



Prime Minister's National Address on COVID-19

Brothers and sisters, we have entered a new phase in managing and preparing for the COVID-19 virus. By all available evidence, and based on the current trends we have seen in our neighbouring Islands, we expect that we will soon see our first case of COVID-19 on Island.

In those circumstances, therefore, and in order to safeguard our population against this pandemic, and contain this disease, the following measures will take effect on Monday, March 16th.

All schools in Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique will be closed for two weeks in the first instance, as a necessary precaution against the contracting or spread of COVID-19.

Further, teachers are being asked to work from home from next Wednesday, March 18th. Educators and administrators are asked to report to schools on Monday and Tuesday, March 16th and 17th, to prepare all relevant material needed to work remotely.

Social distancing is a new term in the fight against COVID-19. According to the experts the virus is contracted from droplets when an infected person speaks, coughs or sneezes and either drops on a surface or on a person within a six-foot radius.

We are, therefore, requesting that all public and other social gatherings, such as cultural, religious and sporting events, cinemas and other places that people gather, that cannot guarantee a minimum of six (6) feet of social distancing, be suspended, until further notice.

It is paramount that we protect as much as possible all citizens, particularly our elderly as they are most susceptible to die in this outbreak, as we can all recall the sad events in a nursing home in Washington when 29 elderly people were the first recorded deaths in the United States. We are taking no chances and making no gambles on people's lives.

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In this regard, therefore, effective immediately, all visits to elderly nursing homes will be suspended until further notice.

Those who are receiving at-home care are to exercise extreme caution.

We encourage the general population, especially the elderly, to continue to exercise an abundance of caution in everyday practices, to protect yourself and your families.

Those include constant and proper hand-washing, with soap and water, or the use of an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, with at least 70 per cent alcohol and disinfecting all surfaces using a mixture of bleach and water.

As I stated earlier, social distancing is one of the established best practices in the fight against the community spread of COVID-19. In that regard, we are asking that you refrain from using public transportation, when possible. We encourage bus operators to continue to sanitize their buses using the bleach and water mixture.

You will see aggressive sanitization measures taking place in public spaces, where necessary.

While the disease is serious, it is manageable, if we all work together.

By all accounts supported by scientific data, 80% of COVID-19 cases exhibit mild symptoms and recover at home. 20% develop more serious illness. The highest risk of serious illness is in people older than 80 years. People with serious underlying health conditions also are more likely to develop serious outcomes including death. The people who are at greatest risk are those older and who also have serious long-term health conditions like diabetes, heart disease, or lung disease.

I remind all citizens to continue to exercise an abundance of caution in everyday practices, to protect yourselves and your families.

Abstain from touching your face (eyes, nose and mouth) with unclean hands, and adopt social distancing practices as much as possible.

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Brothers and sisters, this is not the first time the world has been faced with a crisis of such proportion; neither is it the first time that the State of Grenada has been faced with a national challenge. If we act responsibly, collectively and early, we shall overcome this.

We have overcome challenges before and we will again. Our resilience is best revealed when we work together on all fronts.

We have always been our brothers' keeper and we will continue to do so. Call up your neighbors; check on them... but most of all, take all individual precautions to guard against and prevent the spread of this virus.

I thank the Ministry of Health and all those on the frontlines, working to ensure that no effort is spared in the management of this disease.

Please pay attention to all advisories disseminated by the Ministry of Health and all relevant authorities.

We are all in this together.

Government will be speaking with the International Monetary Fund and other international partners shortly, and will be looking at ways and means to bolster this situation and to keep our economies afloat during and after this crisis.

Fellow citizens, I assure that Government is working aggressively and we urge you to work with us on this. Already, we have met with all major stakeholders and we are assured of their support.

The Ministry of Health will continue to lead all efforts and will disseminate updates as necessary. The National Disaster Management Agency has already been activated, in coordination with the Ministry of Health and the National Coordinator of COVID-19, Dr. Mitchell.

In conclusion, the Government of Grenada will continue to monitor the developments related to the virus and will review decisions as more information and updates are made available.

We are all in this together.

I thank you.