



GOVERNMENT OF BERMUDA
Department of Communications

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

3 April COVID-19 Update from Premier David Burt

Good afternoon everybody.

This afternoon I am joined by His Excellency the Governor, the Minister of Health, the Minister of National Security and Dr. Cherita Rayner from the Mid Atlantic Wellness Institute.

I will give a brief update and turn it over to the Minister of Health to discuss testing items, then His Excellency the Governor will speak on the shipment from the United Kingdom and the flight that is coming in. The Minister of National Security will then provide an update on the operational matters governing the Shelter in Place order and then finally, Dr. Rayner will discuss matters dealing with our health and well-being during this time.

I would like to preface my COVID-19 update today with some good news. News that reassures us that in the midst of this crisis there are many people in private businesses in our community demonstrating kindness and compassion. They are doing things to better our lives.

I would like to publicly acknowledge the kindness and compassion of one of our good corporate citizens. Earlier today I received an email from Ms. Judy Gonsalves, Division President of Chubb Bermuda. Chubb has generously supported the needs of front line essential healthcare services by funding the monthly rental costs for Twizzys, to help essential personnel who do not have transportation to get to and from work. They have donated \$52,000 to Bermuda Hospitals Charitable Trust foundation to assist with additional equipment, including ventilators.

I would also like to recognize the generosity of PwC Bermuda, who earlier this week made a donation of \$50,000 to the Bermuda Community Foundation Emergency Fund, and have committed to providing surplus laptops to the Bermuda public school system.

Since the start of COVID-19 pandemic. Bermudians have seen their lives, disrupted and changed in ways that we could have never imagined just a few months ago. Social distancing, a concept many of us have never heard before, has now become the new norm in social interaction and many of us have seen jobs and or incomes disappear.

Today, I can confirm that there are no new confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Bermuda to report at this time. As there are no additional test results received by the Ministry of Health. There are 33 outstanding tests. Out of the 35 confirmed cases, 14 persons have fully recovered and four remain hospitalized in stable condition.

At this time the Minister of Health will provide further details on the testing that is taking place, and additional supplies, which we're expecting to bolster our testing regime.

Minister of Health's comments.

Thank you, Minister of Health, and I would like to echo the comments from the Minister of Health with thanks to the team inside of the Ministry of Health for all of their incredible dedicated work.

Members of the media should note that you've been used to these press conferences, which are taking place, but because the Ministry of Health has been doing so much work on going to make sure that our next press conference will not be until Monday. So while we actually start the Shelter in Place there might be a little bit of rest and relaxation for the very, I would say overwork team at the Ministry of Health.

They're busy preparing reports for me on a daily basis to keep us updated, but I think that we all need to make sure we have some downtime to recollect ourselves as the Minister always reminds us that this is a marathon and not a sprint, and we will be dealing with this viral outbreak for some time.

Government House and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office have been working with the Government of Bermuda's London Office and the Ministry of Health to bring back stranded Bermudian students and residents in addition to procuring additional supplies.

His Excellency the Governor will now speak more about this flight which is confirmed for Monday, and the support from Public Health England.

HE Governor's comments.

Thank you, Governor.

The Ministry of National Security, our Bermuda Police Service and the Royal Bermuda Regiment have played a critical role in helping our community to preserve law and order throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. I now call upon the Minister of National Security to provide an update on the implementation of the Shelter in Place order.

Minister of National Security's comments.

Thank you, Minister Caines and I'd like to extend thanks of Bermuda to Minister Caines, his team at National Security, and the COVID-19 EMO, the Bermuda Police Service and the Royal Bermuda Regiment for their service during this difficult time.

Many of our fellow Bermudians were already facing tremendous stress before the COVID-19 pandemic. We recognize that the past few weeks of uncertainty, reduced incomes and the inability to move freely around our island during the evenings, have added to that stress.

The 14 days of Shelter in Place will be difficult for many of us. Support has been put in place to help families during this difficult time. And at this time I've asked for Dr. Cherita Rayner of the Mid Atlantic Wellness Institute to speak on how we can each cope with a shelter in place requirements and the resources available to assist, if at any point, any of us need additional help and support.

Dr. Basden's comments.

Thank you, Dr. Raynor.

Now I'm going to give a few closing remarks while actually covering topics of an emerging homemade mask industry in Bermuda. The flights repatriation flights for persons from the United States, and closing comments.

Just as a note on an update from the Ministry of Public Works that the public drop off at Tynes Bay they will close for two weeks beginning at 7pm tonight. Remember the objective of Shelter in Place is for people to stay at home as much as possible. Regular trash collection will continue. but the objective is for persons to stay at home.

Two weeks ago, Mrs. Sheila Tyrrell called me to suggest that we could help ourselves by producing our own face masks. As a sewer herself, she started this initiative with the intention to provide masks for her family and friends, and later decided to get the Government on board with the idea of having persons, making masks locally.

The idea is that this is an open community initiative to get people to be creative and make some really cool masks for their immediate household and friends, and possibly others. A team comprising Miss Tyrrell, her daughter Keisha and two Ministry officers, Miss Georgette Trott and Miss Trina Bean had been leading this initiative.

The message is that we are all in this together and to encourage people of Bermuda to make masks for their friends and families. The masks can be made from items already at home, such as old bedsheets pillowcases, t-shirts, as long as they are 100% cotton.

There are some places where they require a mask to be worn by persons outdoors and though the science is emerging in what we would encourage persons if they do have masks and if they are going out shopping during the week that they should look to wear them. To be clear, masks will not protect you from contracting or receiving the coronavirus. What mask will do is if you happened to be an asymptomatic spreader, will prevent you from possibly spreading those to other persons. And I think that's an important distinction. Wearing a mask does not mean that you should not wash your hands, should not means you should not use hand sanitizer. You should do it in addition to all the other things of which you are currently doing.

There are how to videos online on how to make the mask and we are going to post one to the website coronavirus.gov.bm, should budding seamstresses wish to try their hand at making them.

Also, while doing this research the team discovered that there is a thriving cottage industry in Bermuda already, where several seamstresses have been making and selling masks for weeks. We have some examples on display this afternoon, and you will readily see that there are some very creative and colorful examples.

So far, we have identified four entrepreneurs who have sold hundreds of masks already, and we are sure that there are others who are doing so. We are happy to provide their contact details for those who may not have access to a sewing machine or a family member who knows how to use one and those will be posted to the government website. They are Miss Gay Simmons, Qui-Ja Fabrics, Miss Carla Souza at Revive Boutiik, Dr. Dena Phillips and Miss Gina Flood at All Things Sassy. Yes, we are entering into a period of Shelter in Place, but I'll be speaking to the Minister of National Security to figure out how we can make sure that we can get an exemption so that persons may be able to provide these masks at supermarkets, during our Shelter in Place.

The Ministry of Tourism and Transport advises that Travel Edge, working with the Bermuda Government, the US Consulate and Delta Airlines has arranged for Bermuda residents and US Nationals to be flown home. At 10am on Tuesday, 7 April, a charter flight will depart from Fort Lauderdale, Florida, Hollywood International Airport bound for Bermuda. The flight is then scheduled to depart Bermuda for Atlanta, Georgia, later that day. There will be additional information released this evening from the Government on this charter flight, however tickets are currently priced at \$1,000.

Bermuda residence in the United States who ordinarily reside on the island and US Nationals in Bermuda, who wish to return home are advised to take advantage of this opportunity and book this flight directly with Travel Edge. Please contact Pat Trott at

pat.trott@traveledge.bm or call 299-8717, and as noted there will be a release from the Government that is going to go out this evening, which provides that particular information.

As I stated previously, there is not any regular scheduled commercial air traffic, out of the airport during the month of April. So if you're a US citizen who would like to return to the United States, or if you are a Bermuda resident who is looking to return home, then please take advantage of this flight.

As a reminder, you will be required to be in a government quarantine facility for 14 days upon arrival. And we have been informed that Delta Airlines will not let anyone board the flight who is exhibiting symptoms of the coronavirus.

Before I end, I want to encourage everyone that for accurate and reliable information on COVID-19, please use the government communications channels as your source. In addition to the website coronavirus.gov.bm. The official social media channels, CITV, either on YouTube or on your televisions at home. The Government of Bermuda has created a WhatsApp broadcast system, where you can send a message to subscribe for information to be delivered directly to your phone. To sign up, all you need to do is WhatsApp 'hi', to 504-6045, and add that number to your contacts list. Since this communications channel has launched 1,500 Bermudians have subscribed and are receiving direct updates from the Government of Bermuda.

In closing, as a government, we have approached this pandemic not from a place of wishful thinking, nor from a place of fear. We have recognized the cold hard facts of this situation, and with the advice to our medical professionals have treated this as a war for the very survival of our country.

Yet through it all, we have all surveyed hopeful that through decisive and reasoned action, we will emerge from this global pandemic even stronger and more resilient as a people. Tomorrow, life will change dramatically for Bermuda. The declaration of a state of emergency, the first in over 40 years, and the institution of a Shelter in Place order for 14 days from 6am, this Saturday represents a new necessary level in our collective war protect the health and safety of our community.

Each of us now has a choice. We can take these days and be selfish, disregard the laws in place to protect all of us, and place yourself and others in jeopardy. We can take these 14 days to engage in unhealthy behavior or binge watch Netflix. If we make any of these choices, we will still emerge no better, no stronger, and no wiser than when we began the Shelter in Place Order.

Instead, let us choose to do what we can and all support each other to use this time in a positive and productive manner. The world post COVID-19 will be unlike anything we have seen. Some economists are warning that the global economy will be as bad, if not worse, than experienced during the height of the Great Recession.

Some of the jobs that had been lost, may be lost forever. Some of the skills that have provided an income for ourselves and others may cease to exist. I encourage each of you to use these 14 days wisely. If all of us see this as an opportunity to learn, to grow, to evolve and to strengthen, we'll be better positioned as a people for a post COVID-19 world. If all you've gained from this time is weight, that will be unfortunate.

Take advantage of the internet's resources, learn a new skill, train, work, grow. Yet growth does not have to be limited to enhancing skills. It can be used to deepen your spirituality, strengthen ties with loved ones, or do those chores around the house that you haven't had a time to tackle, or simply use this as a time to refresh, renew and rejuvenate for the days to come.

Someone recently said to me that I had become your Premier in one of the most difficult times in our country's history, and they remarked that they did not envy the burden that myself or our government has had to collectively bear. I can say that I have never been more humbled than I am today for the opportunity you have given me to serve. The days ahead may be uncertain. The future may seem darker than light, and the work to do seemingly impossible, but I know that I am not alone and none of us in this tiny island are alone.

Thank you. Be safe. Be well, be blessed. And let us all work together to ensure that Bermuda emerges from this a stronger, better, smarter, and positioned to set an example for the world.

Thank you.