



## **PRESS STATEMENT**

**The Minister of Health**

**The Honourable Kim N. Wilson, JP, MP**

**Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> July 2020, 5.45pm**

**at Berkeley Institute**

Good Afternoon,

Today there were 363 test results received by the Ministry of Health; and two were positive for COVID-19. Both new cases were imported on the Delta flight on 15<sup>th</sup> July by returning residents.

It saddens me terribly to have to tell you that, unfortunately, one of the persons involved did not adhere to the required quarantine period and attended their workplace before receiving their arrival test results, which turned out to be positive. Consequently, the case management team is now contact tracing all the persons they were in touch with on island, in addition to the nearby passengers on the flight.

The advice for other passengers on the Delta flight 656 of 15<sup>th</sup> July is to proceed with extreme caution, follow the quarantine instructions you were given on arrival, monitor your symptoms, wear a mask at all times and keep 6 feet away from others. If you were sitting near one of the positive cases a public health officer will be in touch with you soon with instructions.

Bermuda now has 152 total confirmed positive cases. Their status is as follows:

- there are 6 active cases, who are
- all under active public health monitoring, and
- none is hospitalized or in critical care;
- a total of 137 have recovered, and
- the total deceased remains 9.

The average age of all of our confirmed positive cases is 60 and the age range of all of our positive cases is from 18 to 101 years.

Overall, 55% of all cases are Black, 41% are white and 4% are other or unknown.

The source of all local cases is as follows:

- 48 are Imported
- 85 are Local transmission, with known contact
- 18 are Local transmission with an unknown contact, and
- 1 are under investigation

Bermuda's country status remains "Sporadic Cases". The seven-day average of our real time reproduction number is below 1.

I now have a few updates to provide you with as it relates to arriving travellers...

As the volume of travellers increases our testing teams and capability is becoming increasingly stretched. Therefore we are reviewing the testing regime to make adjustments based on public health risk and testing capacity.

Incoming travellers are tested on arrival at their port of entry. They then have to comply with further tests on subsequent dates. One change we are implementing is that the day 3 test will be moved to day 4.

As such, persons who arrive on the BA flight on Friday will have their follow-up test on Monday. This will apply to all travellers, whether visitors or residents, except for residents who need to complete their quarantine; they will be allowed to test on day 3, which is Sunday, in order to complete their quarantine period on receipt of their negative result.

We hope this will have a two-fold benefit of encouraging residents to obtain a pre-departure test (although not required) and also make the testing schedule less arduous for our visitors.

Second, we are aware of the challenges for travellers obtaining test results within 5 days and so, will be extending the period permitted to 7 days very shortly. It will be reflected on the website when this goes into effect.

Lastly, we are gearing up to assist the quarantine process with the Aqua quarantine bracelets. Travellers without a pre-departure test – that is largely residents – have to quarantine until they get a second test result on Island (currently on their

3<sup>rd</sup> day). The intention is that they will be fitted with an aqua bracelet until they obtain a negative result.

In addition, persons who do not have a pre-departure test will be asked to undergo a saliva test on arrival in addition to the nasal swab in order to assist us in validating the saliva tests so that we can deploy them sooner. This applies to residents as ALL visitors must obtain a pre-departure test.

Additionally, the requirement to undergo a Day 7 test will change to Day 8. This is safe from a public health perspective and it will help ensure that testing sites are not swamped on certain days.

Residents who refuse all testing must quarantine for 14 days; and very shortly will do so with an Aqua bracelet.

Our goal is not to add layers of red tape and complexity to the lives of incoming travellers, but to protect us all from a COVID-19 outbreak. Our number 1 priority at all times is – and must be – the safety of our island and the protection of seniors and

other clinically vulnerable persons for whom COVID is a life-threatening risk.

Independent of today's new COVID cases, over the past few days, there have been several enquires made by companies from across various industries with regards to staff travelling overseas and then returning to work. The main question being: *When can they safely return to work?*

The answer to this depends on a number of factors. In particular, it depends on if your employee works in a high risk setting such as one with medically vulnerable individuals or institutionalized populations, such as a healthcare setting, for example...

If so, then those employees may want to consider avoiding non-essential travel. Of course, this is not always practical and, in those cases where workers have family overseas, an ability to travel and see loved ones could have a detrimental effect on that individual's mental health. In those cases, we have to ask ourselves *'What is the safest way for these individuals to return to work after travel?'*...

The gold standard is 14 days of quarantine with prescribed testing procedures to provide that extra layer of security. As a Manager, ask yourself, *Could this employee work from home during these 14 days?*

If they must return to work (with two consecutive negative test results), determine how they can minimize their contact with others as much as possible. Each employer must decide what this looks like for their employees. However, the Ministry of Health is currently in the process of developing further guidance on this issue, which will be disturbed shortly and posted to the Government website.

In closing, I want to urge residents to continue to wash your hands frequently, use hand sanitizer before and after entering any store or public building, shield our medically vulnerable, avoid congregating in large groups, and continue to wear your mask and keep six feet apart if you are not wearing one...And, yes, this means wearing masks at work if you are in close contact with others, such as during face-to-face meetings.

As I have mentioned before, there are three preventative behaviours which HealthIQ looks at to assess how we are doing as a country in our response to COVID-19. Two of those three (mask wearing and physical distancing) are currently 'in the red'...which means we need to do better if we want to keep ourselves and our community safe.

I think when COVID-19 first arrived in Bermuda, there were those out there who doubted the difference these seemingly 'small' measures could make to the overall picture...But now I think we can all see that they were, in fact, KEY to our success; not just contributory factors.

On a positive note, today we passed 10,000 HealthIQ users so we have reached the target to put that indicator on our scorecard in the green. Please continue to sign up on HealthIQ.bm and report your status regularly.

Today's two new cases and the quarantine breach are a reminder to us all that we cannot be complacent. How we go forward now depends on you, Bermuda.

Thank You