

**REMARKS**  
**PREMIER DAVID BURT**  
**COVID-19 UPDATE**  
**23 MARCH 2020**

Good afternoon and thank you for coming.

I am joined today by the Minister of National Security, the Minister of Health, the Commissioner of Police and the acting Commanding Officer of the Royal Bermuda Regiment.

By now the additional social distancing measures I announced yesterday have come into effect and in addition to those activities previously suspended, retail stores, cinemas and bars are closed for a period of seven days and restaurants are limited to take out service only.

Whilst there are penalties in place for failing to observe this Order, my hope is that we will see 100% compliance. This is about saving lives and that is an effort in which we must all be united.

This initial seven day period of enhanced social distancing is to allow for us to assess where we are as we continue to ramp up our local testing regime.

As I indicated yesterday, the more we test, the more we know. I can advise the public that all 16 of the testing results received today by the Ministry of Health have now returned negative results for COVID-19. We will continue the aggressive testing regime and do all that we can to keep the public informed of this progress.

The knowledge we gain from testing allows public health officials to advise us on the considerations we must take into account when keeping Bermuda safe. This testing is vital, and Bermuda is ahead of the curve when it comes to the testing of our population.

Today, the Bermuda Police Service announced that in conjunction with the Royal Bermuda Regiment they will adopt a pro-active stance around the enforcement of

mandatory self-quarantine. We can see on the news just how important obeying self-quarantine is against the fight against COVID-19, and it is essential that every citizen in Bermuda does his or her part.

Those people who should be in quarantine put people's lives at risk by being out and about in the community. We ask for the patience and understanding of the motoring public but again, this is to save lives and to prevent our healthcare system from becoming overwhelmed.

Let me return for a moment to address the issue of business closures. The list of businesses ordered to close is available at [coronavirus.gov.bm](https://coronavirus.gov.bm) under the Official Gazette notices.

Retail stores ordered to close are permitted to deliver or arrange pick-up services. For all other businesses not ordered closed, we strongly advise the following::

- Where possible employees should work from home
- Customer facing operations should be reduced to the bare minimum;
- Non-essential work in the field or requiring close customer contact should be deferred;
- Where work continues, businesses must observe the revised social distancing guidelines, and for the safety of workers and customers, reduce the number of people in any space at any one time.

There is a full guidance for social distancing that will be issued following this press conference. This guidance will remain in effect for seven days, at which time, we will review and adjust as circumstances dictate.

And that social distancing guidance has 30 separate categories and so will address all of the various categories that members of the public may have a question on.

Regarding the issue of unemployment assistance, we recognize that there are large numbers of Bermudians who are now out of work due to the measures which we have had to take to contain the spread of COVID-19.

What I must state is that the Minister of Labour, Community Affairs and Sport, earlier announced that this benefit will be effective, and persons will be receiving, as I announced yesterday, up to 60% of their gross earnings, up to a maximum of \$500 per week. The persons that are eligible for this are persons who are not on Financial Assistance.

The Minister of Labour, Community Affairs and Sport, will be administering this programme through the Department of Workforce Development. I am hopeful that this relief, which will be funded by the Government of Bermuda, will provide temporary assistance while we work to make sure that our economy can return back to normal. However, the most important way that we can ensure our economy returns back to normal as quickly as possible is for persons to follow the rules.

Obey self-quarantine. Ensure that you are not putting yourselves in unnecessary risk, or the public at unnecessary risk. Not going out unless you have to, so that we can understand precisely the extent of any spread of COVID-19 in Bermuda through our very aggressive testing regime so that we can contain it and get things back to normal as quickly as possible.

I know that for many families having a loved one overseas and thus far unable to return increases the anxiety of this time. Following yesterday's decision by New York Air Traffic control and its impact on flights to Bermuda, I can advise that provisional agreement has been reached for the FAA to provide air traffic support tomorrow to support a WestJet flight from Toronto, we are looking to confirm that flight will take place and will have confirmation later today.

We are working to secure confirmation from Delta to see if they will operate the flight that was cancelled yesterday, but we do not have that confirmation as this time to report. Today's Cargo Jet service, which is bringing essential medical supplies to Bermuda, was not affected by these challenges and will continue to fly.

Unfortunately, we have had an issue today with trash collection. We are working through this with the Bermuda Industrial Union and the Ministry of Public Works. I am concerned that the result of this impasse would be counter-productive to all that we are trying to

achieve by causing more people to be out of their homes and in unnecessary contact with others just to dispose of their trash. My hope is that this impasse can be resolved in the best interest of all of us.

This is a difficult time and we all must do our part. None of the circumstances of which any of us are working under are currently ideal. Whether they be schools being closed, whether it be most Government services not functioning, whether it be the inconvenience of stores closing, and the temporary dislocation or unemployment. This is being done in the interest of protecting lives and I urge all of those who are involved in essential services to recognize the role we play to help our country be united in getting through this particular time of challenge.

This is a stressful time; a time of heightened anxiety around the unknown and in some cases contributed to by the stark images we see from other countries. My constant theme throughout has been and will continue to be one of unity. There is an opportunity to reconnect amidst these troubled times; to reconnect with some values that may be secondary to the busy lives that we lead. Values like, personal responsibility; putting the needs of the vulnerable ahead of our own; and taking decisions in the best interests of the majority and not a small minority.

The whole world is currently engaged in an exercise of self-examination; trying to determine how this unseen enemy could disrupt so many systems that we thought were invincible. There will be plenty of time to rehearse lessons learned from this pandemic but while we are in it, it is clear that the only thing that will get us through it is a unity of spirit a unity of purpose and that is the most effective way by which Bermuda will win this fight.

Thank you.