



GOVERNMENT OF BERMUDA
Department of Communications

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

16 April COVID-19 Update

Good evening Bermuda.

I will start this evening by speaking directly to the families who have lost loved ones in recent weeks to COVID-19 and to those who have contracted the virus and are fighting to overcome it. The thoughts and prayers of our island are with you as you grieve for your loved one. As a Government we will continue to work hard to manage the spread and reduce the impact of this disease. For those who have contracted and are battling the virus we send you well wishes for a full and speedy recovery.

Today, we will have an update from the Minister of Health on matters related to COVID-19, the Minister of National Security on matters related to our current Shelter in Place, and the Minister of Education will give an update on the work being done in his Ministry to continue the learning process for our children.

Minister of Health reads her statement.

Thank you Minister.

Over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government has listened to or medical experts, taken lessons from countries that have been successful in flattening the curve, and work swiftly

to protect the people who have become challenged economically. We have listened to, and when necessary adapted to changing circumstances, implemented recommendations from those of all walks of life that truly and deeply care about Bermuda.

Tomorrow, Bermuda's parliament will meet for the first time in history in a virtual meeting via WebEx, an internet based video conferencing app. This will enable the people's business to be conducted while still maintaining adhering to Shelter in Place, and social distancing guidelines. I would like to thank the Speaker of the House, his staff at the Legislature, and also the team at the Department of Information and Digital Technologies for working to get this ready for tomorrow, so that we will be able to remain safe while conducting the people's business.

Tomorrow's meeting is necessary, as the approval of Parliament is required to extend our state of emergency. What is important to note, is that though we predict that the Shelter in Place will end on May 2, there will be a need to continue some form of restrictions for the foreseeable future. In other countries they do not need to declare a State of Emergency to restrict movement during a public health crisis, but in Bermuda, this is the only way to do so.

The public health modeling that we currently have predicts that we will need to have strict social distancing for the foreseeable future. So the Cabinet has resolved that we must make amendments to the laws that will allow any government in the future to implement appropriate measures, in the case of a future public health emergency, such as the one we're experiencing right now, without the need to have to declare a State of Emergency.

This evening, we wanted to detail the full changes that are going to be put in place for next week's Shelter in Place. However, these changes have not yet been completed legislatively, and we do not want there to be any confusion between what is said here, and what is reflected fully in the law. So we're going to wait to make sure that we can read from the newly updated law so that everyone will have a full and complete update tomorrow.

But, as I have indicated over the last few days, there will be some changes. All the changes that are being made, are in line with social distancing. The purpose of the Shelter in Place Order is to minimise the interactions between persons in different households to minimize transmission that could spread this outbreak further than what it is spread already. However, recognizing that it has been extended for two weeks, and certain persons may not have been ready to be sheltered in place for a full four weeks, there are going to be some additional businesses that will be allowed to be open.

There will be limited allowances for hardware stores, as we want persons who are at home, and want to make sure they can have the opportunity to make any upgrades to their house and make use the time. Plant nurseries, in case you want to plant some items in your garden or start to help us to better enhance our food security in Bermuda.

There will be limited allowances for pet stores as well, as we recognize certain persons may have only had allowances for two weeks of pet food, and we want to make sure that our pets are taken care of. And certainly, as I've mentioned before laundromats, as it is important, and recognizing that not all persons in Bermuda are privileged to have a washer and dryer in their house, and we're going to make sure that we can find a way that minimizes the risk but allows persons to have access to those particular services.

Additionally, as we're looking to promote delivery services on island, the Minister of National Security is also drafting up guidelines to enhance the use or expand the use of Bermuda's taxis, to help enhance delivery services which are taking place on island right now. Many of our taxi drivers have subscribed to the unemployment benefit, as clearly there is a minimal amount of movement that's allowed by taxi drivers, and this is a move to allow some economic activity for those taxi drivers, while making sure that we continue to maintain our social distancing.

As I had said, Minister Caines will be giving a full update tomorrow on those particular guidelines, but right now Minister Caines will give an update on the Ministry of National Security. Minister.

Minister of National Security reads his statement.

Thank you very much Minister Caines.

Minister, I would just like to add to your statements, and just say that I took note that further reports of panic buying today, especially in the areas of tobacco and alcohol, due to some headlines in local media. The Government is not banning alcohol and tobacco sales tomorrow as some persons have reported, so there is no need to rush to the store. I cannot emphasize enough that there is no need to panic buy any items as we're going to ensure that supply happens.

Yesterday, I indicated that we will allow the limited restocking of these particular items in our stores and the Minister of National Security and the amendments that are being made to Emergency Powers Regulations will allow for that to happen. As this Government sees these

that must be addressed, we will always look at issues carefully, and if we need to make a different decision, while maintaining the health and wellbeing of Bermudians, we will.

I cannot stress that an overwhelming majority of our people are putting Bermuda first by following the rules, sheltering in place, and maintaining social distance. Yet, there are those who continue to act in undisciplined, reckless and thoughtless manner, as was just stated by the Minister of National Security. For them, the only solution will be facing the consequences before the courts of Bermuda, and that is not something, of which we want to do. So if you do not care about anyone else, I hope that you at least pause, as a thought of paying thousands of dollars in fines or potentially finding yourself behind bars.

Given that we are dealing with people's lives, the Government is not playing in this particular situation, and we are urging the Bermuda Police Service to continue to enforce the law as it is written.

Now, the Minister of Education, Diallo Rabain, will provide an update on education. Minister.

Minister of Education reads his statement.

Thank you Minister.

I would like to thank you and your team at the Ministry, the Department, Bermuda's principals, educators, and paraprofessionals, not just the Premier but also as a father. My daughter is enjoying her experience learning online and I'm grateful that in spite of this pandemic she, like so many of our children across the island, has the opportunity to engage in learning.

I am very pleased to share some good news with you. In a press release that was issued a few hours ago, Athene announced this afternoon that it led a joint effort of companies to fund the purchase of eight life-assisting ventilators for the Bermuda Hospitals Board. Together, the companies donated more than \$400,000 to fund the purchase of equipment that is critical to patient health, especially during this pandemic.

The joint effort led by Athene is being made possible by the additional support of several other Bermuda-based companies, including Athora Holding Ltd., Aspen Insurance Holdings Ltd., and Catalina Holdings Ltd. Widespread shortages of essential medical equipment have created a challenge for the hospital. The Bermuda Hospitals Board identified that there was a need for these additional ventilators and this group of companies responded.

Athene, speaking on behalf of all the supporting companies in this joint effort, said that it is an honor to give back to the community and also expressed how grateful they are and supportive of the healthcare professionals on the frontlines treating patients during this extraordinary time.

On behalf of the Government and people of Bermuda, I extend a sincere appreciation for the generosity of these companies who have paid for these life-saving ventilators.

As we entered 2020, no one could have predicted or imagined that we would be confronting the global emergency we are facing today. The world has been forced to change and so we have been forced to change. It has been said that the true character of a people is not revealed during times of prosperity and happiness, but during times of crisis and woe.

We are pulling together as a people. Our healthcare professionals on the front line working tirelessly with those suffering from COVID-19 and treating them with dignity and compassion. I must also add the professional and technical staff at the Mid Atlantic Wellness Institute. They continue to play a vital role for those who need on-going and additional mental health support. Whether it is our bus drivers and members of the community working to ensure that our healthcare professionals don't have to worry about how they will get to work.

Our teachers, many carrying the burden without complaint or reluctance as they educate our children while caring for their own. Our dock workers, truck drivers, grocery, pharmacy and gas station workers, helping to keep us fed and the medicine we need on our shelves.

The security guards who are working at the various stores to make sure that social distancing rules are being followed. There are so many that are working without recognition, quietly behind the scenes to get us all through this difficult time, and to them, I say thank you.

Finally tonight, I extend my warmest thanks to the members of my Cabinet. While I, the Minister of Health and the Minister of National Security have been before the cameras throughout this national emergency, every single member of Cabinet is working hard and doing their part to insure that the government continues to function, continues to listen, and continues to adapt to the swiftly changing circumstances our island faces. I say thank you to them.