Good Afternoon,

Today there were 418 test results received by the Ministry of Health, and none were positive for COVID-19.

Bermuda now has 181 total confirmed positive cases. Their status is as follows:

- 167 have recovered, and
- there are 5 active cases, who are
  - all under public health monitoring;
  - none are hospitalized or in critical care, and
- the total deceased remains at 9.

The average age of all of our confirmed positive cases is 56 and the age range of all of our positive cases is from 9 to 101 years.
Overall, 51% of cases were Black, 42% White and 7% other/unknown.

The source of all local cases is as follows:

- 70 are Imported
- 90 are Local transmission, with known contact
- 21 are Local transmission with an unknown contact, and
- none are under investigation

Bermuda’s country status remains “Sporadic Cases”. The seven-day average of our real time reproduction number is less than 1.

I will now provide you with an update regarding COVID-19 vaccine procurement, something which I’m sure is at the forefront of many people’s minds.

I can tell you that the Government has recently engaged a contractual commitment to ensure guaranteed access for Bermuda to approved COVID-19 vaccines when they become available.
Bermuda is supported by the Pan American Health Organization - PAHO (a subsidiary of the World Health Organization) which is the specialized international health agency for the Americas.

PAHO has collaborated with GAVI Alliance, an international organization whose mandate is to improve access to vaccines and to source COVID-19 vaccines for countries under the PAHO remit. This collaboration provides Bermuda with access to vaccines to support 20% of the population in the first instance and additional access if and when required. The COVAX Facility, managed by GAVI Alliance, is the mechanism through which demand and resources are pooled to support availability of, and equitable access to, COVID-19 vaccines for all economies.

The goals of the COVAX Facility are to:

- Develop a large and diverse actively-managed portfolio of COVID-19 vaccine candidates so that the best vaccines are ultimately made available and the supply will be sufficient for highest priority populations;
- Deliver at least 2 billion doses of approved vaccines by the end of 2021;

- Guarantee access to approved vaccines for every participating economy; and

- End the acute phase of the pandemic by the end of 2021.

The commitment to purchase the vaccines through the COVAX facility provides Bermuda with several advantages. Firstly, it provides us with guaranteed access to approved COVID-19 vaccines. Secondly, it means that Bermuda is able to capitalize on economies of scales with the bulk vaccine purchase of potentially 2 billion vaccines. And, thirdly, Bermuda avoids the risk of trying to independently purchase vaccines which could see challenges such as access, availability, and prohibitive cost which could disadvantage Bermuda in the battle against the pandemic.

In addition, the United Kingdom will be providing Bermuda with a proportional amount of vaccines, therefore with the two
streams of vaccine access available to Bermuda, we are well placed and prepared to tackle COVID-19 with vaccinations when they are approved and available.

On a separate issue, as I mentioned earlier this afternoon, I can advise the public that returning officers and presiding officers employed by the Parliamentary Registrar as well as election candidates will have the opportunity to undergo saliva screening prior to Thursday's General Election to help ensure voter safety during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This means the testing hours for the Perot testing location will be extended tonight and tomorrow night for this group of individuals who can attend between 6pm and 9pm either tonight or tomorrow night.

The Government believes this screening procedure will add an extra layer of protection for voters.

For more information individuals can contact the COVID-19 hotline at 444-2498.
I would now like to address a dangerous mistruth which appeared to be circulating locally on social media last week…

I am almost surprised I have to make this statement but... *mask-wearing does not cause cancer.*

The CDC recommends that people wear cloth face coverings in public settings when around people outside of their household, especially when other physical distancing measures are difficult to maintain.

CDC Director Dr. Robert Redfield said, *“Cloth face coverings are one of the most powerful weapons we have to slow and stop the spread of the virus – particularly when used universally within a community setting.”*

International health organizations around the world agree that cloth face coverings are a critical tool in the fight against COVID-19 that could reduce the spread of the disease, preventing people who have COVID-19 from spreading the virus to others.
Therefore, it is vitally important that we continue to wear our masks...and wear them right.

Wear your mask so it comes all the way up, close to the bridge of your nose, and all the way down under your chin. And do your best to tighten the loops or ties so it’s snug around your face, without gaps.

Always wash your hands before and after wearing a mask. Use the ties or loops to put your mask on and pull it off; don’t touch the front of the mask when you take it off. For apartment or condo dwellers, put the mask on and remove it while inside your home as elevators and stairwells can be high-contamination areas. A cloth face covering should be routinely washed depending on the frequency of use.

Please remember that masks are to be worn in most work environments too. We, at the Ministry of Health, wear them every day. If you are in any doubt regarding what precautions or health measures you should have in place at your workplace, I urge you to read the ‘Return to Work’ Guidance for Businesses which is posted at coronavirus.gov.bm.
It includes sections on infection prevention & control measures, return to work considerations, occupational risk assessments, site cleaning & disinfection protocols, site operations and risk management, as well as general information on COVID-19.

Additionally, it contains industry-specific guidance for Healthcare Professionals, Care Homes, Offices and Banking Services, Construction, Mechanical & Landscaping, Warehouses, Auto Dealers and Retail Operations which details which PPE (such as masks) is appropriate for your workplace setting.

With our low COVID numbers, it's perhaps easy to forget that we are living in the midst of a pandemic; but the reality is that we are and we need to take the same precautions we always have to protect ourselves and our community. Wear your mask, wash your hands often, practice physical distancing, avoid large groups and stay home if you feel unwell. As I have said before, now is not the time to let our guard down. One of the reasons Bermuda has fared so well compared to other
countries is because of our diligence when it comes to these actions. We have worked so hard and done so well; we must not stop now. These small steps make the greatest difference.

And, lastly, I would also like to clarify an incorrect story which appeared in last night's news cycle. A story ran claiming that the PGA Group, arriving in Bermuda at the end of October, would be exempt from on-island testing once they had received their arrivals test as the players would be moving in their own 'social bubble'. This is not correct; the players are not exempt from Bermuda's testing requirements. Players will take a pre-departure test, arrivals test and Day 4 test. Again, our stringent protocols have helped put Bermuda in a position which actually paved the way for such an event to even take place here. So we must continue to apply the same regimes for all which has proven to be fruitful to Bermuda as well as organizations such as the PGA.

Stay safe, Bermuda, and, remember, I wear a mask to protect you; you wear a mask to protect me.