



REMARKS

BY THE HONOURABLE KIM N. WILSON, JP, MP

MINISTER OF HEALTH

THE PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY

29 September 2022

Good morning and thank you for joining me today.

Earlier this week, I announced that the Government would extend the public health emergency for 30 days, expiring on 25 October 2022. An additional and final Extension Order for a further 37 days, will take us to 30 November.

The Public Health (COVID-19) Emergency Orders, which provide the legal framework for our safety measures, have been in place since 30 June 2020 (following the State of Emergency put in place on 1 April 2020). They are made pursuant to section 107A of the Public Health Act 1949, and declare that a public health emergency exists in Bermuda due to a communicable disease that threatens the island.

The most recent extension of the Public Health Emergency Order approved by Parliament was in July, expiring on 26 September 2022. Subsequent to that, and with the approval of Cabinet, I exercised the power available to me under the Act to make an Order to declare a public health emergency for 30 days, expiring on 25 October.

As I also announced earlier this week, the Ministry of Health will not seek an extension of the public health emergency beyond the end of November.

The Government has determined a roadmap out of the public health emergency in the coming weeks. This enables a continued assessment of the prevalence of infection and its impact on our health system as the different public health and safety measures are amended or ceased.

This Government intends to bring an end to the public health emergency in Bermuda, and tomorrow, I will lay in the House the Public Health (COVID-19) Emergency Extension (No. 1) Order 2022 to extend the current Order for 37 days from 25 October, which would take us to 30 November 2022.

Our roadmap out of the public health emergency is as follows:

1. As of 3 October 2022, the mask mandate will be amended so that it applies only to health service facilities, rest homes and Corrections facilities. For those using public transportation, taxis, minibuses and limousines, as well as those working at or passing through the airport, mask wearing will be optional.
2. As of 25 October 2022, the requirement for pre-arrival or pre-departure testing, arrival testing, and day 4 testing for travellers will end. The requirement for unvaccinated visitors to provide proof of health insurance which covers Covid medical expenses will remain.
3. As of 30 November 2022, all mask mandates and border controls related to COVID-19 will end.

I appreciate there will be many questions regarding the future of the travel authorisation, it is important to recognise that health travel documents are not new to international travel. Certain countries have had entry requirements such as proof of yellow fever vaccination for a very long time now. The difference is that those types of entry requirements were limited to specific countries.

However, the global pandemic caused the majority of countries around the world to implement and enforce COVID-19 travel document entry requirements.

In Bermuda, the travel authorisation has served as an effective part of our Covid border controls, and has provided key information to the Bermuda Tourism Authority, as well as the Department of Immigration and HM Customs.

The Government will be having further discussions regarding Bermuda's travel entry requirements, taking into consideration what is appropriate and necessary in light of the ongoing pandemic. We will announce those decisions before 30 November.

Many people will be pleased that the regulations are being removed, but this does not mean we can stop being responsible for our health and the health of others.

The coronavirus continues to be a threat to our health and well-being, though not as substantial as it was this time last year.

And while the public health emergency may be ending in Bermuda, the global pandemic continues. Although our number of positive coronavirus cases has declined significantly, we must not become complacent.

We must be careful and be safe, for ourselves and our community.

Thank you.