



Press Conference Statement

The Most Hon. Dr. Hubert Minnis

Prime Minister

Thursday, 4 June 2020

5:00 P.M.

Good afternoon.

Early on in the Government's response to the COVID-19 outbreak I noted that the country had to respond on several fronts at the same time.

We had to respond to the immediate and ongoing health challenges posed by the virus.

We also had to respond to the variety of economic challenges at home because of

the massive and sudden global downturn, especially, in our case, tourism, our leading sector.

Many weeks ago, I appointed an Economic Recovery Committee that is hard at work and will make medium- and long-term recommendations to the government for economic stabilization and recovery.

We also knew there would be a critical need for food.

The National Food Distribution Committee has begun its work and has already distributed approximately \$400,000 worth of food.

I also previously noted that we also had to protect national security, including preventing as much crime as possible and monitoring gang activity and certain criminal elements.

In making our decisions we had to take into account many factors and to balance the various factors in a phased reopening of the economy and the society.

After we prepared the national reopening plan, we noted that the plan would be done in stages so we could carefully monitor the progress.

Most countries have opened in stages and announced that certain restrictions

might be re-imposed depending on the health circumstances.

The situation the world is in is not static. It is a dynamic, evolving process for an unprecedented time.

Because of this, the Bahamas and other countries have had to continue to make often quick adjustments, and to be prepared to change when necessary.

The capacity to act and to change quickly is absolutely necessary, especially when dealing with an outbreak such as this.

Such capacity to make changes quickly and when necessary is a strength.

Just as we acted quickly at the outset of the pandemic, we have sought to act and to adjust quickly as things evolve.

In countries such as South Korea, Vietnam, Iceland and throughout the

Caribbean, government have changed course when necessary, made adjustments and tried new measures in dealing with the health, economic and social consequences of this deadly virus.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

We are still in a global pandemic.

There is no vaccine or cure for COVID-19.

The success of the re-opening depends on each of us continuing to wear our masks, practicing physical distancing and washing our hands often and thoroughly.

We have started to enter Phase 4 of the reopening plan.

Starting next weekend, the 13th of June, the weekend lockdowns will be lifted.

We have decided to maintain the 9 p.m. to 5 a.m. curfew Monday to Sunday for a period of time.

We are doing this in order to continue to open in a gradual and sustained manner.

I wish to announce that effective Monday, June 8th, beach and park restrictions will be removed for the islands of Eleuthera, Harbour Island, Spanish Wells, Exuma and San Salvador.

Beaches and parks on New Providence, Paradise Island, Grand Bahama, and Bimini remain closed.

Also effective Monday the 8th of June:

- Exercise is permitted 5 a.m. to 9 p.m. beyond one's immediate neighborhood every day of the week. You may continue to exercise with your immediate family,

however group exercise and sporting activities and events are still restricted.

- All professional services and commercial activity may resume regular operating hours but must be closed by 7 p.m. daily. This does not include restaurants, bars, hair salons, barbers, cinemas, gyms and cultural and entertainment facilities, which are to remain closed.

- Places of worship may resume regular office hours.

- Fishing is allowed with more than two people in a vessel. Physical distancing and proper sanitization and hygiene measures are required. Masks should be worn.

Effective Friday, June 12th, restaurants may re-open with outdoor seating only.

There will be no indoor seating allowed at this point.

This includes restaurants at the Arawak Cay Fish Fry, and Potter's Cay Dock.

All restaurants must follow industry COVID-19 protocols and guidelines.

Owners must ensure proper physical distancing.

Effective Monday, June 15th, hair salons and barbershops may resume operations following certification by the Ministry of Health.

All salons, spas and parlors wishing to open should produce a current business license, engage in deep cleaning of their salon and put procedures in place to maintain physical distancing, hand washing and sanitizing, and mask wearing to protect themselves and their clients.

In conjunction with the Ministry of Health all beauty professionals are required to

attend an Infection Prevention and Control course before returning to work.

The course will be offered digitally through the Bahamian Cosmetology and Barbers Association, Faces of Beauty School of Cosmetology and Workforce Training Institute or the Early Access Training Center.

Upon successful completion of the class, proprietors will receive a certificate which

must be displayed in the salon where they work.

Health protocols have been established for specific industries.

General workplace protocols are continuing to be finalized and revised as necessary by the Health team and the National COVID-19 Coordinating Committee.

National exams BJC and BGCSE will be held 13 July. More information will be

provided during the Budget debate by the Minister of Education.

I wish to announce that the Government's quarantine facility will be disabled on Friday June 5th. This applies to facilities in New Provide and Grand Bahama.

Returning Bahamians and residents will no longer be required to quarantine on returning home but will be monitored by the

Ministry of Health's Surveillance Unit and Hubbcat monitoring app if necessary.

To date, the Government has facilitated the return of close to 500 Bahamians and residents on Bahamasair. There have been five flights so far.

The Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Health are working to arrange more flights as necessary.

The Government has approved \$16 million dollars for the national food distribution program.

This will provide food for approximately 80 thousand people for 12 weeks.

Food is being distributed in zones across the country and New Providence through the Ministry of Social Services and NGO Partners.

Accountability mechanisms to ensure proper distribution of food is being done in conjunction with the University of The Bahamas.

I wish to note that through the Suggestions platform on opm.gov.bs, the Office of the Prime Minister has received more than 2,700 suggestions from Bahamians and residents throughout The Bahamas.

A team from the Office of the Prime Minister and Ministry of Tourism went through each submission and earmarked each for a specific public private committee or government agency.

Thus far, close to 2,000 suggestions have been forwarded on to the National COVID-19 Coordinating Committee, the Economic Recovery Committee, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Agriculture and Marine Resources.

I want to thank everyone who took the time and the effort to submit a suggestion.

I want to thank all of those who offered positive and constructive advice and proposed solutions and ideas.

I also want to especially thank the National COVID Coordinating Committee, which has greatly aided the Government with valuable recommendations and

professional guidance on the reopening of our economy.

The Committee has also served exceptionally well as a link to the private sector and civil society to develop relevant and specific protocols for the operation of various commercial activities.

The work of the National COVID Coordinating Committee is fast coming to an

end as we move into the new normal of our economic and social operations.

We owe them our gratitude.

Let me end by reminding the public that the weekend lockdown goes into effect at 9 p.m. tonight.

On Labour Day, tomorrow, June 5th, you may exercise in your immediate neighborhood 5a.m. to 9 p.m.

Grocery stores may open 6am – 7:30pm to the general public; pharmacies may operate 6am – 5pm and restaurants, takeaways and drive throughs from 6am – 7pm.

Otherwise you must stay at home unless you have an emergency, are an essential worker or have been specifically exempted.

Let me take this opportunity to thank the workers of The Bahamas.

This is a very difficult Labour Day for many, including the many thousands of Bahamians who have lost their jobs or have been laid off.

I assure you that one of our most urgent and overriding concerns is the creation of jobs and opportunities for work as we outlined in the recent budget communication.

Just like the rest of the world, COVID-19 has put us in the worst economic situation since independence.

We are going to do everything in our power to get our economy moving as quickly as possible in the medium- and long-term.

I am going to work day after day to restore as much of our economy as quickly as possible.

I will have more to say about this in my budget communication and I will brief the country on the work of the Economic Recovery Committee.

Let me now turn over to Dr. Dahl-Regis for a health briefing.
