need to know if you were on those particular flights. If you were on the British Airways flight on March 15th, your self-monitoring period ends on March 29th.

If you were on the British Airways flight on March 17th, your self-monitoring period ends on March 31st.

If you were on the British Airways flight on March 29th, your self-monitoring period ends on April 3rd.

If you are feeling fine and have no symptoms, there is nothing for you to do except to continue to remain in your house and continue to observe the self-quarantine.

If you have any respiratory symptoms, such as a cough or even a mild fever, please contact your doctor. Explain that you were on one of the mentioned British Airways flights and that you would like medical guidance. Do not go to your doctor's office or the hospital. Please call ahead.

Faced with a worldwide shortage and concurrent demand for testing equipment, we are constantly working with various partners to increase our ability to test locally as this is a necessary tool in the fight against COVID-19 and the reduction of the risk of community transmission in particular.

We are very grateful and fortunate to have the testing capacity on island that we have right now and we are going to continue to maintain our aggressive testing schedule as this is the only way that we will contain this particular virus.

These results and the potential trend they represent demand that we adopt a stricter approach to prevention of community transmission. Therefore the Cabinet will meet tomorrow to consider the next phase in this pandemic response. It is important for the people of Bermuda to recognize that this is no ordinary time and ordinary approaches will not work. Measures will include further restrictions on movement around the Island and possible further ordered business closures.

Where there is a balance is to be struck between non-essential business continuity and saving the lives of people, we will choose saving lives every time.

Regrettably, it seems this view is not shared by several local businesses. In spite of my strong urging that employees be allowed to work from home where possible, in some extreme cases, whole offices have been ordered to work under the threat of losing jobs. Still others have only today determined to adopt a working remote working policy for their employees.

I consider these actions to be a direct affront to the public health threat that this pandemic presents and for Bermudian companies to have the cavalier attitude that these employers have demonstrated, putting profits above people is not acceptable. Among Cabinet's considerations tomorrow will be amendments to mandate working from home, with few exceptions, and significant penalties for companies that do not follow those particular rules.

The Bermuda Police Service and the Royal Bermuda Regiment have started checking on and speaking with individuals who are currently under self-quarantine. They do not enter homes and will practice social distancing as they complete home visits to ensure that everyone is following the guidance on self-quarantine. This is an important and necessary step to ensure the health of those not just in quarantine but everyone in Bermuda.

I would like to remind all persons that the reason why self-quarantine was put in place over a week ago, is to ensure that we minimize the possibility of any community transmission. We recognize that persons were travelling from places where COVID-19 is more wide spread than it is here in Bermuda, and those strict measures were put in place to ensure that we can contain any spread.

For those persons who are not following their particular quarantine, I advise you to ensure that you follow your quarantine because we are going to make sure that we enforce this particular quarantine as it is important and vital for the public health.

In these times, there are significant community partners stepping forward to assist in the whole-Island effort required to meet these challenges. Today, the Salvation Army confirmed that the funding and staffing model provided by the Government to their operations has enabled them to continue to and increase their services which are much needed at this time.

Additionally, a number of local and international businesses have joined an effort coordinated by the Bermuda Business Development Agency to charter flights from Atlanta today to enable a number of resident who were not able to travel on the Delta flight which was cancelled earlier this week, to be able to return home.

Of course we recognize that flight was cancelled due to New York air traffic control closing and the fact is, and this is significant because we have changed our approach. Persons who

are on board that flight will be required to self-quarantine and many of them will be housed in a quarantine facility which have been offered by the Government of Bermuda.

Going forward, if there are any further repatriation flights, as has been done in many other places, those individuals will not be allowed to self-quarantine, they will be under their 14 days in a Government approved quarantine facility. Right now thankfully, hotels are providing that particular option, as they are in many other countries, and that will be the case if there are any further repatriation flights that happen and take place.

I would like to close by saying this; it is not a time to be frightened. As your Premier, I am not frightened because I recognize that the public health team is doing what is necessary to make sure that this particular pandemic can be contained. It is a time for all of us to be vigilant. The best thing which you can do to prevent transmission of any virus, specifically this virus, is to follow the hygiene requirements which have been set out. Washing hands, making sure that we are not touching each other, and ensuring that we are maintaining social distancing.

It is also critically important, at all times to observe the rules which have been laid out. If all of us in this country adopt this vigilant approach, if all of us become our brothers and sisters keepers, ensuring that this approach is followed and maintained, we will be successful in containing the spread of COVID-19 in Bermuda. On that I have no doubts.

These results are not unexpected, as we made the decision to allow persons to be repatriated but now that these persons are here we have to make sure they can get well and after they get well we can return to a sense of normalcy.