



GOVERNMENT OF BERMUDA
Department of Communications

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

15 April COVID-19 Update

Good evening.

As a government, our priority is to protect lives, preserve the health and safety of our people. It is also our mandate to create jobs and opportunities for Bermudians. Today, there is uncertainty surrounding COVID-19, and there is uncertainty around the economic future of Bermuda and the world.

Today, we will give an update from the Ministry of Health, but we will also provide an update on government's efforts to protect our economy and to aid small business and what we are going to do to prepare Bermuda for an economic recovery after the Shelter in Place has ended.

This evening I'm joined by Minister of Health Kim Wilson who will provide a COVID-19 update. I'm also joined by the Minister of Finance, Curtis Dickinson, who will provide an update on the economy. We are also joined by the Executive Director of the Bermuda Economic Development Corporation, Miss Erica Smith, who will announce the small and medium sized business relief package. I'm also joined here at The Berkeley Institute by the Minister of National Security, who's on hand to answer any questions in addition to the Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Cheryl Peek-Ball.

First, there will be an update from the Minister of Health, regarding the various issues surrounding the latest update, regarding COVID-19. I do warn that the news that is about to be shared may be sobering to many, and I recognize that it will cause concern, but I also want to remind the public that there is a team of Public Officers and the Government that is working day in and day out to make sure that we continue to control this outbreak. Minister Wilson.

Minister Wilson reads her statement.

Thank you, Minister of Health.

As I said yesterday, while we sacrifice, we cannot let the economic effects of this pandemic be worse than the health effects of this pandemic. The economic plan the Government is putting in place will allow us to be agile, and to move quickly.

Bermuda, like the rest of the world must continually assess our financial position and start laying the groundwork now, so that when the time comes to step out of our homes and eventually open our borders, we'll be in a strong position to move forward. It is our goal to use this opportunity not just to restore our economy, but to transform our economy, identifying new ways to elevate Bermudians financially and creating new opportunities for entrepreneurship and new careers.

Minister of Finance Minister Curtis Dickinson will now give an overview of the items which the Ministry of Finance has been working on, and outline the economic plans for the country. Minister.

Minister Dickinson reads his statement.

Thank you, Minister of Finance.

As an entrepreneur, I'm keenly aware of the many challenges that are facing many of our businesses. When you tell me that you're struggling to maintain health insurance for your staff or cover other expenses during this time of reduced business activity, I get it. It is heartbreaking to see hard work slipping away, and your businesses stuck at a standstill. I believe in bottom up economics and it is the small business owner who hires two or three others who will need ongoing support as we transition from this pandemic into a fully operational economy.

The BEDC has been working with agency partners to help our small business owners. I will now turn the mic over to Ms. Erica Smith of the Bermuda Economic Development Corporation, who will present on the resources being put in place to assist at this time, and get more details on the distribution of the \$12 million in funding, which has been made available by the Ministry of Finance.

Erica Smith reads her statement.

Thank you very much Ms Smith.

The Bermuda Economic Development Corporation has been hard at work, and this \$12 million additional of assistance to our small and medium sized enterprise will certainly go a long way. I thank them for their continued work and their efforts. I know that they have continued to work remotely, and have continued to serve our small business community, and assisted even some small businesses during this time to expand as they change their business models.

Economic recovery is not just about the government. Bipartisanship is necessary. And as we move forward, the Minister of Finance has indicated that he will be making sure that we are going to involve, not only members of the government, but also members of the community, and also members of the Opposition inside of this particular endeavor.

Keeping with my pledge that I made to the Opposition Leader to make sure that the Opposition is informed, there was a meeting earlier today, sharing the preliminary modeling information with the Minister of Health, and her team. There will be another meeting that's going to be held later this week

for members of the Opposition to ask additional questions, in addition to the sitting of Parliament which will take place later this week.

However, it's important to note that the Government's outreach when it comes to dealing with matters of the economy will not only involve politicians but it must involve all of you, as well. In order to collect thoughts from Bermudians as we move through this COVID-19 era, and look to transition our economy, the government has set up an online forum where members of the public can share their suggestions.

The questions that are being asked are:

- what laws would you like to see modernized, reformed or introduced to the benefit of Bermuda, as we move past this pandemic?; and
- what are your ideas to stimulate economic recovery, create jobs and opportunities for Bermudians once the emergency Shelter in Place Order ends?

The questions can be found on forum.gov.bm.

This is going to be administered by the Minister responsible for Communications, Minister Jamal Simmons. This is an opportunity for us to put our collective heads together as we develop ideas that create jobs and stimulate the economy.

So while the Minister is forming an Economic Advisory Council, we want to make sure that all Bermudians can play their part in feeding in to this particular endeavor, as it is going to require significant change as we move past this particular period in our time.

Earlier today, the Minister of Labour, Community Affairs and Sports, Minister Lovitta Foggo announced the cancellation of Bermuda Day activities, which will include the half marathon, and the parade. I know this is a disappointment for many, because Bermuda Day for Bermudians signifies the unofficial start of summer. However, the decision was made this far in advance, out of an abundance of caution to ensure the continued health and wellbeing of everyone on the island.

Before I go on to brief updates provided by the Minister of National Security. I would like to speak to those who may be suffering at home with domestic violence.

Unfortunately, when you have orders such as Shelter in Place, you will unfortunately see an increase in the risk of domestic violence. If you are in an unsafe situation, have any concerns for your safety. If you're being abused, emotionally, sexually, physically, contact the police, or call the Centre Against Abuse at 292 4366, or their 24 hour hotline on 297 8278.

If you're in a situation where you feel unsafe and you can't get to a phone, please feel free to leave your house and go to the police or make sure you report in at one of these checkpoints. The last thing that we want is persons to suffer in silence at home, under the hand of domestic abuse.

This government is committed to giving you the support, which you need to get out of an unsafe environment, and we'll work with our community partners to ensure that you and or your families can have a safe environment, during this crisis. Please do not suffer at home.

Earlier today, I received an update from the Minister of National Security, and I'll share a few items. The Royal Bermuda Regiment continue their deployment across the island providing support in a variety of capacities.

In conjunction with the Bermuda Police Service, the Community Advisory Points recorded a total of 10,899 stops over a 24-hour period at 20 various locations across the island. Of these stops, 311 were advised to return home, and one attempted to evade a checkpoint.

In conjunction with the Bermuda Police Service marine officers, soldiers of the Bermuda Coast Guard continue to maintain a daily presence on Bermuda's waters. Some of yesterday's Coast Guard patrol activity included redirecting boater activity back to shore as the Shelter in Place Regulations forbid boating activity outside of commercial fishing. The Royal Bermuda Regiment continues to provide support for the transport of hospital staff via the Department of Public Transportation buses.

A quick note regarding the issue of exemptions for the next 14 days of Shelter in Place. The Minister of National Security is working on a process for people to have their Exemptions extended for the further 14 day period, without having to re-apply.

The Minister will provide additional information on this point tomorrow. In the meantime, please refrain from applying for the extended 14 day curfew period until otherwise notified.

Turning to the government run shelter facility at CedarBridge, which continues to operate on a 24-hour basis. We are reiterating our call for medical volunteers (nurses and doctors) for the shelter. The contact number for nurses and doctors to volunteer is 707-2223.

We did have an incident at one of the Government Quarantine Facilities. This involved the arrest of one the persons under quarantine and found in possession of a controlled substance. This individual will go through the appropriate court process.

Yesterday, I announced at the shelter in place water will continue until May 2. The rules which have guided actions over the last week and this week, have not changed. Our overall aim is to save lives by limiting the transmission, by reducing non-essential movement of everyone in Bermuda to ensure that the number of COVID-19 positive cases require who hospitalization, to not overwhelm the hospital. The only way we can do that is by persons following instructions and remaining at home.

On Friday, Parliament will meet, and we'll be passing the extension to the emergency order related to Shelter in Place. There have been suggested modifications that while maintaining social distance and Shelter in Place will help to address some of the concerns that you have expressed surrounding the services available to the public. Those details will be provided by the Minister of National Security at tomorrow's press briefing, following the conclusion of the Cabinet subcommittee meeting tomorrow.

The enforcement of social distancing is one of the key public health measures that will reduce transmission of this highly contagious disease. And as a reminder, until the Shelter in Place ends on

May 2, you must still remain on your property and can only leave for the permitted uses. And if you do go outside continue to maintain your social distance and make sure that you wear a face covering.

Before I close I just want to note one thing. I did understand that yesterday, an Instagram account that belonged to me was cloned. I want to remind all persons in Bermuda that you will never be asked for money by a Government Minister or anyone in Government online. Do not send money to anyone through Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, or any social media platform. If you have any concerns about any messages you have received, please send an email to stopcybercrimes@gov.com, or you can visit cybertips.bm.

Before I close I'd like to take a few minutes this evening to say my customary thank you to each and every healthcare professional who is on the front line, making sure that Bermuda is effectively dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. To every person who works in public health to every doctor and nurse, who's working in our hospital or out to the field, are those in private practice. I extend the country's appreciation to the grocery stores, the pharmacies, the gas stations, their staff together with the dock workers and also the truck drivers who are transporting our wares from the docks to the individual locations.

I also have to mention the public officers who continue to provide services for the government of Bermuda, and the very hardworking team, the Department of Communications, who put on these press conferences and make sure everyone remains informed. In addition, I'd like to thank our team here who are also providing services to the hearing impaired.

The government and the people of Bermuda are truly grateful for the dedication of all the hard working professionals who continue to make sure that this country runs. And from my office to all of you I want to say thank you and please continue to keep up the excellent work, which are providing to all of us.