



Message from Prime Minister

The Most Hon. Dr. Hubert Minnis

Sunday 30 August 2020

A pleasant good afternoon.

As we once again reopen a range of activities tomorrow, I would like to offer some words of encouragement and if I may, some guidance.

I invite the residents of every Family Island to follow the specific orders, guidelines and restrictions in your communities.

I want to offer particular caution and encouragement for the residents of Grand Bahama, and especially New Providence, where the number of COVID-19 cases remain high.

As we begin this gradual and phased reopening, I remind you to please follow the well-known health and life-saving measures, particularly wearing your masks, maintaining appropriate physical distance and staying at home when you do not need to be out.

Do not let your guard down. We are still in a marathon fight against COVID-19.

Let me say to you again:

This is not a time for large parties, socials or group gatherings, which can further spread the virus, which is easy to catch.

We are trying to reopen in a measured manner, allowing certain activities in accordance with specific guidelines, restrictions and health and safety protocols.

Details related to the commercial and social activities allowed under the latest Emergency Order may be found on the COVID-19 Guidelines page on **opm.gov.bs**.

I note that there are two schedules of islands, with various orders and guidelines, depending on the island on which you live.

All Emergency Orders are available at the OPM site.

Family Island Administrators should pay careful attention to the orders applicable to their communities.

Information is also regularly posted on the Office of the Prime Minister's official social media pages.

On **Facebook**, our official page is **Office of the Prime Minister – The Bahamas**, look for the blue tick.

On **Instagram** the official page is **OPM The Bahamas**; and on **Twitter**, the official page is **Office of the Prime Minister The Bahamas**.

Please continue to send your suggestions and questions via social media and our suggestions platform on **opm.gov.bs**. We continue to welcome them.

I encourage all businesses, no matter the size, to ensure that your employees and customers are following the health measures, including proper sanitization, physical distancing and the wearing of masks or face coverings.

Let me again express tremendous gratitude and admiration to the many Bahamians and residents and businesses who have consistently followed the various health measures.

Thank you so very much for your spirit of cooperation and your sense of national unity and purpose.

The new Orders were designed to ensure that more small business could open, with appropriate health measures.

For example here on New Providence, Grand Bahama and on the islands in the Second Schedule of the Order:

- Barbers and beauticians may open, with one person per service provider.

- landscape service providers may operate Monday thru Saturday, from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m.;

- news vendors may operate Monday thru Friday, from 7 a.m.;

- retail businesses may operate Monday thru Saturday between the hours of 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., utilizing curbside or delivery services; however, clothing and fabric stores may also offer in-store service with physical distancing, sanitization and mask protocols.

- Restaurants may offer take away, drive-thru and outdoor dining. Restaurants at the Fish Fry and Potter's Cay will be able to offer take away services only.

- Public transportation may operate at 50% capacity, subject to health guidelines.

This is only a brief list.

Please visit **opm.gov.bs** and the recommended social media platforms for details related to religious and educational institutions, and for specific commercial and social activities.

Tomorrow, the Minister of Education will hold a press conference at 3pm to provide a comprehensive update on the upcoming academic year.

As it relates to in-person worship services on New Providence and other congregant activities on islands with a curfew in place, we will continue to follow the advice of public health officials to determine when to safely resume these activities.

As we work to balance the health, economic and social needs of our country, I again report to you:

We have increased hospital capacity including for COVID patients; created a COVID-19 Enforcement Unit; increased testing capacity; improved the turnaround time for test results; and generally improved the analysis of health data.

Of course, there is still more to be done in terms of our health response and we are doing so.

Let me also assure you that the Royal Bahamas Police Force remains on high alert.

We should all be vigilant in terms of safety and security during the phased re-opening of the economy.

The Public Service, the uniformed branches and independent government agencies have been advised to ensure greater and strict adherence to health measures in the workplace.

As I said last Monday:

Our task now is to restore our confidence in ourselves by shutting down community spread and flattening the COVID-19 curve of transmissions and infections once again, over the next several weeks.

The only way that we can get there is by moving from “the government should” to “we should”.

We have to move from “they should” to “we should”.

We have to move from “they say” to “we say”.

This past Friday, I had the wonderful privilege of extending birthday greetings to Mrs. Doris Smith, who turned 98 Thursday past.

Mrs. Smith blessed me with her spirit of encouragement, with her words of inspiration and her hopeful spirit.

I was deeply moved when she told me that she prays for the country, for the Cabinet and for myself every day.

On behalf of the entire country, I again wish her a Happy 98th Birthday.

I ask all Bahamians, especially our young people, to honor our elders, and in the words of Scripture: “Honor thy father and mother: that thy days may be long.”

We honor and show respect to our elders during this pandemic by following the health measures that will ensure that their lives and their days are healthier and longer.

When we are successful as a country, it is not the government that is successful.

It is the Bahamian people who are achieving success!

This fundamental truth echoes the words of the great American President John Fitzgerald Kennedy, who proclaimed in his Inaugural Address, on January 20, 1961:

“In your hands, my fellow citizens, more than in mine, will rest the final success or failure of our course.”

Kennedy stated:

“Since this country was founded, each generation of Americans has been summoned to give testimony to its national loyalty.”

The Preamble to the Bahamas Constitution is also a summons to national loyalty expressed through a national

commitment to a greater good, a national commitment to a common good, a national commitment to a spirit of love and unity.

Even during the most difficult times such as these, including the worst economic downturn in most of our lifetimes, there are things we can all do for our country, no matter our particular circumstances.

We can encourage each other.

We can pray unceasingly for our country.

We can consistently practice the basic health measures that protect each other.

I ask my fellow-Bahamians and residents with greater means to do whatever you can, wherever you can to help the poor and the most vulnerable in our country.

Yes we can, and we will, beat this deadly virus. We will overcome the challenges of today.

It is the people's time to act in a spirit of solidarity to heal and to renew the country we all love.

May I end with the same prayer President Kennedy offered 60 years ago, next year:

He prayed those six decades ago at his inauguration:

“With a good conscience our only sure reward, with history the final judge of our deeds, let us go forth to lead the land we love, asking His blessing and His help, but knowing that here on earth God's work must truly be our own.”

May God bless our Bahamas.

Let us keep each other in prayer! Please stay safe.

Thank you for listening.

Good afternoon.