



## MONSERRAT

# Phased Reopening of the Economy Updates & Protocol Discussions on Phased Reopening of the Tourism Sector

COVID-19 Weekly Message Premier, Hon. Joseph E. Farrell

Good day to all hearing my voice, I extend warm greetings to all of you.

Another week has come and gone and I do hope that all of you are safe and well. We have come this far by faith, and we give God thanks.

Yesterday was International Nurses Day, and like the Minister of Health, Hon. Charles Kirnon, I wish also to express my personal thanks to the nurses and their families for their enormous service to humanity. I am truly thankful for the sacrifices they so often make in saving lives and restoring hope, especially more than ever now during this Coronavirus pandemic, when they have been called upon to give their all to this island, even at the risk of their own health. Thank you very much for your service to humanity and this island!

The island continues to maintain a positive trend as we have not registered a single new COVID -19 case since April 12, and active cases have reduced to one, with fewer persons visiting the Flu Clinic and the number of persons in quarantine has also significantly reduced.

It is clear that the coronavirus disease on island is under some level of control at this time, however this is no indication that we are clear and free to move on.

Our borders are still closed and the movement of people into Montserrat is restricted. However, we all know that the time will come when our borders will have to be opened to the movement of people into and out of the island, and at that time we will once again be at an increased risk of exposure. So, we have to ensure that appropriate protocols are

in place to manage this potential risk.

### **OECS Meetings – Protocol for Phased Reopening of the Tourism Sector**

In fact, leaders across the region are very cautious about this and so it is essential that as a region we take a unified approach when our borders are open. Over the past ten days, a number of meetings were held amongst the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States, (OECS) Tourism Ministers and various tourism stakeholders in the tourism sector, to discuss a draft protocol for the opening up of the tourism sector, and in particular air travel.

Member states were given the opportunity to discuss the draft protocol and to provide feedback. When agreed member states reserve the right to set its own timeline for the reopening of its borders to air traffic.

This is considered as the very first step to a phased reopening of the Tourism sector.

### **Cruise Industry**

A protocol will also be developed for the cruise industry, including businesses that are directly linked to providing services for cruise ship passengers when they arrive on island.

One question that is often asked is; how will tour guides operate, in light of COVID-19?

It is clear that Tour and Taxi operators will have to modify their seating arrangements, and will have to implement other protocols to ensure persons are not at an increased risk of exposure when utilizing their services.

To this end, the Ministry of Health will continue to vigorously monitor the situation for any presence of or likely resurgence of the virus, and will provide further guidance on ways to reduce possible exposure.

### **Arrival of Testing Machine**

To assist with this monitoring, we are indeed thankful that the testing machine from the United Kingdom has now arrived on island and will provide the country with the ability to undertake a more vigorous testing regime which would allow for greater detection, tracking and tracing of the disease.

There can and never will be a full proof system in managing this virus. But all of us must play our part in continuing to keep each other safe as we continue to practice social distancing, staying at home if you can, practice good hygiene, and cover your nose and mouth when in crowded places.

## Phased Opening of the Economy

Any prolonged closure of the economy can be disastrous for any island or country, and while your government's primary goal is to protect you, we have to now balance that as we also focus on the economy.

In seeking to apply a much broader and balanced approach to the re-opening of the economy, government sought and received input from a number of groups and individuals.

Contributions received, were then fed into a public sector task force which was and assigned the responsibility of providing

Cabinet with guidance to the gradual removal of restrictions that have been in place for the management of COVID-19.

The government wishes to place on record, its sincerest appreciation and thanks for the invaluable contribution made by the following groups, towards providing guidance for a phased reopening of the economy.

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- The Montserrat Chamber of Commerce and Industry led by the President Mrs. Florence Griffith Joseph.
- Reuben T Meade (Former Premier) as Chair, and all Members of the **Economic Recovery Task Force**.
- Paul Lewis and other members of the Parliamentary opposition;
- The University of the West Indies, spearheaded by Ms. Gracelyn Cassell.

Government is cognizant that not every business on Montserrat can be opened at the same time, as consideration for allowing businesses to open must be managed by the science, and each operation must be assessed to determine the level of risk that persons may be exposed to.

Each phase of implementation of this guidance strategy for reopening of the economy will therefore be influenced by the situation which exists, at the time at which that particular phase is to be implemented, and on the advice received from the Health professionals.

On May 7<sup>th</sup> we began phase 4 of the reopening of the economy, and this phase will continue until May 22<sup>nd</sup> when it will be reassessed. There is no guarantee that these measures will stay in place or that there will be new businesses added to the list. This current phase provides for the opening of businesses that are at low risk of spreading the virus and where social distancing measures can be put in place and monitored. The list of these businesses is aired from time to time on Radio Montserrat and can be viewed on the Government Information Unit Facebook page.

You are still allowed to exercise two sessions every day as stipulated by the Order, but no vehicles are allowed to transport persons for the purpose of exercising.

### **Restructuring of Businesses**

COVID-19 has resulted in a shift in our normal mode of operating and as such we must all adjust to the new way of doing things.

The science tells us that this virus will not be going anywhere soon and as a result we must begin to arrange our lives and our businesses to co- exist with the Coronavirus disease. In other words, we will have to learn to live with the virus and still go about our daily lives with some changes.

Business owners must now begin to give some serious considerations as to how best to reorganize their businesses, in light of COVID-19:

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- Banks may have to ask more of us to use their Automated Transaction Machines (ATMs); meaning more of us will have to use cards.
- Supermarkets and shops will have to consider if online shopping and a delivery service will be the new norm.
- A shift system in businesses may become common place.
- Is it that working from home or remote working has finally reached our shores, as the new way of conducting our business operations?
- Social distancing is going to be with us for some time, so how do we greet our families and friends?
- Will restaurants and cook shops need to have fewer seating arrangements when we begin to eat out?
- How will COVID-19 impact the way we travel on the ferry or an aircraft?
- Is online learning and home schooling here to stay?
- Is government in a position to increase its online payment system, providing for less face to face contact?
- In all of this, how will the culture of our island be affected; will we become anti-social or more friendly as a people?
- Will we become less caring or has the crisis knitted us closer together?

These are all points to consider and questions being asked about what the 'new normal' will mean for us; we all must clearly begin to think about this and talk about it.

While we continue to be on the alert we must also prepare ourselves to live side by side with the Coronavirus until a vaccine has been developed and readily available; until then we must continue to practice the social distancing and hygiene practices that have been promoted throughout our response to COVID-19.

Remember please stay at home if you do not need to be on the road for any business or shopping purposes, allowed for during this time. While you are at home keep yourself busy, call a friend and share a joke, speak with family members and find other means of keeping occupied at home.

Life is worthwhile living and in spite of all of this, it is worth living well.

We are in this together and we will all come out together.

May God bless all of you and may God continue to bless Montserrat.

Joseph E. Farrell

Premier

13<sup>th</sup> May 2020

## **MONSERRAT**

### **Premier's COVID-19 Weekly Message Premier**



### **From May 22, 2020 More Businesses to Open and Curfew in Place from 8:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m.**

*Issued on May 20, 2020 By Premier, Hon. Joseph E. Farrell*

My fellow Montserradians, residents and friends of Montserrat I extend warm greetings to all of you.

God has truly been good to us on this island; in spite of all, when we observe what continues to happen globally were COVID-19 is concerned, we know that by God's mercy we have come this far, and we give him thanks.

Last week in my weekly message, I reported that the number of active cases of Covid-19 on island at that time was down to one, and that the number of persons in quarantine had significantly reduced.

Just a few days later, on Friday May 15th to be exact, the Ministry of Health reported that our remaining active COVID19 patient had fully recovered. I am indeed pleased and proud that that after two months of managing the Coronavirus disease on island, the number of active cases on island is down to zero, there are no suspected cases at the moment and the number of persons in quarantine has reduced to two. The flu clinic is still open and persons are reminded that if they are exhibiting any flu like or other COVID-

19 related symptoms they should visit the flu clinic immediately.

Having said this, I must remind us all that the Coronavirus Disease might still be around, even though no one is displaying symptoms, and as a result each of us must continue to protect ourselves and those around us, while the Ministry of Health, the government and other stakeholders work together to develop protocols for businesses, the workplace, schools and all other institutions. These protocols will be geared towards safeguarding the population, further reducing the threat of the virus, while we continue to reopen the island for business.

I noted last week that it matters not how much we work to keep the virus under control, there are no guarantees that it will be totally eradicated; hence we may have to co-exist with COVID-19 for some time to come.

To date, there is no cure for the virus and while the entire world waits, as labs race to develop a vaccine, no one knows for sure if and when one will be developed, tested and be available for mass distribution. In the meantime, let us continue to do our part in trying to protect ourselves and mitigate the threat of the virus through the measures of social distancing, and proper hygiene.

My brothers and sisters it is commonplace and perhaps even human nature for some of us to become complacent and very relaxed, especially when we now know that there are no known active case of the virus on island.

- We might soon forget that we must keep our distance.
- We might soon forget that we must wear a face covering when visiting crowded place, or while communicating with others who are not members of the same family.
- We may soon forget to practice safe hygiene by washing our hands properly at all times with soap and water, using hand sanitizers, and sneezing and coughing into our elbows or napkins, and disposing of the napkins properly.
- We may soon forget that we must still exercise with only member of our own household.
- When the beaches are opened, we might soon forget that COVID-19 could possibly still be in the air.

But, as the reopening of the island continues, and more persons are on the streets or in business places, I urge you to be vigilant, as though there are eleven active cases on island, be a part of the solution and not the problem.

On May, 7, 2020 a phased reopening of the economy began and I promised that each phase will be assessed, and guided by the information available from the Ministry of Health, measures will either be relaxed or reintroduced. This is the environment in which we are operating and we can never be certain, the science will therefore dictate the speed at which the country will return to some level of normality; however it will not be business as usual.

Of course, we want you to return to work, we want to allow you to exercise at free-will and we would want you to eat from your favourite restaurants.

I am therefore pleased to report that Cabinet having assessed the activities which were allowed to take place in the first phase of the reopening (13 days ago,) and having viewed the level of responsibility displayed by businesses, service providers and you the residence, Cabinet has agreed to allow some other additional businesses to reopen and the easing of some of the other restrictions as of midnight on May 22nd, 2020.

Starting on Friday May 22, at 12:00a.m:

- There will be a nighttime curfew from 8:00 p.m. -5 :00 a.m.
- There will be no weekend lockdown.
- There will be no restrictions on the times persons are allowed to exercise.
- All retail stores will be allowed to open.
- Restaurants and cook shops will be open, but for TAKE AWAY ONLY.
- No restrictions on construction work—All level of construction will be allowed.
- Visits to Margetson Memorial Home and the Golden Years Home are open to immediate family members only.

These are in addition to the businesses and services which are already in operation, since the first phase.

However, all businesses allowed to operate must be able to:

- Show that they are in a position to adhere to the social distancing requirements, and display markings of such inside and outside of their establishment.
- Be able to manage the number of persons inside the business place at any one time.
- Businesses must provide evidence that they have a plan for regularly disinfecting door knobs, trollies, refrigeration handles, and other tools and equipment being frequently touched or handled by workers and clients.
- And, provide hand sanitizers for employees and clients.

### **CLOSURES STILL IN EFFECT**

While we have made provisions for additional businesses to operate, there are some which still must remain closed.

- The borders remain closed.
- Schools remain closed. (The Ministry of Education will give updates to teachers, parents and students on plans to reopen school and the holding of exams).
- Hairdressers and Barbershops are to remain closed.
- Bars are also not allowed to open at this time.

Information with regards to the Public Service, as to how it will continue to provide service to the public during this time, will be provided by the Office of the Deputy Governor. Radio Montserrat and the Government Information Unit (GIU) will keep the public posted, as soon as this information becomes available.

Gatherings still remain at four and preferable should be with members of the same family or household.

You will notice that businesses which are allowed to operate in the different phases are based on the level of risk. The risk level is determined by the number of persons that can encounter or come into close contact with each other, and the ability of the establishment to adhere to social distancing inside and outside of the premises.

As we continue to work together to restore some level of normality to our lives, let us not forget that COVID-19 is still a major concern; as it was when we started two months ago.

In this season, the only thing that has changed is that there are no known active cases on island at this time, and some businesses are allowed to open.

Even while we experience what appears to be a lull in known COVID-19 cases here, I can assure you that the Ministry of Health and the health team will continue to improve their techniques in identifying, tracking and tracing the disease while the lab technicians sharpen their skills in testing.

My sisters and brothers, as always, I remind us all to work together and protect each other from any resurgence of COVID-19. We are in this together and we will come out victorious.

May God bless all of you and may he continue to watch over Montserrat.