



GOVERNMENT OF BERMUDA
Department of Communications

2 April 2020

CONTACT
Aderonke Bademosi Wilson
Director
Phone: (441) 505 1868
Email: abwilson@gov.bm

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

2 April COVID-19 Update from Premier David Burt

Good afternoon.

Today I'm joined by the Minister of Health, the Minister of National Security and the Minister of Education.

My remarks today will cover my daily update, regarding test results for COVID-19, I will then discuss a few matters relating to the upcoming state of emergency and the existing curfew round the Shelter in Place measure which has been put into place by the Government of Bermuda, commencing on Saturday and also the Minister of Education will an update on the Ministry's plans for students next week.

The Government did receive additional test results today. Out of the 36 test results received today, there were three positive cases for COVID-19, and 33 negative test results that were received. This means that the confirmed positive cases in Bermuda now stands at 35.

Out of those 35 persons, it is important to note that 11 persons have recovered. Out of those 35 persons, there are four persons now that are hospitalized and all of those persons are listed in stable condition. So again, we have 35 total cases, there are 11 persons that have recovered, 24 active cases and of those 24 active cases four persons are hospitalised.

Out of the cases, 22 overall, the 35 reported, 11 were local transmission and two were under investigation. Out of the three new confirmed cases. Two of them were imported, and one is under investigation.

One of the confirmed cases arrived in Bermuda, on the British Airways flight on the 18 March. The other arrived on the Delta flight DL561 on the 18 March, 2020. If you're on either of those flights on the 18th of March, your quarantine period ended yesterday, 1 April 1. If you are feeling fine and have no

symptoms, continue to either practice social distancing, remain in your house, and observe the self-quarantine guidelines.

If you have respiratory symptoms such as a persistent cough or even a mild fever or a sore throat, please contact your doctor. Alternately, you can prior to contacting your doctor, you're welcome to go to the website is listed here, coronavirus.gov.bm, and look under resources, where you will find a symptom checker which has been released by the Bermuda Hospitals Board. So you can look to see whether or not you may have, or had the symptoms of the coronavirus.

When you talk to your doctor explain that you were on one of the mentioned flights, and you would like medical guidance, please as I say all the time, do not go to a doctor's office or the hospital, call ahead.

Currently, there are 1,206 persons that are under self-quarantine with public health supervision. A review of our overall testing numbers, states that out of the 261 tests that we've conducted, as we know that 35 are positive, and 204 were negative. The rest of the results are pending results.

Regarding the curfew. I'm pleased to say that the vast majority of people in Bermuda understand the importance of the curfew and are in their homes by eight o'clock pm. The Bermuda Police Service today reported that there was one curfew breached last night, and that person was detained and held at the Hamilton Police Station and released after curfew.

It is important to note that the exemptions, can be found for anyone who's requesting an exemption for curfew at forms.gov.bm/covid19/curfew. Or you could just visit the coronavirus.gov.bm website, and you will find the link to the exemption request for there.

Yesterday I announced the Government will be instituting a Shelter in Place order for the 14 days from the 6 am Saturday 4 April until Saturday, 18 April. I will reiterate why this measure is important for the lives of each person who lives in Bermuda.

COVID-19 is a deadly disease. We have seen how this has devastated towns, cities and countries around the world. In Bermuda, we have the ability to flatten the curve and slow down the transmission of the virus by reducing our contact with each other. The virus, as you know, is spread from person to person, and by people touching surfaces where the virus is present. This is the reason why it is important to maintain your social distance, and to practice the good hygiene, that we have spoken about.

Minister Caines has spent the bulk of this afternoon answering questions that people have regarding the Shelter in Place and how it impacts their personal circumstance. Though we will have the ability to answer questions at the end of this press conference regarding specifics, I'm going to ask for the patience of the public as the Attorney-General's Chambers is finalizing the regulations, and it's important to know that though the regulations were requested by the Cabinet of Bermuda, the Governor of Bermuda must issue those regulations, and until those regulations are issued, nothing can be considered official as it is under the remit of the Governor in which to issue. So we will wait for the finalization of those regulations.

What I will note, however, is that Shelter in Place will be difficult for many persons in our community. The added stress of reduced incomes, anxiety surrounding the coronavirus and the inability to leave people's property creates extra pressures for many families. It is important to know that support has been put in place to help families during this time.

The Government has established clear priorities for ensuring that vulnerable persons in need, that are in our community have their needs met. Many partner agencies are working together, churches, nonprofits and Government departments. Resources are available to deliver food, and there are services for seniors. Shelter is available for those in need and for those persons who may be, unfortunately, experiencing domestic violence, help is also available.

Approximately 14 food services and feeding programs have been put in place, and they are providing over 3,000 meals a day island-wide.

Regarding our seniors and our nursing homes. Many of Bermuda's most vulnerable live in senior's homes around the island. There are 21 facilities, 19 of them, which are private, would serve a total of 392 seniors. Funding from Bermuda Emergency Fund, which is administered by the Community Foundation, has been used to buy supplies, personal equipment, installed Wi Fi and get more phone lines into the nursing home facilities. If anyone has a concern about a senior or if you're a senior that needs help, you're welcome to contact Dr. Claudette Fleming at 747-7525.

Before this COVID-19 crisis emerged, a team of non-profit and public experts met, including representatives from Vision Bermuda, Meals on Wheels, Aging and Disability Services, the Bermuda Health Council (which has oversight and licensing responsibility for seniors homes) Age Concern Bermuda, and a consortium of public and private nursing homes.

Each organization went back to their list of most vulnerable clients, many seniors were contacted directly, and their needs were assessed and addressed with the assistance of Age Concern social workers. Aging and Disability Services also is conducting wellness checks on seniors around the island. These organizations are on standby to address short-term needs of those seniors, as they arise.

For those members of our community who can help make a difference by making a financial contribution to the emergency fund, please go to www.Bcf.bm. All funds will be used to support the identified priority areas for our most vulnerable.

On to the issues of domestic violence. Unfortunately, what happens when you have curfew orders or Shelters in Place, you will, unfortunately see an increase in the risk of domestic violence. Please know that if you are in a domestic situation, and have concern for your safety, contact the Police or call The Center Against Abuse at 292-4366, or their 24-hour hotline to 297-8278.

The Government does not want anyone to remain in a vulnerable position where you may be subject to domestic violence. I'd like to speak today to say, that if you are in that situation, we can ensure that provisions are made for you. We do not want you to be in a situation where you may be abused, and if you need help, please call, and the Government will make sure that we can assist you in your circumstances.

Earlier today, I saw the long lines at the grocery stores. I want to reassure the people of Bermuda that grocery stores will remain open during the 14-day shelter in place. Pharmacies will be open, as well as gas stations. There is no need to buy in bulk. There is plenty of food on the island, and there is enough for us all.

I ask, and remind persons that social distancing is particularly important, and the Minister of National Security in conjunction with our services is going to look at what assistance may be provided to help to

make sure that we can have persons maintain adequate social distancing. But the best advice is, buy what you need to buy, and do not buy anymore. There is enough for everyone, and to remember that during the 14 day Shelter in Place, there will be the opportunity to travel to a grocery store, within limits of which will be laid out in regulations.

The Government has also been focused on bringing Bermudians home who have been stranded in the United States and our students who are stranded, some in dire conditions, in the United Kingdom. Working with a local travel agency, who have generously secured a charter flight by Delta Airlines – and the travel agency is Travel Edge – a flight is being organized to bring travellers who may be stranded in the United States, from Fort Lauderdale, Florida to Bermuda. There is a cost for this flight. However, the more persons who take advantage of the flight, the cost could be reduced.

If you have a loved one in the United States who needs to return home, direct them to coronavirus.gov.bm to complete the Returning Bermuda Residents form to add their name to the list. It should be noted that priority, both in London, and in cases from the United States are for persons who are students or vulnerable persons. Then it goes to people who are ordinarily resident in Bermuda. Persons who have moved overseas and are not normally resident and are lower on the priority list and may not be given seats on the flight given that there may be space constraints.

Whether travelers arriving from London, or the United States, once they arrive in Bermuda they will be mandated to enter a Government quarantine facility for 14 days. The Minister of Health has signed a new order that requires this, and our Government has secured a facility, with more than 300 rooms to meet these required quarantine demands.

As I've stated previously, we have an obligation to help bring home every Bermudian who is stranded overseas by circumstance far beyond their control. And as I've stated previously, some of the stories which you're hearing that I've heard, are not good. I just got off the phone with Ms. Kimberly Durant's who runs our London office, and we have students that are literally calling her office in tears, because there are no services and support for them as their universities have shut down, and they are very literally the only person that is left on their university campus. The fortunate thing is that most of those students will be home on Monday.

I have heard stories of our seniors who are having retired have made the decision to vacation and have ended up in a city where they hadn't planned to stay in and spending money on flight, hotel rooms, and food that they had not budgeted for. These are our people, and I'm happy that we continue to work with Government House and the Foreign Commonwealth Office to resolve their dire situations.

Earlier this week, I spoke about the plan to get hospital workers who used to rely on public transportation to and from the hospital. There had been a delay in starting the service. However, the Department of Public Transportation management, the Bermuda Industrial Union and the Bermuda Public Service Union officials, and the Occupational Safety and Health Committee members met with Bermuda Hospitals Board's Chief of Medicine an expert on infectious diseases to clarify the requirements for personal protection equipment, hygiene and social distancing on the buses under COVID-19 regulations.

The Department of Health, and healthcare professionals were also present to advise on personal protective equipment and COVID-19. The bus drivers now have an understanding of the risk exposure and precautionary measures required to ensure the safety of employees and passengers on buses.

Follow up actions are ongoing. However, the team at DPT has made sufficient progress to safely resume the KEMH bus service starting tomorrow. I thank everyone who has worked to make the service possible so our healthcare workers can get to work.

Now, I will end with some good news, the Bermuda Post Office today confirmed that pension checks for seniors will be delivered tomorrow. Also, the Minister of Finance confirmed to me earlier today that payments have been processed for 1,142 persons who were all approved to receive benefits under the unemployment fund.

Again, 1,142 persons. Those payments were processed at our local banking institutions today, and there will be another run that will be performed tomorrow. The Minister of Finance has informed me that the persons whose payments were run out of that fund were paid for the first two weeks of their benefits, not just one, but the first two weeks of their benefits.

I will close my remarks today with my customary thank you. Thank you to Bermuda's public health professionals and healthcare workers around the island, who are on the front line, every day. Those are doctors, those are nurses, those are lab technicians, and those are the ones who work in support. Persons who cleaned the hospital, orderlies, the persons who preparing food, and otherwise. Whether you are persons who are working or picking up garbage around the country, whether you were transporting our people to and from work, whether you are off the streets, making sure that we've maintained our curfew, as police officer of a regiment officer. I, on behalf of a grateful country, give you our thanks.

To my fellow Bermudians, as I say, all the time, we must use this time to define who we are. To do what is right for ourselves in our country. We are going to have to dig deep and be strong, as we prepare to endure 14 days of Sheltering in place. But I have no doubt that we can do it, and if we do it the right way, it'll be the last time that this country will have to do it.

Thank you. And with that, I will turn the podium over to the Minister of Education.