



**STATEMENT BY HON RAYBURN BLACKMOORE  
MINISTER FOR NATIONAL SECURITY AND HOME AFFAIRS**

Good evening Ladies and Gentlemen

Over the last few weeks, Dominica has been faced with a surge of the COVID-19 virus on island. In an effort to slow the spread of the virus, an Emergency Powers (Curfew) Order came into effect on August 3, 2021. This Order was extended over a period of three weeks and will come to an end on **Monday, August 23<sup>rd</sup> at 6:00pm.**

The Curfew Order was intended to limit movement and support the work of our health care professionals in contact tracing, testing, and providing care for the ones affected by this virus.

I can report that for the most part, the Dominican public has been compliant during the period of the Curfew Order and I want to take this opportunity to thank everyone for their cooperation with the Dominica Police Force and the other frontline workers during this time.

Last evening the Honourable Prime Minister reasoned with us and indicated that Government does not wish to impose “draconian measures” at this time and we urge the public to take personal responsibility to protect ourselves and each other from the COVID-19 virus so that our country can return to state of normalcy.

While we continue to battle this virus, it cannot be business as usual and we must continue to put measures in place for a safe phased re-opening of the country. In this regard, Cabinet has approved new Environmental Health Services (COVID-19) Regulations under Section 30 of the Environmental

Health Services Act Chap 42:01 to deal with the management of COVID-19 from **Tuesday, August 24, 2021**.

While the curfew will be lifted from Monday evening, a number of measures to manage the gathering of people will remain in place. The new regulations includes provisions for isolation, travel protocols, requirement to notify in case of infection or suspected infection, mandatory mask requirements, large gatherings, reopening of business, public transportation, among others. It is worthy of note that throughout these Regulations, the onus is put on persons providing services as well as persons seeking or accessing these services. This situation calls for vigilance from every single person, business or entity.

### **Isolation**

The Regulations will make provision for the Chief Medical Officer or any doctor authorised by him to isolate or place under surveillance any case or suspected case of COVID-19 or any carrier or suspected carrier or any contact of such persons.

In keeping with the new protocols for home isolation, a Medical Officer shall require a person who is isolated at home to wear a wristband. The wristband shall only be removed by an authorized medical professional when the person is medically cleared.

I wish to state that under this Order, a person who fails to comply with a requirement to be placed in quarantine or isolation, removes a wristband without authorization, or absconds from isolation, commits an offense.

Under the Environmental Health Services Act, failure to comply with measures imposed in connection with isolation or quarantine carries a penalty of up to \$10,000.

The SRO includes a requirement to notify the Ministry of Health if a person who may have come into contact with someone who has travelled to a country

affected with COVID-19 or a person who is infected by COVID-19, develops symptoms.

### **Mask Mandate**

The importance and efficacy of masks in the fight against COVID-19 has been proven time and again and along with physical distancing, has been recommended by the Center for Disease Control, the World Health Organization, the Pan American Health Organization and many other reputable medical institutions as an important factor in preventing the spread of COVID-19.

Therefore, in an effort to prevent the spread of COVID-19, a person shall wear a mask or suitable covering over his nose and mouth while

- Using public transportation
- In a public building including supermarkets, retail and wholesale establishments
- At a market or other similar business or place
- In other public places including parks, river banks and beaches

A person found not wearing a mask in a public place commits an offense. The fine has been increased from \$75 to \$500.

I wish to note that a business establishment that does not require a person accessing the business to wear a mask also commits an offense. Therefore the onus is not only on individuals but on businesses as well.

We are urging all Dominicans to do the right thing and wear a mask to protect yourself and those around you and all establishments to ensure that your patrons comply with the mask mandate.

## **Large Gatherings and Restrictions on Social Activity**

Under the Environmental Health Services (COVID-19) Regulations, a person shall not host or attend a large gathering. A large gathering in these regulations is defined as ten or more persons.

A person who is present at or promotes or aides or assists in the promotion of a large gathering commits an offense and a police officer may order a large gathering to disperse.

All religious places of instruction or worship will be open to allow for no more than ten persons and to facilitate the conducting of services by electronic or virtual means. This week we will hold consultation with the churches to discuss protocols for a safe reopening.

Weddings will be limited to ten persons which includes six persons other than the bride, bridegroom, official witnesses and the marriage officer.

Funerals will be limited to ten persons including one officiant and essential mortuary staff.

Anyone attending any sanctioned gathering must maintain a physical distance of at least six feet from other persons.

All schools shall remain closed and will reopen virtually under conditions to be further detailed by the Ministry of Education this week.

A person shall not host or attend

- A private party which includes any person from outside of the immediate household of the house occupant
- A recreational or competitive sporting event
- Any social event

- A meeting of a fraternal society, private or social club or civic association or organization

Anyone attending or hosting such an event commits an offense.

With regard to Public Transportation, no more than three persons shall occupy a row of a bus and no more than two persons per row in a taxi. Passengers must sanitize hands, wear a mask, and keep windows open as much as possible.

I am calling on all Dominicans to take these measures seriously. We have all seen first hand how transmissible this virus has been at large gatherings. The decision to maintain the limitations on gatherings is not taken lightly but in our interest.

### **Restrictions on Visitation**

Restrictions on visitation will remain in place that is a person shall not be permitted to visit any place of quarantine or isolation, hospital, infirmary, residential care facility or nursing home, prison, or a home where a person infected with COVID-19 is isolated. This is especially important to protect the elderly, the vulnerable, the incarcerated and the sick.

### **Reopening of Business**

With effect from Tuesday, August 24, 2021 business and establishments will reopen in accordance with protocols established and published by the Chief Medical Officer.

Every business or establishment shall be subject to the physical distancing requirements in Section 10 of the Environmental Health Services (COVID-19) Regulations:

- Ensure that customers and staff maintain physical distancing of no less than six feet in or outside of their business
- Determine the number of people to be inside by permitting one person for every thirty square feet of store space
- Place distance markers in and outside of the business
- Provide all cashiers with masks and
- Exercise proper hygienic practices

All establishments which were allowed to open under the Emergency Curfew Order will continue to operate, and all other retail and service establishments will reopen with the following exceptions:

- Restaurants will remain open for take out and delivery only
- Barbershops, Hairdressers and Spas to be opened on a phased basis under strict protocols from the Ministry of Health. Protocols to be published. Please note that approval must be granted by the Environmental Health Department prior to opening.
- Hot water spas and other tourism establishments will operate under the same protocols of the Safe in Nature Programme of the Ministry of Tourism.
- Bars and Nightclubs will remain closed
- Gyms will remain closed

Although we are no longer under a Curfew, the Police will work closely with the Ministry of Health to ensure that the measures under the Environmental Health Services are strictly enforced.

These measures present as cautious a balance as possible at this time between maintaining livelihoods, resuming a measure of economic activity

and ensuring the safety of all our citizens. We must however, continue to follow the protocols and follow the advise of the health professionals.

Let us continue to be our brother's keeper and do all in our power to make Dominica a safe a prosperous nation for all.

Thank You.