



GOVERNMENT OF BERMUDA
Department of Communications

1 June 2020

CONTACT

Aderonke Bademosi Wilson

Director

Phone: (441) 505 1868

Email: abwilson@gov.bm

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

1 June COVID-19 Update

Good evening Bermuda. I hope that all persons had a safe and happy Bermuda Day holiday. Today, I am joined by the Minister of Health, The Minister of National Security and the Minister of Tourism and Transport.

I know this press conference is focused on our continuing work related to COVID-19, but please permit me to offer these words about the news that has dominated global headlines over the past few days and has taken the coronavirus from the headlines.

In the midst of the global fight against COVID-19, the world has been reminded of an enemy that seems harder to defeat and a battle that has been waged over centuries. Systemic and institutionalized racism is a stain on modern society. We profess greatness as a generation when we celebrate conquering space or seeing leaders of colour in positions of authority. Both, however, ring hollow when neither accomplishment has succeeded in tearing down the system that makes what happened in Minneapolis a week ago possible in 2020.

A black man was murdered by a police officer in the United States. Far from being a surprise, it is the imagery that has provoked international outrage.

George Floyd lost his life to this system and his is only one name that we know. There are countless others in that country and many others who suffer similar fates daily. Black and brown people are under siege every day by a system designed to ensure that they start with a presumption of guilt and spend the rest of their lives trying, often in vain, to be respected.

Here at home, our unity has kept us focused and in an excellent position to be an example to the world of how to deal with COVID-19 and yet there remains an undercurrent of racial tension that comes to the fore the moment we assert the rights of our people in their own land.

How can we pretend to be outraged by systemic racism everywhere else except here at home? Our future depends on our ability to confront and deal with our past.

We must never forget or diminish the people who live amongst us who have experienced firsthand discriminatory laws, policies and practices stating where they should go, where they could live, what they could own, or what they could do and what they could aspire to achieve.

Too often Bermudians have been told in their own country, 'we can't address race right now, our clients don't feel comfortable talking about it.' 'We can't mandate our membership dismantle racism in their organizations. We can only guide them.'

Then we hear statements like, 'Oh, we can't address racism right now, we have to leave that for our children so they can fix it in twenty or thirty years.'

Addressing the issue of systemic and institutionalized racism is holding us back from reaching our full potential. It is causing capable, qualified Bermudians to be excluded from opportunities in their own country. Time and time again, research shows that when you have a diverse workforce, profits and profitability increases.

As a father of two young children, I always think about how this is going to impact them. And the conversations in my household this week, with a wife who is American, reminded us of the dangers of which persons of colour continue to face. From Trayvon Martin to Eric Garner to Michael Brown to Sarah Reed to D-Andre Campbell and yes, George Floyd.

I think, in 10, 20, or 30 years, that could be my child. They could be doing nothing wrong and yet they could still die by state-sponsored murder.

My Bermudian family, it is important to remember this is not just an American issue. This is a global issue. And, that's why you're seeing protests all around the world.

We must also not forget our recent history. 2 December 2016, still weighs heavily on my heart and my soul. I need not remind people of the story, because the images are forever imprinted in our collective consciousness as a people.

As many of you know, but some might not - by order of our Constitution, the Government of Bermuda does not have operational control over the Bermuda Police Service. That power is vested in the Governor as Bermuda still is a colony of the United Kingdom. However, this government has taken several steps to build a more equitable society. Bermuda's Attorney-General, the Hon. Kathy-Lynn Simmons will be doing a Facebook live discussion this weekend to expound on some of those initiatives which have already been approved by the Cabinet, and also to give her thoughts on legal reform in Bermuda.

It is ironic that on a weekend when the world has been forced to confront these complex and challenging issues, we lost one of Bermuda's greatest advocates for confronting racism; Dr. Eva Hodgson. She believed and taught that Bermuda's cultural affinity towards sweeping the issue of race under the carpet was unhealthy and creating a festering cancer, rotting away at the core of our island.

She believed that if we did not confront the issue of race, we would never be able to overcome the inherent destructiveness of racism and discrimination and she fought tirelessly to get us all to understand that racism doesn't go away if you just don't talk about it. She pushed and challenged all of us to do better on race in spite of the abuse, discrimination and disrespect she was subjected to over the years.

Dr. Hodgson reminded us that most people don't want to talk about race, but, that we must talk about race. We must know our history and know that there is pain and hurt in that history and there was a struggle that got us to where we are today.

Dr. Eva Hodgson is the very embodiment of a freedom fighter, and as we mourn her passing, we must commit to seeing her work continue. No more second-class citizens; only first class men and women.

Now I will ask the Minister of Health to give an update to the country on the latest with the novel coronavirus – and the new health indicators that the Government of Bermuda will be publishing today. Minister.

MINISTER OF HEALTH SPEAKS

Thank you Minister.

Bermuda has emerged from a three day holiday weekend starting with an online Bermuda Day virtual parade and the showing of past parades on CITV, a celebration of our heritage, our culture and all things Bermudian.

I am truly grateful to the Ministry of Labour, Community Affairs and Sports for all they did to ensure that this important holiday was celebrated in spite of the restrictions imposed by the coronavirus pandemic.

Yet as many of us celebrated Bermuda Day, safely and calmly, unfortunately there were others who did not. The Minister of National Security will provide an update on the incidents over the weekend and on the work being conducted by the Ministry of National Security as they continue to make sure that the rules are enforced during this pandemic.

Minister Caines.

MINISTER OF NATIONAL SECURITY SPEAKS

Thank you Minister of National Security. Thank you to you and your ministry for their continued work, energy and effort.

There was one correction to the statement from the Minister of Health that she's asked me to clarify for every person. Inside of her remarks she had indicated that 89 persons had recovered. Today, actually the number is 112 persons to date have recovered so that number is not 89. That number is 112 out of the 141 cases have fully recovered.

As we move through this phased reopening of Bermuda and as more and more of our people are able to safely return to work, the need for safe, reliable public transportation becomes more critical.

I am grateful to the Ministry of Tourism and Transport and the workers at the Department of Public Transportation for helping to get us to a place where our buses and ferries are operating while using physical distancing and providing our people with the means to get to and from work. Now we will have an update from the Minister of Tourism & Transport on public transportation and other matters.

MINISTER OF TOURISM AND TRANSPORT SPEAKS

Thank you Minister DeSilva.

Despite all we have faced, Bermuda is moving steadily and safely towards enabling more and more of our people to get back to work safely so that they can provide for their families.

We continue to test extensively, monitor our progress against any type of community spread and continue to be vigilant, prepared for the worst, while working hard to ensure the worst does not happen.

As I said in the House of Assembly the last that we met, I as Premier, am not willing to write off this year's tourism season like many persons have. My aim is that Bermuda will carefully reopen its borders and welcome tourists to our shores this summer. We are increasing our testing capacity, we have invested in technology, and we will have the means to safely reopen the airport and allow visitors to come to our shores, secure in the knowledge that we can manage this virus and continue to protect our community. This is essential as there are many in Bermuda who depend on tourism for their livelihoods.

When we do reopen, Bermuda will be a changed place, our economy will be weaker, some jobs in tourism will be lost, perhaps forever, and some more businesses will close their doors. As businesses close, others will open to meet the demands of the new and transformed economy. Each of us will have to be adaptable and ready to cooperate and compete in the new economic environment.

As reported by Minister Caines last week, a number of work permit holders will be returning home. This is an opportunity for Bermudians to step forward and fill those jobs, even if it means changing careers, or using that job as a stepping stone to getting back into your field of choice to provide for your families. The more Bermudians we have working, the more Bermudians we have providing for their families, the better it will be for the entire country.

As has been said, we are all in this together and collectively we will only survive, recover and return to prosperity, if the community remains flexible, nimble and perhaps most importantly, compassionate towards each other.

Right now we are collectively building a new future and each of us has a role to play in shaping that future together.

I have been overjoyed with the amount of persons who continue to send in the ideas on forum.gov.bm. I remain pleased that people will share their ideas with us. And please know that when I say that the government is rebuilding together, the ideas are coming from all the

people in this country, and there is no idea that we will not consider. With that, I'm happy to take any questions that members of the media, may have.

We are in this together and we will only survive, recover and return to prosperity if we remain flexible, nimble and perhaps most importantly, compassionate towards each other. Right now we are collectively building a new future - and each of us has a role to play in shaping that future – together.

Thank you.

Bermuda Broadcasting Company Questions

Question: Last week Government proposed mandatory waiving of social Insurance and pension contributions to June 2021 and said persons could make voluntary contributions if they wished. When is this supposed to start and how will voluntary contributions be handled? ie Will the employee have to contact Social insurance department and/or their insurance company to make payments, or will the employer be able to make the deductions and forward them on behalf of the employee?

Answer: To provide further support to employers and employees during this unprecedented period it is proposed to amend the Contributory Pension Act 1970 to allow for a suspension of employee and employer contributions into the Contributory Pension Fund, for period from 1 July, 2020 to 30 June, 2021.

This is a temporary measure that will provide temporary relief to employers and provide additional income to employees. Additional income to employees provides stimulus for our economy. This measure is voluntary and employers and employees can still contribute to their funds if they wish.