



Ministerial Statement

by

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Minister of Public Works

Public Works Covid 19 Operations

May 8th, 2020

Mr. Speaker, it was only a few short months ago that the world was hit with a pandemic that would bring life as we know it to a grinding halt. And although we like to think of Bermuda as “another world” we were not immune to this crisis.

Mr. Speaker, similar to major events that changed the world in times past such as World Wars I and II, the bombing at Pearl Harbour – and more recently the 9//11 attacks in the US in 2001 that dramatically changed the way in which we travel, it is anticipated the Covid-19 Pandemic that landed on our shores in March will further impact our travel habits. This pandemic has also changed the way we communicate, the way we socialize and the way we conduct our daily business. For the foreseeable future we can no longer shake hands....we cannot fist pump... or do the “bro” shake when greeting one another.

Mr. Speaker, these interactions were replaced with elbow bumping....foot tapping....to the new reality of physical distancing that requires us to remain six feet apart. Who knows, that may be a good thing!

In person meetings are now replaced using technology such as Zoom, WebEx and Lifesize.

Mr. Speaker, some may have thought that the Shelter in Place conditions brought the island to a standstill. However, the business of the country, and in particular, the functions in the Ministry of Public Works had to continue as they are critical to the operation of this country. Without the monitoring and maintenance of our water and sewage system.....the 24 hour /7 days a week operation of the Tynes Bay Waste to Energy Facility.....to the daily collection of garbage.....Bermuda would experience major infrastructure challenges and health issues.

With that brief introduction **Mr. Speaker**, I wanted to take a few minutes this morning to acknowledge the hard work of several teams within my Ministry who had little rest during this Shelter in Place – and I consider them our “*Heroes without a Cape*”.

Mr. Speaker, I am in no way saying things in the Ministry are perfect. You may recall shortly after we required persons to self-quarantine from overseas travel, the team in the waste management section expressed serious concerns that one of their colleagues returned to work without following those guidelines.

My Permanent Secretary, the President of the Bermuda Industrial Union and I held several meetings with the Waste Management team at Marsh Folly in an attempt to allay any concerns. It was agreed that the workers would return to work the following week March 30th. I must thank Ms. Lawreida Cartwright for attending those meetings at short notice to sign for our hearing impaired employee.

To ensure garbage was collected that week, the Management team of the Waste Section immediately reached out to a number of private organizations and contractors, who quickly agreed to assist the country at that time.

Once again I would like to extend my thanks to the Corporations of Hamilton and St. George, and the private contractors who ensured garbage across the island was collected with minimum issues.

Mr. Speaker, during Shelter in Place, the Ministry was also tasked with coordinating the efforts of seamstresses across the island to produce face masks. Two members of our Headquarters team, Mrs. Trina Bean and Mrs. Georgette Trott along with Mrs. Sheila Tyrrell, who brought the idea to us, and Ms. Gaye Simmons, quickly formed the nucleus of our “face mask team”. Shortly thereafter the Ministry received numerous offers of help from private individuals who simply wanted to help. They have produced over 1,000 masks between them – free of charge – which have been donated to the Hospital, 9 Nursing Homes, the police Service, Bermuda Regiment and 6 community groups. It is my pleasure to acknowledge and thank them for their generosity and community mindedness.

They are:

Mrs. Belinda Brown
Mrs. Nancy Frith
Mrs. Lee Hall
Ms. Renee Hill
Mrs. Cynthia Kenahan
Mr. Patrick Mahon
Ms. Rochelle Minors
Mrs. Cindy Patterson
Mrs. Marilyn Sannemalm
Mrs. Karen Skiffington
Mrs. Nancy Thompson, and
Mrs. Sheila Tyrrell

Mr. Speaker, to ramp up the testing of residents for the coronavirus, the team in the Buildings Section led by Mr. Sheridan Ming and Mr. Dalton Burgess – collaborated with Dr. Carika Weldon to design and build the new lab all while she was in quarantine. The team contracted Bermuda Drywall & Ceiling to complete the lab preparation works by converting a part of the Health Lab at Southside into a COVID-19 testing lab in three days. This second lab would now be used to support the government’s efforts with having as many persons in Bermuda tested for the virus.

The lab was now operational, but the drive thru testing site still required some works. Once again, our team, along with the BLDC team pulled out all the stops to ensure this drive thru testing facility was up and running on Friday April 24th. A special thanks to Mr. Stephen Tucker who has worked tirelessly to ensure the site became fit for purpose as well as ensuring the medical team and scientists had all the equipment and supplies they needed.

A team of Doctors led by Dr. Kyjuan Brown along with Dr. Amne Foggo–Osseyran, Dr. Cindy Morris and Dr. Jeffrey MacLeod ensured the process ran smoothly. They were assisted by an amazing group of 14 young medical students – all but one of whom are young ladies.

They are

Ms. Toya Anderson
Ms. Nia Bailey
Ms. Dejah Burgess-Simons
Ms. Dasha Caines
Mr. Tahj Cox
Ms. Elizabeth Davis
Ms. Taala Somner
Ms. Sacara Phillips
Ms. Sadaije Riley
Ms. Jade Robinson
Ms. Nafisa Robinson
Ms. Kiandra Simons
Ms. Kristin Steede, and

Ms. Kayah Wilkes

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry was also tasked with assisting the third sector with the delivery of meals, supplies and computers to seniors, water and food to those in need, to driving the seamstresses across the island to secure materials – to delivering face masks to those in need. I would like to say a big thank you to Mr. Nathan Darrell our Transport Supervisor who always displayed a positive attitude and no matter what the challenge. The first words out of his mouth were, “Not a problem, we’ll get it done”.

The Ministry received several requests from residents that ran low on tank water. So the Quarry team, led by Mr. Abayomi Carmichael, quickly responded by delivering several truckloads of water.

Mr. Speaker, securing Personal Protective Equipment, or PPEs as it is more commonly known, remains an issue globally. However, our Purchasing and Finance team worked with a local company to secure face masks of surgical quality from an overseas vendor. As such, the Ministry liaised with the Ministry of Health – with the end result being a joint order for PPEs being made. From this order, the Ministry received several boxes of face masks on Monday of this week and expect a few more shipments over the next week or so.

Mr. Speaker, the Bermuda Housing Corporation (the BHC) instituted enhanced 24 hour security at all the rooming houses during shelter in place. The BHC also issued face masks to their clients to adhere to protocols, provided transportation for those in need to go grocery shopping. In addition, while preparing contingency plans in the event quarantine was needed. Emergency accommodations were prepared should they be needed. The BHC also provided administrative assistance to Dr. Carika Weldon at the Southside Lab.

The Hustle Truck provided assistance where need.

The Bermuda Land Development Company provided:

1. Assistance in setting up the COVID-19 testing lab at Southside
2. Administrative support to Dr. Weldon
3. Assisted Belco with support for a blown transformer at Southside which disrupted the power supply at Southside that would have resulted in power outages.

Mr. Speaker, the Public Lands & Buildings team assisted with filling requests from Dr. Weldon for the sourcing of required lab items which included the fabricating of units in our Carpentry Shop to be used for storing sampling kits at the drive through testing center at Southside. The Prospect Depot also assisted with fabricating the mobile hand sanitizer stands that are positioned at key entry points at government buildings.

The Public Lands & Buildings team also:

- Provided internal improvements for the refit of a Government owned residential property used for quarantine by the Ministry of National Security.
- Set up a new lease for the Fort Knox Building at Southside for the new Warehouse facility for Covid-19 stores.
- Worked with BHB/Ministry of Health and donated materials and equipment for the setup of the new stores.
- Worked with the Department of Workforce Development with facility set up for the Covid-19 Unemployment Benefit Programme.

Mr. Speaker, with the Shelter in Place eventually coming to an end, it was important that the Government be ready for what this would look like. To that end, our team was tasked with drafting the Government Reopening Protocols. A special thanks to Mr. Derrick Simmons and Ms. Zoey Roberts in the Ministry who worked alongside the Department of Health team to produce these protocols. Highlights from this document speak to the:

1. Taking of Body Temperature before entering a government building;
2. Wearing of Face Masks before entering a government building;
3. Use of Hand Sanitizer before entering a government building;

4. Specific use of elevators depending on the building (one or two riders at any given time);
5. Use of stairs where possible to reduce the risk of spread and social distancing while in the workplace; and,
6. Social Distancing while in the workplace.

There are also markings (6ft apart) on the ground outside each government building for customer's convenience to adhere to the new protocols.

Some services that were closed are now open such as the Tynes Bay Drop Off, the Airport Dump Facility and the Marsh Folly Composting site. I would like to thank Mr. Clarkston Trott and Mr. Nasir Wade, the respective team leaders of Marsh Folly and Tynes Bay for their oversight and support during this Shelter in Place.

Mr. Speaker, the Finance team in the Ministry were equally busy during this time. They were responsible for:

1. Managing the government's vehicles to enable other Departments to achieve their mandate
2. Procure key supplies such as masks, as well as continued services for regular goods and services including fuel supply
3. On boarding, termination and other transitions of key members of staff.
4. Visits to our communications towers to ensure they were working and under no threat during the shelter in place

I would like to specifically thank Ministry Controller, Ms. Joanne Smith who was in the office daily assisting the teams to carry out their duties.

Mr. Speaker, the Land Title Registry team worked remotely for the most part but were still able to:

1. Provide a search facility to stakeholders on the information we hold electronically going back to the year 2000.
2. Complete 160 land title registration applications
3. Continue work on creating registers for the 58,000 scanned deeds registry documents.

Mr. Speaker, the WEDCo office continued to operate normally throughout the Shelter in Place by ensuring:

1. WEDCo's infrastructure, water and sewage operated 24/7[and,
2. Provided emergency repairs when and where necessary.

Mr. Speaker, the Land Valuation Department activities during this Shelter in Place included the ongoing work with the 2020 Revaluation project.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank all the members of the Public Works team who stepped up to the plate and did what was necessary for us to do our part during this time of crisis for our country. Many demonstrated what will become the new normal – those who are willing to step outside their comfort zone and do what is necessary to get the job done – will have the greatest success.

Thank you, **Mr. Speaker**.