

COVID19 Update
REMARKS BY THE PREMIER
The Hon David Burt, JP, MP
25 May 2020

Good afternoon Bermuda!

While Phase two is progressing, it is important that each of us are doing our part, following the rules and holding each other accountable. I am troubled to see people not wearing masks while they are not engaging in physical distancing, and businesses not adhering to the necessary protocols.

Getting used to what can and cannot be done during Phase 2 will take some getting used to, and mistakes will be made – but quite simply there is no excuse for some of the reckless behavior I have seen. There are examples of countries that began to give their people the opportunity to return to work, people stopped acting responsibly and Covid-19 cases increased.

Bermuda will NOT be one of those countries. To that end, I have directed the Minister of National Security & the Minister of Health that we will be adopting a zero tolerance approach with regards to enforcement of the rules for phase 2. Businesses that are not following the guidelines, will be closed. It's that simple!

Most of us are doing the right thing. Most of us are following the rules and most of us are doing their part towards moving us closer to a day when more of our people can safely return to work and provide for their families.

But we can do better, as it only takes 1 asymptomatic super-spreader to set us back. That person could be your friend who had a party where it was too hot to wear a mask. But you were signing and having a good time and now you are at risk. Our collective job is to minimize transmission – and that means that we must all have our guard up!

Before we continue with updates from the Minister of Health and the Minister of National Security, I would like to address a matter that has arisen over the weekend on social media and across the community. The reopening of the airport and our borders to travelers.

Let me be particularly clear on this matter. The airport reopening is one that we are watching very carefully and preparing for very carefully. The return of regularly scheduled commercial traffic is currently listed in Phase Four of our plan to safely bring our country to a place where people can return to work and provide for their families.

While we are exploring measures involving a combination of quarantine, testing, contact tracing technology and enforcement that will enable us to develop a plan around what traveling to Bermuda will look like, we are not there yet. We will not be opening the airport to regular scheduled air travel until we are absolutely certain that we not only have means to protect our community, but that we are absolutely safe to do so.

Now, I will ask the Minister of Health to provide an update on COVID-19 and the work of the Ministry of Health

MINISTER OF HEALTH SPEAKS

Thank you Minister.

Obedying the rules and enforcing those rules are key to us moving forward and out of Phase 2. The Ministry of National Security, the Bermuda Police Service and the Royal Bermuda Regiment were on our streets and out in the community this weekend doing their part to enforce the law and protect our community. The Minister of National Security will now provide an update on the work of his team over the weekend.

MINISTER OF NATIONAL SECURITY SPEAKS

Thank you Minister

As the world is changing, we will have to change as well. Beyond physical distancing and wearing masks, business models will change, and the approach to providing goods and services to people will have to change as well. On top of that, each of us will need to invest in ourselves, developing new skills and acquiring new knowledge to enhance our ability to compete for jobs and opportunities.

The world saw a steady and relentless move away from brick and mortar businesses before COVID-19 and a steady march away from unskilled and low skilled labour towards technology. This pandemic has accelerated the need for businesses to be responsive, customer driven and innovative and accelerated the need for each of us to personally and professionally evolve.

Those who are slow to change, those who are fearful of change, those too arrogant to accept that they need to change, will find the coming months and years challenging.

Change can be scary.

Change can mean being forced out of your comfort zone.

But change can also mean new opportunities.

Opportunities for new businesses to start. Opportunities for individuals to create services that may never have existed before.

Opportunities to reinvent yourself and enter new careers or advance in your current one.

Take for example Mr. Nicko Albouy, operator of Advanced Air, who today announced a new dry-steam cleaning service – to aid businesses disinfecting their establishments.

Or Mr. Quincy Jones of Quality Air, who is installing ultraviolet light filters for air conditioning systems that will kill pathogens in the air.

This is what Bermuda needs more of, entrepreneurs who will assist the country in ensuring that we safely navigate the future.

If you have a business idea and need help getting it started please contact the Bermuda Economic Development Corporation. This Government and its agencies will support your idea if it is a good one.

As a government, we know that we are not exempt from change. Whether it is our MPs and Ministers leading from the front by taking a pay cut or innovating government making it more responsive, more effective and more efficient.

We know we have to change. We know we have to evolve and with the help of our public officers we have become more responsive, more effective and more efficient in the delivery of services to our community.

As we recognise that we cannot and should not shape reform and change alone, we have reached out to you for ideas and feedback and you have responded.

We have seen the suggestions pouring in via the online government forum...ideas that are inclusive....ideas that change the status quo for the better, and ideas that will grow and evolve Bermuda for the better are beginning to capture the imagination of our people. You still have time to submit your idea – please visit forum.gov.bm and share your thoughts.

As we have effectively managed the health crisis caused by COVID-19 we must be equally as effective in managing the economic crisis facing our community. Alongside the Economic Advisory Committee established by the Finance Minister, my focus as leader of our country has shifted towards the reinvention of our economy.

As we have broken down obstacles to small businesses obtaining capital and we have opened up Government contracts so that more businesses owned by black Bermudians, women and others who have traditionally been excluded, we will continue the work to create new opportunities for Bermudian entrepreneurs and business owners.

As we have given more Bermudians access to higher education through increased investment in educational grants and scholarships - will we give more Bermudians more opportunities to obtain the skills, certification or degrees needed to not only become more competitive in our economy but to be leaders in our economy.

This new spirit that we are seeing in our country; optimism, creativity and innovation has been matched by a new spirit of camaraderie, a new spirit of national unity, and behaviour that embodies the old adage of being our brother and sisters' keeper. Bermuda we have done well and we have done well together.

Let us continue to support each other, encourage each other, lean on each other and uplift each other as one people with shared goals; keeping our community safe, getting our community safely back to work and dealing with each other kindly, compassionately and generously.