



MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

TO THE SENATE

BY DR. THE HONOURABLE ERNEST G. PEETS, JP

MINISTER OF YOUTH, CULTURE AND SPORT

Large Group Exemptions

7th July 2021

Madam President, today I'd like to advise this honourable chamber and the general public on the upgraded process to apply for exemptions to host large group gatherings.

As we advised the public recently, the responsibility for approving large group exemptions is now under my Ministry.

Under the current Public Health (COVID-19 Emergency Powers) (Phased Re-opening) Regulations 2021 the maximum number of people allowed to gather is 50 persons.

Requests for group gatherings larger than 50 people must be submitted for through the online application form, which can be found on the gov.bn coronavirus webpages under 'forms'.

However, while we are able to consider applications for large group exemptions, I do want to remind the public that Bermuda and the world are still experiencing a pandemic. So, I remind prospective applicants that public health guidance must be followed.

There are Standard Conditions for Large Group Exemptions posted online, to assist applicants in understanding the requirements as they plan for events and submit applications.

There is also detailed guidance on the website on how to apply for large group gatherings, and people have been making submissions. We have received 32 applications since this responsibility was transferred to us and we are processing them without delay.

I'd like to remind applicants of the importance of submitting all their information, as incomplete applications cannot be reviewed and missing information causes delays in processing their applications.

Madam President, prospective applicants should take note that the online application must be completed in one session and takes at least 30 minutes to complete. Complex events with multiple dates and venues take longer.

Before beginning an application make sure you have all the information required, such as the site map with the required markings, such as a floor plan, spectator and participant areas, access and exit routes, bathrooms, traffic flows, etc. You also need to submit a declaration by the Facility Operator confirming their knowledge of the Covid-19 Public Health protocols and agreement to comply with requirements.

The online form asks for a lot of detail so we can understand exactly how an event host will ensure contact tracing details will be collected, how mask wearing and physical distancing will be enforced, their cleaning and sanitation procedures, as so on. SafeKey is required for indoor events with over 50 persons and outdoor events over 100 persons. Therefore, the application also requires details of how SafeKey will be implemented.

Applying for an exemption should not be taken lightly. The applicant signs a declaration accepting liability and, once approved, is legally responsible for all of the conditions being met and legally liable if they are not. The Police is informed of each event approved and spot-checks can be made by the Police, Public Health Officers or Youth, Culture and Sport Officers to ensure compliance.

Therefore, I ask that applications be treated with due diligence. The online form requires judicious attention. Any fields left unfilled or with wrong information – such as an inaccurate email address or letter text in a number field – will result in the form not going through. So if you are applying, take the time to do so carefully and correctly.

Madam President, Following submission of the application, an automatic acknowledgment email with an ID number is received. The application is then reviewed for completeness and the applicant is contacted if any information or documents are missing. Once all the information is received, the Ministries of Youth, Culture and Sport reviews the application, consults with the Ministry of Health if necessary, and provides a response.

Madam President, as we get into full swing of the summer season, we want to see people enjoying the safe environment we have worked so hard to create. Huge sacrifices have been made by many to get our country status where it is today, but we cannot be complacent. Precautions are still needed and the purpose of the large group exemptions is to ensure events can take place safely. We appreciate the public's compliance with the measures in place to continue to keep Bermuda safe.

Thank you, **Madam President**.