



GOVERNMENT OF BERMUDA
Department of Communications

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

28 July COVID-19 Update

Good afternoon Bermuda. Welcome to tonight's COVID-19 press conference. Joining me today are the Minister of Health, the Hon. Kim Wilson, the Minister of National Security, the Hon. Renee Ming, and the Minister of Public Works, the Hon. Lt Col David Burch.

We will start our press conference this evening with remarks for the Minister of Health, on the latest update regarding the coronavirus pandemic. Minister of Health.

Minister reads her statement.

Thank you Minister Wilson.

Before I go to the next minister, my office has received a number of questions surrounding the ending of the Unemployment Benefit to people who aren't able to work through no fault of their own, as a result of COVID-19.

The first question is about the schedule of payments. The next payments will be made at the end of next week, and there will be no payment made this week Friday. The Benefit ends after a maximum of 18 weeks of payments. This is made up of the original 12 week benefit, plus the initial four week extension, and the further two week extension announced last week.

Individuals started to receive the Benefit at different times. Therefore the end times will vary. However persons who received the benefit at the first week will be eligible for the full 18 weeks.

You do not have to reapply to receive the two week extension. And this extension was granted to give those who came onto the Benefit in the very first weeks, the ability to apply for financial assistance, and to give them time to submit their application and so their application can be processed.

Applications for financial assistance can be found in the lobby of Global House at 43 Church Street. Once the application has been completed. It can be returned to the secure drop box, also located on the ground floor of Global House.

So far, just over 100 people have submitted an application for financial assistance, who were on the Unemployment Benefit. It is important to note that not everyone who is on the Unemployment Benefit will be able to qualify for Financial Assistance. For those persons who apply for Financial Assistance, and do not qualify, the government is developing a Supplemental Unemployment Benefit. The Minister of Labour will release the details of this Benefit next week.

It is critically important that everyone is aware that you must apply for Financial Assistance, so you can go through the assessment process. If you do not qualify for Financial Assistance, you will then be able to qualify for the Supplemental Benefit but you must go through the process to ensure that your needs are accurately assessed.

Many in Bermuda are starting to prepare for the two day Cup Match holiday. I now invite the Minister of National Security to give an update on what her ministry is doing to prepare for the holiday. Minister Ming.

Minister reads her statement.

Thank you very much Minister Ming.

I will now ask the Minister of Public Works to give an update on what beach goers and campers need to know to be safe this holiday weekend.

Minister reads his statement.

Thank you Col. Burch.

It was great to join you earlier today for the groundbreaking ceremony for the Ottiwell Simmons International Arbitration Centre. And as you mentioned, its projects like this, that will ensure Bermudians are able to get back to work, as we work to rebuild Bermuda's economy.

As we look at more seats becoming available for travelers to the island, as airlines increase their flights, more hotels will begin to open and the number of hotel rooms available will increase. Therefore, providing more opportunities for Bermudians to return to work.

It is anticipated that by the end of August, the number of hotel rooms will almost triple from 345 to 948. This is good news for the employees at the hotels that are planning to open and the government will continue to work with our hoteliers to provide the support required for their employees during this time of transition.

As we head into the Cup Match weekend, I just want to pause and reflect on the significance of the holiday. The first day is Emancipation Day, recognizing the abolition of slavery in Bermuda. This year, for the first time we will recognize the second day of Cup Match as Mary Prince Day.

Mary Prince is a Bermudian national hero. A Black woman whose definitive narrative, revealing the harsh injustices endured by black people in Bermuda in the early 1800s, formed a critical contribution to

the movement for the abolition of slavery. We honor her for her bravery and her courage and we're proud that we celebrate Mary Prince Day for the first time this year.

As we talk and reflect on the holiday. I often speak about the new normal and many of us will be practicing it this weekend. While we celebrate and reflect this weekend, we must also be mindful of the tough times that are to come. The struggle that will test us as a country.

It is important that as your Premier, and your government, we are real and honest with all Bermudians. The new normal will not be just about social distancing. It will be about how we collectively cope during a period of great economic challenge. It will be about how we all play our part to participate and be productive in our economy, wherever we can.

It will be about how we save and invest in each other. It'll be about how we work to be our brother and our sister's keeper. And it will be about how we look out for those who are less fortunate than us, and strive to assist those who will be challenged over the next few months.

I make no bones about it, we are certainly going to be in for a period of economic difficulty. So our celebrations must be tempered with reality of what is to come. As I've given the assurance at many times, the government will not abandon people,

Just like we innovated as a people to stay ahead of the virus, we must collectively be as innovative to thrive as we work together to build our economy. It's important to note that the government cannot do it all by itself. It's going to require a collective effort of all persons in this country, moving and rowing in the same direction.

So though I'm concerned of the challenges ahead, I have no doubt that if we remain united, as a country we will be able to prevail. Let us carry the spirit of unity into this holiday and beyond, as that is the only thing that will ensure that Bermuda can emerge from this upcoming period of economic challenge as a stronger and more united country.

As I conclude my formal remarks, I want to make sure that we continue to take precautions, as we enjoy this holiday weekend. Physical distancing, wearing a mask and appropriate hand hygiene are a must.

With the announcement of the two more important cases from a turning resident, COVID-19 is still very much a factor in our daily lives. We must remain strong, vigilant and united as a country, to keep this virus at bay, so that we can continue the work to rebuild our economy. With that, I'm happy to take questions from members of the media here this evening.