



GOVERNMENT OF BERMUDA  
**Department of Communications**

18 May 2020

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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **18 May COVID-19 Update**

Good afternoon.

The gradual return of activity on our streets and the efforts of hardworking men and women in business to adapt to a rapidly changing model of customer service should have been seen by everyone. Slowly, there is growing economic activity in Bermuda and some people have been able to return to work. As we go about our daily lives, the same precautions must apply and we know what they are: frequent and proper hand washing; physical distancing and the proper wearing of masks. The ability of more of our families, friends and neighbours to return to work and to earn the living that provides for their families depends on our collective efforts to reduce the spread of this virus which if not done, can infect our most vulnerable and overwhelming our healthcare system.

Last week I signalled that Cabinet would meet on the weekend to discuss Bermuda's move into Phase 2 of our multi-phased plan for reopening. Yesterday ministers considered input from our caucus colleagues, the latest public health guidance and weighed the benefits and risks of moving into this next phase. Your concern is our concern. The transition must be measured, emphasize safety of our people, and return as many people to work as safely as possible. We believe what we have determined achieves that goal, and that it is needed. It is indeed time to move Bermuda into Phase 2.

With effect from Thursday, May 21, these are the changes that you can expect:

- Retail stores will be open for in-store customers, and they will be occupied by 20% of the buildings approved maximum fire occupancy inside at any one time, and will follow the same alphabetical shopping days in place for grocery stores and gas stations;
- Beauty salons and barbers will open under strict public health requirements which the Minister of Health will expand on;

- Restaurants, both standalone, and restaurants in hotels will be able to open for outdoor dining only;
- Licensed bars with outdoor facilities will be permitted to open on the same criteria as restaurants. To ensure the safety of both workers and patrons, restaurants, and those licensed bars slated to open in this phase will only be permitted to do so with the approval of the Ministry of Health. The Environmental Health team will work with restaurant owners, and operators and bar proprietors who have outdoor facilities already to ensure that they are able to meet the strict standards required to begin serving patrons again. This means, if you do not have the requisite permissions, it will still be unlawful for you to open on Thursday.
- Outdoor weddings and funerals will be permitted, with a maximum of 20 persons outdoors in attendance, subject to the proper wearing of masks and appropriate physical distancing. These two services are the only times where more than ten persons can be gathered. Apart from that, the restriction for gatherings of ten in public and or private remains.
- Requirements for those boating to be from the same household, will be removed. But still, only a maximum of ten persons will be allowed on any boat, subject to appropriate physical distances. That means you cannot have ten persons on a 20 foot Boston Wailer. You must be responsible.
- Following consultation with the Bermuda Pediatric Association, playgrounds will be open and licensed daycare centers can apply to the Minister of Health to again, open their doors for childcare. This is especially important for our essential service workers.
- The use of outdoor gym equipment, in our public parks, which was prohibited will now be allowed. However, anyone using this equipment should sanitize this equipment, prior to public use.
- Remote working and working from home will still be required, were reasonably practical.
- All businesses permitted to operate will operate between 7am and 9pm, as the 10pm to 6am curfew will remain in effect.

The reopening of these services will mean an increased need for enforcement and compliance. We are focused on the health and security of people at all times, and this includes service providers as well as customers. The Bermuda Police Service and the Royal Bermuda Regiment will be checking for adherence to public health standards regularly.

The team at Environmental Health will provide training to these officers to assist them in monitoring physical distancing and public health standard compliance. It is our intention that these changes will be enforced into next month, and therefore on Friday I will table the revised regulations in the House of Assembly and invite the House and thereafter the Senate to approve their extension through to June 30. This extension to June 30 does not mean that there will be no more changes over the next six weeks, but it is required as the current regulations expire at the end of May. Collectively, if we do our part, we can advance to future phases, allowing more persons to return to work within the next few weeks.

With the expansion of services available in Phase 2, there will be parents reporting back to work and will need to have continued educational support for their children who attend our public schools. The Department of Education is organizing an educational support programme for children of parents who

aren't able to return to work during Phase 2. Parents who may be returning to work from Thursday should send information to the principal of the school that their children attend.

Please provide the names of your children and their grade level, and please submit this information, no later than Wednesday, May 20. This information is critical, so that the department can know in advance the number of children that they should plan for. The educational support programme will focus on students continuing their learnings, but in a different venue, other than home. The programme will be administered as a supervised controlled environment. To be absolutely clear, the programme will service the children of those parents who must physically return to work, resulting from changes in the regulations. The programme at this point will not be equipped to accept children with special needs.

Now, the Minister of Health will present today's COVID-19 results and give more details regarding this move to Phase 2, Minister of Health.

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH READS HER REMARKS.

Thank you very much Minister of Health. Now we will have an update from the Minister of National Security who will give an overview of the policing plan for Phase 2 and also talk about the third sector support and donations received. Minister.

THE MINISTER OF NATIONAL SECURITY READS HIS REMARKS.

Thank you very much Minister.

Before I go to questions, I think it is important for us to collectively take stock of where we are and where we are going. The success of the country isn't my success or the Cabinet's success. It is the success of all of us and we should collectively be proud in our efforts.

As a country, to date:

- We have managed to successfully contained the virus on our shores and we've never moved to wide spread "Community Transmission". This is due to not only our decisive action as a Government, but the continued cooperation of all of you.
- With the support of the Ministry of Health and the aid of young Bermudian Dr. Carika Weldon, numerous volunteers and local community physicians, we created a government testing lab that enabled the island's testing capacity to expand dramatically with Bermuda among the leaders in the world for per capita testing.
- We ensured that widespread testing is conducted at no cost to people being tested.
- We quickly identified facilities that could be used to quarantine arriving passengers for two weeks and then arranged for all to be tested prior to being released to their homes. This policy prevented further spread of the virus and is one of the reasons why we didn't move to community transmission.

- While the hospitalization rate is falling, the Ministry of Health and the Bermuda Hospitals Board have successfully added 48 additional beds to our stock of hospital beds to enhance the hospital's ability to care for patients with COVID-19 if needed; and
- Through public and private sector efforts we've expanded the number of ventilators available at the hospital with other measures to improve the ability of our hospital to respond to any future outbreak.
- We provided new and unprecedented support for our people economically displaced by COVID-19 with over \$20 million paid out in support to those who were unable to work, and over \$12 million being made available to small and medium sized businesses.
- We've worked together as a community to support our most vulnerable members of our society. The third sector, churches, community groups and citizens ensure that our seniors, vulnerable, and our homeless population were supported during this time; and
- We set aside petty political bickering and worked together across the political, philosophical and ideological chasm that so often holds back our island's progress.

We have done well as a country. I am grateful to everyone within the Government, the Legislature, the community, the unions, private sector and third sector who have helped to get Bermuda to where we are today.

Though we have done well, we have not been perfect and there are things we could have handled differently. We concede that we could have:

- moved faster to test all in our seniors' homes; and
- been quicker to provide payment of unemployment benefits to those who qualified but didn't get them in a timely manner.

However, despite those setbacks – as a country we have done well and we all should be proud.

We have adjusted quickly to changing circumstances, moved swiftly to correct missteps and followed examples set by countries that are successfully managing COVID-19. We are grateful and humbled by the support, trust and gratitude we have received from the community and for everyone's patience as we continue to work together to overcome this virus.

From here, as we get ready to move into a new phase, we must remain vigilant and continue to push forward with solutions that protect the health and safety of our community. At the same time, we must put our people back to work safely. With the right tools and with your cooperation we can have the courage to give our people the freedom to once again earn a living and provide for their families.

We are in a position today to give Bermudians more choices and more freedom. But with more choices and more freedom comes greater responsibility. We cannot become lax and move away from the work, which we are all doing to keep us safe; wearing masks, maintaining physical distancing, washing our hands, and making sure that we do not hug, kiss and embracing when we see persons while greeting. As

the Minister of Health said, these actions could cause another outbreak and can force us to go back to where we came from, where I'm sure none of us want to go.

We have not defeated this virus completely, but it is important to us as a country that we cannot let this virus defeat us. We have increased our capacity to take care of our citizens who may be covered afflicted with this virus. We have increased our capacity to test and detect, to trace and to isolate persons who may become infected with this virus, and collectively as a leader of this government, I have confidence that we can deal with what the future may bring. The truth is, however, that we must continue to be safe. We must continue to be kind, and we must continue to be patient. As more and more businesses open, we will see many changes in how we interact with each other at retail stores, restaurants, at our parks, and even at our beaches.

We must remember that everything we are experiencing is new and unusual, but it is necessary to make sure that we can get more of our people back to work, while making sure we keep our country safe.

The days ahead, and the economic challenges ahead will be tough. Our economy has been weaker, and there may be businesses that will not survive in the current economic climate. Our people and our institutions will feel economic pain. What this experience has taught us is that fear, cannot stop us differences of opinion will not paralyze us, but kindness and compassion for each other, will take us further and faster. The opportunity before all of us as your government and the opportunity before us, as a community, is this. Rebuilding our economy, less than the image of the past, while successful, it did not always include everyone.

We must build a new economy, one that is based on equity, genuine cooperation and genuine collaboration for the benefit of all. On Thursday, more of us will be able to return back to work, and that is a start.

But we still have a long way to go. We've come far together. Let us continue to work together for each other, and remain focused on the goal at hand. And I have no doubt if we continue to add to the upcoming months, as we have in the past two, Bermuda's success will be that we have successfully managed this virus, while getting our people back to work.