



House of Assembly

Resolution Notes

The Most Hon. Dr. Hubert Minnis

Prime Minister

Wednesday, 8 July 2020

Mr. Speaker:

This past Sunday, I was pleased to witness the signing of the Hippocratic Oath by new physicians here at home, who will serve our country for many years to come.

The ceremony was particularly special for me as a father because one of my sons took the Oath, which medical doctors have sworn for centuries.

The Hippocratic Oath is an ethical oath historically taken by physicians.

It is a rite of passage for new medical doctors.

The Oath is attributed to an ancient Greek physician and has various versions.

One part of the Oath, which I wish to paraphrase, is as follows:

“I will prevent disease whenever I can, for prevention is preferable to cure.”

This has been a guiding light for me and the People’s Government during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Because of this oath and because of the oath of office I took to serve the Bahamian people, my first and most solemn obligation as Prime Minister, as Minister of Health, and as a medical doctor is to protect and to save lives.

While others may play partisan political games, my focus is on saving lives.

Because of our tough actions and decisions we have prevented many Bahamians and residents from catching COVID-19 and getting sick and dying.

We have arrested community spread.

But such community spread can quickly re-emerge if we don't continue to act decisively and strategically.

And just because we have no new confirmed cases does not mean that the virus is gone from The Bahamas.

The spread and containment of this virus is in all of our hands.

We must be individually and socially responsible.

This is why I have continued to stress, that if necessary, the Government will re-impose various restrictions if warranted.

We had stopped the spread of COVID-19.

The virus has not been eliminated and may spread widely and quickly again based on our individual and collective behavior.

Mr. Speaker:

Today, we are debating a Resolution to extend certain emergency orders to protect the health of the Bahamian people.

I quote directly from the Resolution before the House of Assembly:

“AND WHEREAS having regard to the continuing proliferation of confirmed cases in neighbouring jurisdictions and active cases in The Bahamas;

“AND WHEREAS due to economic necessity, The Bahamas re-opened the national economy, including the entry of visitors coming from places in which there may be extensive community spread of Covid-19, which poses great risks to the public health of The Bahamas;

“AND WHEREAS the state of public emergency in The Bahamas continues;

“AND WHEREAS it continues to be necessary and expedient for securing the public safety, the defence of The Bahamas, the maintenance of public order, the suppression of mutiny, rebellion and riot, and for maintaining supplies and services essential to the life and well-being of the community to continue in force, the Proclamation, the Emergency Powers (Covid-19 Pandemic) Regulations, 2020, the Emergency Powers (Covid-19 Pandemic) Order, 2020 and the

Emergency Powers (Covid-19
Pandemic)(Special Provisions) Order,
2020:

“NOW THEREFORE BE IT
RESOLVED that this House —

“(a) approves the continuance of
the Proclamation made on the 29th day
of June, 2020 until the 31st day of July,
2020;

“(b) affirms the continuance in effect
of the Emergency Powers (Covid-19

Pandemic) Regulations, 2020 made on 29th day of June, 2020 until the 31st day of July, 2020;

“(c) affirms the continuance in effect of the Emergency Powers (Covid-19 Pandemic) Order, 2020 made on the 30th day of June, 2020 until the 31st day of July, 2020;

“(d) affirms the continuance in effect of the Emergency Powers (Covid-19 Pandemic) (Special Provisions) Order,

2020 made on the 30th day of June,
2020 until the 31st day of July, 2020.

Mr. Speaker:

I wish to advise the House of the most recent information from health officials, as of today, July 8th, 2020.

The total number of confirmed cases in The Bahamas as of yesterday was 104 but as of today it is at 106. Two additional cases confirmed in Grand Bahama this morning.

Health officials will provide more details later today. Aggressive contact tracing is underway on Grand Bahama.

Eighty-two of the total number of cases originated in New Providence;

As of today, 10 originated in Grand Bahama;

3 in Bimini and 1 in Cat Cay.

As of 7th of July:

- there were 89 recovered cases, 6 active cases, and 11 COVID-19 related deaths.

- there were no hospitalized cases.
- a total of 2,467 tests had been completed.

Mr. Speaker:

More than half a million people have died thus far during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The death toll continues to rise. Even young people are dying.

Some medical experts are wondering about the long-term effects of this deadly and dangerous virus, which is very contagious.

The virus is spreading at an alarming rate in various parts of our Western Hemisphere, including in neighboring countries.

I again warn Bahamians that the pandemic is not over.

The global health emergency will likely not end until there is a vaccine.

Countries and territories are trying to navigate between opening up to allow people to make a living to take care of themselves, while at the same time keeping in place certain restrictions to slow the spread of the virus.

This is an ongoing balancing act, requiring agility and quick action based

on the best available information at the time from public health experts.

We are trying to do two critical things at the same time: to protect lives and livelihoods.

We have to do both at the same time.

It is not either/or. It is both!

Places that opened too fast and that did not follow proper public health

guidance are experiencing a resurgence of the virus.

Some health care systems are on the verge of collapse. This is something we have prevented thus far in The Bahamas.

In some countries, and states within some countries, the resurgence has been extraordinary.

This has caused the re-imposition of restrictions, including lockdowns and

the closure of establishments which were allowed to reopen.

The Bahamas has been a model nation so far in our handling of the pandemic because we locked down early and are now trying to gradually reopen.

We have been widely praised internationally, news which has apparently not reached some quarters, including the Opposition, which seems

to be deaf and blind to any news that does not suit their agenda.

Mr. Speaker:

My Government took the crisis seriously from the beginning.

We imposed restrictions early and moved to closures, physical distancing, masks, curfews and lockdowns, though these quick measures were criticized by some.

Together, we stopped the virus in
The Bahamas during the first wave.

During this pandemic we have not
made decisions in order to pander and
to posture for personal political gain.

We want our people to live!

I want our people to be healthy and
safe!

I want our economy and society to
reopen as safely as possible in order to
get thousands of Bahamians back to

work as quickly and as safely as possible.

Mr. Speaker:

The purpose of the curfew, lockdown, and phased re-opening of the economy is to minimize the risk of spread within the community.

At the beginning of the COVID-19 surge in The Bahamas a lockdown was implemented based on the advice of health officials.

This was done to change the trajectory of COVID-19 cases.

The lockdown resulted in a change in the rate of new cases daily.

At one point, health officials were expecting as many as 90 cases within a week, but because of the lockdown there were fewer than expected cases.

I am also pleased to report that health officials have been able to contact trace every confirmed case of COVID-19.

Contact tracing is ongoing for the two additional cases confirmed this morning.

Mr. Speaker:

Even as we were battling COVID-19 on the health front, we developed a plan for the phased reopening of the economy.

We put in place unprecedented plans before and in the National Budget

to address the health, economic and social aspects of the pandemic.

I appointed an Economic Recovery Committee, which is preparing bold plans and ideas to help get our economy moving and get more Bahamians back to work.

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused the worst downturn and recession in our lifetimes.

We have had to gradually open up so that people could try to make a living to take care of themselves and their families.

We have done so while maintaining our core public health message and policies of: physical distancing, mask wearing, and hand washing and sanitization.

If we remain disciplined with these practices, The Bahamas may remain

one of the model nations responding to the pandemic.

In order to stay ahead of this deadly virus we are continuing to take necessary preventative measures.

Because our borders are now open there is more risk of importing the virus from overseas.

The reason we must take certain preventative measures is because we

want to avoid problems before they happen and not just react to them.

That is why beaches and parks are to be closed in New Providence, Athol Island, Rose Island, Paradise Island, Grand Bahama, and other cays surrounding New Providence, over the July 10th holiday weekend.

This is being done out of an abundance of caution.

This is being done because prevention is better than cure.

During holiday weekends there is a natural tendency for people to have mass gatherings on beaches and parks.

Such mass gatherings are where there can be a super-spreading of COVID-19.

We cannot take this risk!

While many Bahamians continue to act responsibly and to observe health measures, there are some who are acting quite irresponsibly and with little to no regard for the health and well-being of others.

Hundreds and hundreds of people in close contact with each other could quickly spread this virus, which is very easy to catch.

As a Government we want to prevent what Bahamians are seeing on the news in countries around the world.

There are places where the hospitals are now full. The intensive care units are full.

They need more doctors and nurses to help treat all the sick COVID-19 patients.

And we all know from the first wave internationally, when sick patients overwhelm hospital systems more people die.

I understand people's disappointment of not being able to go to the beach on the holiday weekend.

I was once young also.

However, our decisions are for the protection of Bahamians, residents and visitors to our shores.

We have considered the representations made by our partners in the Tourism Sector.

The decisions taken have been done so soberly, and in conjunction with the health advisors to the Government.

Mr. Speaker:

I know from long experience, that some of the very same people and commentators and institutions, who are criticizing the decision to close certain

beaches and parks this coming weekend, would be the very same people criticizing this Government if we did not close these beaches and parks resulting in the wider spread of COVID-19.

My conscience is clear and resolved, Mr. Speaker.

We are doing the right thing in this case to help prevent the spread of this virus.

Mr. Speaker:

I remind young people that they are not immune to this deadly virus.

I remind them that they cause others to get sick and possibly die.

We all know that this virus kills, but what the medical community is learning is there are various serious effects that may linger.

We cannot yet say what all the effects are and when or if they will go

away because it is early in the trajectory of this virus.

There are concerns COVID-19 causes various types of long-term damage to the bodies of those who survive it.

We are working as a Government and health team to do all we can to prevent this dangerous virus from spreading.

