



GOVERNMENT OF BERMUDA
Department of Communications

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

1 April COVID-19 Update from Premier David Burt

Good afternoon, to the listening and watching public.

Today I'm joined by the Minister of National Security, the Minister of Health, and the Chief Medical Officer. Also, the Commissioner of Police and the Acting Commander of the Royal Bermuda Regiment.

Good afternoon.

Today, I will start with a COVID-19 Health update, and then provide some context around the national address, that I gave earlier this afternoon.

Minister Caines will discuss the results of the meeting of the EMO earlier, and will also provide details of the operational aspects of the Shelter in Place, measure, which was announced earlier today.

Regarding COVID-19.

I can confirm that there were eight results that were received today by the Ministry of Health, and there are no additional positive cases to reports. Our total number of confirmed cases remains at 32 persons. As I mentioned last night, there were three cases that were under investigation. Two of those cases which were under investigation have been confirmed as close contacts, and a third remains under investigation still.

As of this afternoon, there have been 236 tests that have taken place, and there are 33 results, which are still pending ,171 negative results, and as I mentioned before, 32 confirmed cases. Out of those 32 confirmed cases, 20 were imported and 11 were limited local transmission, where we could trace the contacts and one is still under investigation. It

is important to note that ten persons have fully recovered from their infections, while three remain hospitalized in stable condition.

We currently have 1,488 persons who were under self-quarantine with public health supervision.

Earlier today, I gave a national address stating that from 4 April at 6am, Bermuda will implement the Shelter in Place measure for 14 days. The Shelter in Place is scheduled to end on 18 April.

The decision to move to Shelter in Place, was not taken lightly. We looked at the number of confirmed cases in Bermuda. We listened to the guidance from the Chief Medical Officer, who was closest to the situation. With COVID-19, there is uncertainty and decision-making is tough, and will always be second guessed, and will always be questioned.

I recognize the incredible pain that this will cause in our community, both financially and certainly emotionally, and how unpopular this decision may be in certain quarters. However, the pain will be nothing compared to the pain that we will have, if we have an overwhelming of our healthcare system, which will lead to a number of deaths. We have seen it play out on television overseas, and it will be a violation of our public duty, if we do nothing to prevent that from happening here.

This government will always make decisions that are in the best interest of the health and welfare of those of us who live in Bermuda.

So what does Shelter in Place look like in practical terms? It means that the only businesses that will remain open are food producers, such as farmers, fishermen, and those persons who raise and herd livestock, food wholesalers, retail grocery stores, doctors' offices and medical facilities, pharmacies, gas stations, the ports, utility companies like gas and water will be available for emergency services and banks on restricted hours to only provide the most essential of services.

Local banks have been designated as essential services. However, all face to face interactions between bank customers and bank employees will be suspended for the two week period. Bank office operations include the servicing of ATM machines and the processing of wire payments, among other things such as online banking will continue.

The purpose of this 14 day Shelter in Place, is to restrict the movement of people to ensure that our healthcare system is ready for any future surge in patients. It is a big step to ask persons to stay on their properties, to close beaches and public parks, but it is essential that we restrict movement to ensure that we contain and constrain any possible outbreak.

People will be allowed to exercise outside their home within a reasonable distance with no more than groups of two, for restricted times. Minister Caines will provide additional details when he speaks, and the Police Commissioner, as well as other officials are here to answer any further questions.

It is essential to remember that this is a time that we must all pull together, and we must all do what is right for ourselves, for our families, and for our communities. We must work together and treat each other with kindness and respect.

There are a number of stories that have come to me regarding landlords, both commercial and residential, who are not understanding the need for compassion, during this particular time, and who are demanding rent from those persons who have been let go from work, and are threatening eviction of people who from no fault of their own can't operate their businesses, and cannot pay the rent on their home or their apartments. To these unscrupulous landlords I say today the courts are closed, and eviction notices will not be processed. This is a time for unity, and it is not a time for us to turn on each other.

I want to touch on the airport and when it is scheduled to reopen.

We closed the airport to scheduled commercial traffic for two weeks, commencing on March 20 2020. The fact is, however, that due to the global situation we have been informed that there is no commercial air carrier that has regular service to Bermuda that is intending on re-commencing flights until 1 May 2020.

It is important to note that this is not fully a decision of the Government of Bermuda, but also of the air carriers which flying. This does not prevent our efforts to continue the work to bring stranded Bermudians home and ensure that there are adequate quarantine facilities in which to house those persons to then minimize the risk of any future outbreak.

Before Minister Caines comes to the podium. I want to remind people that you have time to get your home in order before Shelter in Place goes into effect on Saturday morning.

You do not have to run out and start panic buying. Remember, grocery stores will open during the 14 days that we will be sheltering in place. And in addition to that, all major grocery store chains have confirmed that the traditional Wednesday 5% discount will be in place during the entire duration of the Shelter in Place. I want to thank the employees of our grocers, who are doing stellar service, while they are on the front lines. Our ports will be open for goods, and goods will continue to come to the island. If you run out of necessary items, you will still be able to purchase them. So I will encourage you over the next few days to operate and do things in a good and decent order.

We have the opportunity to show each other our best, to be our best, and we must show kindness to each other and exercise the patience of which this time requires. While we cannot touch or hug each other, we can share the smile, exchange a warm greeting, check up on your friends, possibly repair those relationships from a distance which has been frayed, and go the extra step to be a friend, because that is the only way that we will get through this tough time together.

I will close my remarks by saying I want to again pay tribute to all of those persons who have answered the call of service. I was particularly gratified that after my press conference yesterday, I received WhatsApp notices from Public Officers who made sure to prepare themselves to drive nurses to the hospital earlier today. This is a time when we can all come together.

As I said earlier, COVID-19 does not discriminate based upon age, does not discriminate based upon race, does not discriminate based on economic status, does not discriminate against political party, and does not discriminate against immigration status.

If there was ever a time when it was about all of us being in this together, it is now. I recognize that the times will be difficult, but I will call upon all aspects of society, to not only ensure that we endure this next painful period, but we write the next chapter of Bermuda's history, which will be one of success, collectively, as we seek to recover from the damage that this crisis, right now will cause, but certainly will not have to endure. If we do what's necessary and right. Thank you. And now we'll turn the podium over to the Minister of National Security.