



**OFFICE OF THE  
PREMIER**  
CAYMAN ISLANDS GOVERNMENT

## MEDIA RELEASE

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Tuesday 17th March 2:00 pm COVID 19 Government Update**

**GRAND CAYMAN, Cayman Islands** – The Chief Medical Officer Dr.

John Lee announced today that the preliminary results have now come back from the first tests for COVID-19 to be carried out here in the Cayman Islands.

Of these 20 tests there were 19 samples sent from Health City and one referred through the Health Services Authority. All the samples have tested negative for the virus causing COVID-19. All the test samples will be sent on to CARPHA for confirmation.

The Premier Hon. Alden McLaughlin underscored the point that Dr. Lee made, that these are preliminary results and we will await confirmation of the results from CARPHA. In the meantime the patients will remain in isolation.

Mr. McLaughlin went on to announce more measures that Cabinet has put in place to continue to limit and control the spread of COVID-19.

From 11:59 pm on Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> March all bars will be closed and restaurants will be restricted to take out and delivery only. In addition, all gyms, spas and public swimming pools will close as of the same date for an initial 2 week period.

Due to the economic impact of the virus and the measures Government are taking to constrain its spread, a onetime emergency COVID 19 stipend will be made to permanent financial assistance recipients to help them better prepare with additional provisions and medical expenses.

This one time stipend of CI \$425 will be provided in addition to the \$850 they currently receive monthly as their regular stipend and will be paid on 30<sup>th</sup> March 2020. Currently, 1,025 people receive permanent financial assistance, this includes 841 seamen and 81 veterans.

The Government will also make a one-time stipend payment on 30<sup>th</sup> March 2020 to families who are currently in receipt of food vouchers to accommodate additional supplies. Currently Government supports 311 families with food vouchers. Government is expecting a doubling in the number of families currently supported and are budgeting to cover a 3 month period.

Responding to a query on Caymanians unemployed as a result of the tourism industry contraction, Mr. McLaughlin said the Needs Assessment Unit (NAU) is being geared up with redeployed personnel and additional budget to process applications using means testing which they will handle via phone or email.

Regarding the need for certain segments of the population to self-isolate, Mr. McLaughlin appealed to them to be responsible and voluntarily follow the prescribed guidelines.

He specifically appealed to students who have already returned from the US and some 470 students who will be returning from the UK in the next few days to not treat this as a spring break and not gather in groups big or small. Returning residents coming off the BA flights on Thursday, Saturday and Sunday will each be provided with a messaging sheet about what they should do, notably self-isolate for 14 days, so that everyone gets the message. This is a real health threat, a major threat to families and friends, but particularly older members and the most vulnerable in our community.

Tackling fake news being spread, Mr. McLaughlin reiterated that there is absolutely no truth that cargo ships would be stopped from bringing

goods to the Islands. Supermarkets and merchants had assured Government that supplies would not be interrupted, except for items like sanitizers the non-availability of which is currently an issue worldwide.

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