



**2018/2020 SESSION
of the
BERMUDA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY
OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT**

**17 April 2020
VIRTUAL SITTING**

*Sitting number 46 of the 2018/2020 Session
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**Hon. Dennis P. Lister, Jr., JP, MP
Speaker**

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BERMUDA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT****17 APRIL 2020****10:00 AM***Sitting Number 46 of the 2018/2020 Session***VIRTUAL SITTING***Continuance of State of Emergency pursuant to section 14(6) of the Constitution**[Hon. Dennis P. Lister, Jr., Speaker, in the Chair]*

The Speaker: Is everybody's microphone muted? It is now ten o'clock. We have 29 Members on, so I am ready to start. I am going to unmute Mrs. Wolffe's microphone so she can give the opening prayer. And then we will start the day from there.

Is everyone okay?

Mrs. Wolffe, you have the microphone.

PRAYERS*[Prayers read by Mrs. Shernette Wolffe, Clerk]*

The Speaker: Thank you, Mrs. Wolffe, for the prayer.

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER**FIRST VIRTUAL MEETING OF PARLIAMENT**

The Speaker: Welcome, Members. And I appreciate us, on this historic occasion, doing this first virtual take.

Good morning, Members. Our normal way of doing business has been disrupted by coronavirus/COVID-19 and has necessitated the need for us to meet virtually. This is indeed historic. The period we are facing is very daunting and recent events have predicated that the Government extend the shelter in place regulations and extend our state of emergency by way of a Resolution by the Premier which will be debated this morning.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

The Speaker: Let me also state a couple of house-keeping items.

One, I am going to ask the House to suspend the Standing Order rules. The rule for us to conduct business virtually, as we are doing today, is outside of our Standing Orders. The House will have to suspend the rules to allow us to conduct business in this format today.

And I am also going to ask that the House suspend the rules to allow us to limit the speeches. Both of the leaders in a conference call have agreed that the House will sit today from 10:00 am to noon to

allow some form of debate to take place around the motion with limited speeches so that we can stick to the time. After we finish, the Senate will sit, as you know, to conduct the Senate business today. And so we are going to limit the speeches from the normal 30 minutes to 15 minutes.

And I just need to have the House agree to those suspensions. And we are going to do that by using the button to just test it. I just sent it . . . and I did not get it, actually.

Give me one moment.

[Pause]

The Speaker: Members, what I am actually going to do is open all the microphones. And just by voice, respond to the [question on the] suspension of the rules. And then we will go on.

Once we have agreed to the suspension, the Premier will then introduce the motion and then give his remarks. Once his remarks are given, the Opposition Leader will get up and have his time.

All of your microphones are being opened right now. So you may want to just hold your comments at the moment. And I will see if all of the microphones are open.

Just by a show of voice, is everyone in favour of our suspending the rules?

AYES.

The Speaker: Thank you. The House has agreed that we will continue as stated.

[Motion carried: Standing Orders suspended to allow Parliamentary business to be conducted virtually and to limit Members' speeches on the motion to 15 minutes.]

ORDERS OF THE DAY

The Speaker: This just allows me to get people individually. I think I have got everybody's microphone at this point. I will just do a last check. All right.

So now with the House having agreed to the suspension of [Standing Orders] to allow us to conduct business virtually here today, and [having agreed

to] allowing the speeches to be limited to 15 minutes, I now put the floor to the Premier to introduce the motion.

Premier.

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. E. David Burt: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. Can you hear me?

The Speaker: Yes.

MOTION

CONTINUANCE OF GOVERNOR'S PROCLAMATION OF EMERGENCY TO 30 JUNE 2020 AND CONTINUANCE OF EMERGENCY POWERS (COVID-19 SHELTER IN PLACE) REGULATIONS 2020 TO 2 MAY 2020

Hon. E. David Burt: Great. Excellent. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I move the following resolution:

WHEREAS the World Health Organization has declared COVID-19 to be a global pandemic;

AND WHEREAS COVID-19 continues to be an unprecedented and severe threat to public health in Bermuda;

AND WHEREAS, in accordance with section 14(6) of the Constitution and section 18(2) of the Emergency Powers (COVID-19 Shelter in Place) Regulations 2020, ("the Regulations"), the House of Assembly and Senate resolved on the 6th of April 2020 to extend the proclamation of emergency and the duration of the Regulations until 6:00 am on the 18th of April 2020, and communicated that fact by message to the Governor;

BE IT RESOLVED that, pursuant to section 14(6) of the Constitution, this Honourable House approves the continuance of the state of emergency until 6:00 am on the 30th of June 2020; and the continuance of the Regulations until 6:00 am on the 2nd of May 2020, pursuant to section 18(2) of the Emergency Powers (COVID-19 Shelter in Place) Regulations 2020.

The Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Premier.

As you will bear with me, I am going to just open the microphones again so we can confirm that there is no objection to the motion being put.

Are there objections, Members?

[Technical interference; feedback]

The Speaker: No objections.

Mr. Premier, would you like to speak to the motion now? And again, I just want to—

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Technical interference; feedback]

The Speaker: I believe we have got most microphones muted again.

Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you.

[Pause]

The Speaker: Premier, I think . . . hold on a second. Somehow we have muted you again. One second.

Hon. E. David Burt: No problem.

The Speaker: Okay. Start over, Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, again this House meets in extraordinary session to play its role in the response to this global pandemic. And today's meeting is historic, as it is occurring virtually through the Internet.

The motion before the House today seeks to extend the state of emergency first declared by the Governor on April 1st until 6:00 am on June 30th. However, the Shelter in Place Regulations will be extended only until 6:00 am on the 2nd of May.

Mr. Speaker, let me explain. The Public Health advice is that for the shelter in place to be most effective, a 28-day shutdown is necessary. This represents two full 14-day periods of incubation for the virus. On May 2nd, we will have completed that 28-day period. However, Mr. Speaker, under our laws the power of the Governor to make regulations under a state of emergency is the only mechanism that we currently have to continue to appropriately restrict the movement of people and take actions necessary to mitigate the risk of community transmission.

It is for this reason that we must extend at least the state of emergency until the end of June.

Mr. Speaker, people have already died in Bermuda as a result of this virus. In the coming days, I hope to provide for the public the data that set out the predictions of what is still to come and how the disease may continue to impact Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, it is no exaggeration to say that the picture painted is sobering and by any measure tragic. The cold reality is that shutting down the Island for these four weeks will not make this virus go away and it will not stop people from contracting the virus. This shelter in place is to protect the vulnerable from these consequences and to ensure that our hospital and health care system are able to better prepare for the pandemic by acquiring necessary supplies and equipment to ensure that they do not become overwhelmed.

Mr. Speaker, when it seems that leaders around the world have employed all possible adjectives to describe the impact of this global pandemic,

we are left with a pure and simple reality: And the reality of the situation is that we can only reduce the potential for tragedy in this community by strong intervention.

As I face the people of Bermuda in daily press briefings, I have been at great pain to provide as much information as possible. The more we know and understand about this disease, the better we will emerge from its impact on our way of life. Mr. Speaker, the modelling of this pandemic for Bermuda will show a comparison of worst-case scenario versus what is most tellingly described as a better-case scenario. In other words, Mr. Speaker, there is no best-case scenario.

The worst-case scenario assumes we do nothing at all—no interventions, no measures of social distancing, a fully open and functioning society, almost as if the virus was just another feature of the flu season. That scenario suggests that we could see over 700 deaths and a peak of early June.

The better-case scenario is based on effective interventions along the line of what this Government has done over the past few weeks. This means a shelter in place, aggressive and maintained social distancing and, thereafter, a measured return to the reopening of business with restriction to minimise possible transmission of virus inside the community. This scenario, the better-case scenario, gives a prediction of 263 deaths with a peak in mid-September.

Clearly, “better” is a relative term, because even doing what we are doing now will still mean tragedy for too many families. But this, Mr. Speaker, is a global reality. Bermuda is not another world.

The real-time learning curve in this pandemic is the importance of testing. Mr. Speaker, in a very short period, I have been forced to apply my mind to the very complex science and regimen that is required to accurately test people for this virus. Every component of the testing process is in global demand, and we have had to bring resources and contacts with the private and public sectors to secure the items required to increase our testing capability in Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, global issues aside, this process has tested my patience and increased my frustration. And I frankly admit that we have not been able to test as much I would have liked to test at this point. The imposition of self-isolation and mandatory quarantine can only go so far in limiting the risk of community transmission, as it has incredible economic costs.

However, I feel able to express some cautious optimism. Mr. Speaker, the public/private contacts to which I referred have borne fruit. We have been able to test thus far due to the dedicated work of Dr. Desiree Spriggs and the Helix lab. And to further complement our testing capacity, equipment has arrived in Bermuda. And through the incredible efforts of Bermudian geneticist, Dr. Carika Weldon, next week we will have additional testing capacity with a custom-created lab at Southside.

This lab will be staffed by passionate young Bermudians who have answered the call to help their country at this critical time in our history and to give effect to the Government's mandate of aggressive testing.

Mr. Speaker, as I indicated in the opening consideration of this motion, while the state of emergency will be extended to June 30th, the Shelter in Place Regulations will end on May 2nd. This too should be explained. Mr. Speaker, in the same manner that we have progressively and gradually tightened restrictions on the movement of people and the operations of business, we must now plan for change. In preparation for May 2nd, the Cabinet will invite the Governor to issue a revised set of regulations, which will likely end the 24-hour shelter in place, permit additional businesses to open and prescribe a regime of home delivery or curbside pickup for customers to avail themselves of services they provide.

Additionally, Mr. Speaker, I will discuss with the head of the public service how to resume the provision of those government services suspended or scaled down as a result of the requirement for public officers to work remotely.

Mr. Speaker, this is perhaps the most delicate balancing act demanded in the modern era of government. We must be mindful of the ongoing needs to save lives while building a new foundation of this economy so that we can live again. This will not be easy and depends on more than leadership. We must have compassion, patience and understanding. We have to have continued collaboration and unity between political parties, the public and private sectors, and Bermudians and guest workers.

And, Mr. Speaker, at this time I want to give homage to the Opposition Leader. He and I have been in close contact throughout this, and we have had multiple briefings with his caucus. And I want to also thank them for their support as we continue to go through this unprecedented crisis.

People were hurting before COVID-19. And in so many instances that hurt has been magnified by gigantic shifts in this economy. At every level in this community—lender/borrower, tenant/landlord, employer/employee—people have all lost something. This Government will do its part to renew the hope of people and enhance the potential of the Island to recover from this seismic event.

Mr. Speaker, as I commend this motion for the support of Honourable Members, let me sound a clear note of thanks to all those men and women who have met the challenge in this extraordinary time by doing extraordinary things. They wear uniforms of combat trousers and shirts of familiar navy blue. They man cash registers, control lines, stock shelves in stores. They drive buses and haul containers. They keep late nights poring over statistics, providing advice for doing contact tracing. And, Mr. Speaker, behind surgical

masks they risk their own lives to treat the sick among us to the highest possible standards.

We owe them our gratitude, and their constant professionalism is one of the silver linings to this global cloud. And we, Mr. Speaker, salute them all.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Premier.

I will now recognise the Opposition Leader.

Opposition Leader, let me just shut the Premier's microphone down and open your microphone. There you are.

Opposition Leader, your microphone is now open. Can you hear me?

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Okay. Can you hear me now?

The Speaker: Yes.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Okay, great. Thank you very much first, Mr. Speaker.

I do want to recognise that this obviously is a very unique situation that we are in, and an opportunity, actually, as we go forward to move our House of Assembly sessions into a new era. And I am happy to see that your team has been able to, in very short form . . . as you know, I was a bit concerned that we would not be able to pull this off in such short form. But it has been done. So, I want to give thanks to your team. I want to give thanks to the IT team, as they have moved forward with this new venture that we are participating in. And I look forward to the following meetings that we will have in the like.

I must say that these are unprecedented times. I want to thank the Premier for the opportunity that we have had to have discussions. I am looking forward to intensifying those discussions and having more frequent and longer discussions with the Premier as well.

I want to first start out by saying, Mr. Speaker, that we have thanked many people within the community, especially those who fit within the area of emergency services and the fine work that they have been doing.

I would like to also highlight at this time, because all of us have come into contact with the [Bermuda] Regiment during the last couple of weeks as we are moving through this period, and thank them for the thoughtful way that they have pulled us all over who are on the road to ensure that they are doing the inspections, as has been meted out by the Minister of National Security. And so I want to say kudos to them.

I know it is not easy. And I know at times, in frustration, we as a people can get concerned when [we are] not quite sure of all of what is going on. And they have been the brunt of the success of this, and also they have been the brunt (the [Bermuda] Regiment) of maybe some challenges as we have moved

forward during this time. Again, I say thank you to the [Bermuda] Regiment team. Thank you to the Minister for calling them out. They are doing a fantastic job.

As we move through this period of time, one of the things that this virus has made very clear is that it is not a respecter of persons. It could care less which part of the Island you come from, which ethnicity you believe that you belong to, what socio-economic category you believe that you fit in to. What is clear about this disease is that it is after our vulnerable. And that is a major concern for all of us. I have heard the concern coming from the Premier and his team. I have also heard it come from our team as we move through this process. It is the most vulnerable who are under severe attack from this virus, and we must fight it to the ground and protect our most vulnerable as far as possible.

I want to thank Bermuda and those who have given into the regulations that have been put in place and the state of emergency, who have adhered to the guidelines that have been put out there. But we are still hearing rumours, and we are still hearing clear evidence that there are those out there who continue to try and move around the regulations, to not work within the guidelines that have been set out. And I must say to the Minister of National Security that we support every measure that you need to take in order to ensure that our people are kept safe as we move through this trying time.

I want to move to the motion at this point, Mr. Speaker. A lot of thought has gone into this motion, even though we just received it as of last night. It is important that we all clearly understand where we are and what is going on. As the Leader of the OBA [I can say] we wholeheartedly support extending our state of emergency period for another two weeks until May 2nd. What we are concerned about and what we are not supporting right now is extending the state of emergency through till the end of June 30th. I want to be clear here. We are not saying that this measure will or may not be needed, but most likely may be needed—just not this far in advance when we are still trying to get information pulled together.

My concern is that we are still collecting data. My concern is that we are still analysing data. My concern is that we are still trying to understand what we are dealing with. We are still attempting to relay as much accurate information as possible to our people so that the majority, if not all Bermudians, are clear on the direction that we need to go in and that all of our Bermudians and our guest workers actually get it.

Now let me qualify "get it." What should we be *getting*, Mr. Speaker? I have outlined two things. And I am sure if you talk to many folk they may have other things that they may wish to say to this here, but what we should be getting as a people, as Bermudians, and as our guest workers . . . we must understand that our most precious resource is our people. And any threat to this must be met with swift informed action.

And the second thing is this: To fight this war against our physical and economic ruin, we must aggressively quarantine, test and trace. It is important that we all get this. It is important that we do all three—quarantine, test and trace—aggressively, simultaneously. This is the way that we are going to arrest this thing. This is the way that we will continue to see our numbers get better as opposed to getting worse. We must continue with aggressive quarantine, testing and tracing.

Now, depending on who you talk to, there are many who feel that we are doing one part aggressively and maybe not some other parts aggressively. What I am saying is that it is clear that we need to get all three done aggressively. I am not sure if we are at that point yet. And I will qualify that as I go through.

Extending these powers is an Act of Parliament. And we can meet again to extend, if necessary. We now have regulations in place that have not as yet been tabled, and we are about to once again put in place regulations a second time, and the first ones still have not been tabled. That is a concern of mine, and I would have hoped that today we may have, or would have, at least at this opportunity tabled the first regulations that we put through.

As we have already seen, things constantly are being changed, fine-tuned and even sometimes retracted. I believe we must extend our reach to the broader public to ensure we achieve best results, and that we achieve as best as possible the right safeguards and also the right liberties for our people. How? This balancing act is not an easy task. And I recognise what the Premier and his team are going through. And so, because this is not an easy task, we, understanding that, will work with our Government to this end. We support the Premier in extending these emergency measures through to May 2nd and believe we should not continue on in this manner with regulations, and new regulations, until we have more information available to us and until these regulations are tabled so that we can positively move forward with whatever measures we believe to be the right ones.

Now clearly, we need a better understanding of the PHE [Public Health England] model so that we can put in better regulations to fit the required guidelines to achieve our desired results. Unfortunately, this week in our attempt to understand and get a better layout of the PHE model, we were not able to have that discussion in freeness on Wednesday as we attempted to. We had technical difficulties on Wednesday with the Premier trying to set this up. I am not placing any blame on anyone. I just believe at this point we as an Opposition were not given enough time because of these technical difficulties to be very clear on what the model is stating and what we should be analysing and what it is exactly that we should be doing.

We are hearing over and over from the public that they are still confused, still not clear. So we would

like to assist the Government in being very clear on the measures that are needed to [be put in] place. We very clearly can meet within a week's time or even two weeks' time to come back, if we need to, once we have had the opportunity to go through the modelling, once we have had the opportunity for more data coming in, to analyse this and extend the measures if need be through to June 30th.

And so with that in mind, what I am attempting to say is that we believe that the emergency measures must be in place through to May 2nd, and we should meet before that to consider the measures going on into June the 30th. We need to have more information given to our people so that they clearly understand the measures that are needed. This is a must. And I know that the Premier agrees that we need to continue to put out more information at this present time, based on where we are, still trying to understand the data that are coming in. We must have another two-week period of a state of emergency. But clearly, moving into this position today, there have been many questions.

And I know that the Government has been bombarded with all kinds of questions about the regulations and the state of emergency. What we need to do now is to be very, very clear on exactly where we are. We need to be clear on the number of tests that we can actually mete out. We need to be clear on the orders that are coming in, the regularity of these orders, and if there are not going to be regular orders coming in or the ability to test.

But the bottom line is that we still need more information to move forward. And with that in mind, Mr. Speaker, I want to again thank the Premier for the time that he has dedicated. I know that it is not difficult to . . . speaking [for] myself, we have been bombarding him and some of the Ministers with questions on a regular basis, or suggestions on a regular basis. I do believe that we can move even swifter if we broaden our scope to the private sector and include them in on some of this decision-making so that we can get a thorough, comprehensive feel for what is going on out there in our Island and the concerns that many people are having.

So I will close by saying that we support the measures going forward. We support the measure of two-weeks of state of emergency through to May 2nd, and we would like to be able to meet a third time under these conditions that you have set up, Mr. Speaker, to flesh out a bit more. And we will wholeheartedly support at that time, once we meet again, whether we need to go into a state of emergency until the end of June, June the 30th.

I want to thank you for this time, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for this opportunity. May God continue to bless us as we move through this period of time, as we work together to achieve saving our most precious resource, our people. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Opposition Leader.

The next person who has indicated that they wish to speak is Mr. M. H. Dunkley.

Mr. Dunkley, I am going to shut off the microphone for the Opposition Leader and then turn on the next microphone for the next speaker. Give me one second. The microphone is now on.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Good morning, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Good morning. Mr. Dunkley, you have the floor.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: No, Mr. Speaker, I did not ask to speak at this time. I just acknowledged your direction; but I will speak at a later time. So I will defer to my colleague.

The Speaker: Oh, okay. Yours was the first one that responded. Okay. Let me go back to the checklist and see who was planning to speak at this time.

[Pause]

An Hon. Member: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Ms. Gordon-Pamplin, would you like to speak at this time?

Hon. Patricia J. Gordon-Pamplin: Can you hear me, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: Okay. Would you like to speak at this time? You are on the list.

Hon. Patricia J. Gordon-Pamplin: I thought that we were going to have a Government Member and then an Opposition Member.

The Speaker: Well, I am just going by the response list that you see on the chat. I am going by the names that have responded thus far.

Hon. Patricia J. Gordon-Pamplin: Yes. I mean, I can speak. It would have been useful to hear somebody from the Government, but I certainly can—

The Speaker: Well, your name is next on the list. I am going by the names as they appear.

Hon. Patricia J. Gordon-Pamplin: Okay. That is fine. That is fine, Mr. Speaker.

Good morning to colleagues, and thank you for us being able to have this unusual and extraordinary meeting, unprecedented for us. But we are going through an unprecedented experience, that of how COVID-19 is impacting our community.

Mr. Speaker, given the Premier's motion, we certainly as an Opposition agree with the rationale behind ensuring that we have an additional 14-day shelter in place. And we have zero objections to that. I think that we can embrace the necessity as we look at how the results are actually coming through and the information that we have which would enable us to make a decision that is important to our people.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that as the Legislature, we have a responsibility to the electorate to protect not just their civil liberties, but their lives. And at this point in time, I believe we are dealing with a dichotomy in that respect inasmuch as people are getting frustrated. They are being . . . not locked up, but they are being asked to shelter in place. They are seeing what would be their normal way of life being stripped away from them. And they want to understand why.

So when we have enough information to say to people, *Listen. This is the experience that we are having. This is what we have seen. Our results have shown us ABC, XYZ. And as a result of that, it is important for us to help you, for us to be able to be in a position to assist people to say this is why we have to shelter in place. We understand your frustration.* But we cannot abdicate our responsibility to scrutinise the decisions of Cabinet in a collaborative way.

I do not want to ever come across as being critical under these very trying and difficult circumstances. But the unfortunate thing is that we did not have the ability to aggressively test at the outset. What we have seen from information that has come through on a worldwide basis is that testing is critical. Testing, tracing, as well as just making sure that we have the data to quarantine people. So this additional necessity to quarantine is not a problem. But in the absence of good empirical data, Mr. Speaker, I find it a lot easier to be able to go to our people and say, *We don't have all the information that we need as of yet.* So in two weeks' time, we will come back again as Members of Parliament fulfilling our responsibility to our people to ensure that they understand.

I believe that all of us, Mr. Speaker, have in mind the need to minimise frustration. We have seen some people act out. We have heard of situations in which somebody had gone to the grocery store, left the groceries in the car, gone away and then come back and the groceries were gone. These are the kinds of frustration that people are experiencing both because of lack of funding and just because of the mental challenges that they are having, the emotional challenges that they may be having as a result of the extended period of time under which we have to be under these restrictions.

So I believe it is very important for us to understand that if we can come back at a closer time, as opposed to saying have these powers until June 30th, we have got the existing regulations until May 2nd, and there is nothing . . . the Premier did not really explain why June 30th was the operative date. I did not quite

get that, unless I missed it. But I did not quite get why June 30th was appropriate and why, given that we have got this technology, we cannot come back in a two-week period of time. We can call right now a meeting at the drop of the hat. And it would seem to me that if we are able to get more information and we are able to speak to our people on a regular basis, then they would be able to embrace the decisions that Parliament is making and our ability to understand them and to help them to work through their frustration.

You know, if the Premier can let us know, or the Health Minister when it is her opportunity can let us know . . . how many complete tests do we have? When we say to people, *We are ramping up the ability of laboratories to process tests*, that is very positive and that is something that we all support. But how many kits do we have that are complete?

I think I have made mention of the fact, Mr. Speaker, that if we have 1,000 tests but we only have . . . and I am saying “if.” If there are 1,000 tests and if there are only 50 swabs, then technically we only have 50 tests. These are hypothetical numbers. But I just wanted to ask, How many complete kits do we have, or do we believe that we will be able to have in the short term, such that ramping up the laboratory capacities is going to be an effective and efficient use of the time and the resources that we have?

In addition, it would be important to know that we have seen what would appear to be local transmission. The earlier cases that we had, we were able to identify that person “A” came in on this flight and person “B” was infected by their association with person “A.” We have kind of lost that ability more recently, especially in respect of the results that came through from the Matilda Smith [Williams Seniors Residence] where, obviously, contact tracing may still be in progress, though we do not have sufficient information in that respect.

My question also would be, How many people have been allocated to the contact tracing team, and is there anything that we as Members of Parliament can do to assist that process?

We have people in our communities, and even though we will not have names, we can certainly have case numbers and be able to assist if at all possible. Because the more information that we have to feed into the model that we are utilising would obviously give us more accurate information coming out, and information on which we can go back to our electorate and say to them, *Listen. I understand the frustrations that you are experiencing. But this is really what we need to do.*

So, Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to make those points, if we can get some responses here. And I believe it is also important to point out that we are not criticising. We are trying to have constructive input into the decision-making process. We did have the ability or the opportunity a few days ago to look at the

modelling results. And those results . . . the meeting was abridged, through no fault of anybody. But we do not have a full understanding as an Opposition as to exactly what those results were trying to tell us.

The Premier gave an overview this morning as to what we have seen in the results. But we have not had the ability to drill down. We were told that we would be able to have further discussions on that. And unfortunately, that has yet to happen. And I am sure it will happen with the next day or two so that we have the ability to understand.

What we have seen is that we had a jump, we had a spike. The one area that we were actually able to test and to know from empirical evidence at the outset, looking at things that were happening in the United States, we knew that the vulnerable societies were our seniors. We put in place, the Minister has indicated, rules that indicated where those vulnerabilities are. And we have put in place rules to manage the nursing homes. However, our major [outbreak], as we have it, is in a nursing home.

So somewhere, notwithstanding the best of intentions and where we are trying to go with this, we want to ensure that whatever new regulations are put in place that we are able to think them through collectively, and maybe there is something that you, Mr. Speaker, can recognise, or maybe Honourable Member . . . you know, one of the backbenchers can recognise as being vital that may not have gone into the mix.

The Speaker: May I just remind you that you are winding down into the end of your 15 minutes?

Hon. Patricia J. Gordon-Pamplin: Yes, absolutely. And with those comments, Mr. Speaker, and recognising the shortage of time, just looking at, how can we work collectively and collaboratively so that our input and our intellect can all meld together to have the best outcome for the people of Bermuda?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.

The next Honourable Member on the list is Honourable Member Scott Pearman.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: And, Mr. Pearman, would you like to participate at this point—

Mr. Scott Pearman: Yes, Mr. Speaker, just checking if you can hear me.

The Speaker: Okay, Mr. Pearman. Let me just unmute your microphone so we can . . . or you can. Okay. Your microphone is unmuted.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can you hear me, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: I can hear you, yes.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Excellent, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for calling on me. I know that there is a limited amount of time, only two hours, and many wish to speak. So I will be as brief as I can and move as quickly.

Mr. Speaker, I have three points that I wish to raise. Firstly, how did we get here; secondly, today's motion; and thirdly, what are Bermuda's plans for the future.

How did we get here? On the 1st of April the Governor passed a proclamation of emergency granting the Government emergency powers under Bermuda's Constitution. Mr. Speaker, this is virtually unprecedented in Bermuda's history.

Five days later, in accordance with our Constitution, specifically [Schedule 2, Chapter 1, section] 14 of Bermuda's Constitution, the "Provisions for time of war or emergency," we came back before the House on Monday, the 6th of April. We met, and we voted. We voted unanimously to support the proclamation of emergency from the Governor and to extend to 6:00 am on Saturday, the 18th of April, the current shelter at home provision. That is this Saturday, tomorrow.

Mr. Speaker, the Opposition has supported, and continues to support, the Government's containment policies to reduce the impact of COVID-19. These policies include increasing public awareness, maintaining social distancing, temporary school and business closures, working from home and the current shelter at home containment strategy. These are all sensible precautions seeking to contain the spread of the virus, measures intended to reduce the loss of life.

Although many will rightly feel their civil liberties are being curtailed, most will understand why this is necessary. Conversely, others may feel the current restrictions do not go far enough. So we accept that the decision-making by the Government in these circumstances is not easy, and most Bermudians will understand that. We have given the Government time to find its footing on the shifting terrain. And because there is currently no COVID-19 vaccine, the Government's stated goal, which the Opposition supports, is to lessen the impact of the virus.

You will likely have heard the expression "flatten the curve." The virus will still spread, but the spread will be flattened—first contained, then slowed, and hopefully better managed medically. Yes, people will still catch the virus; and yes, deaths may occur. But containment seeks to avoid a spike in COVID-19 cases which could and likely would overwhelm not only our hospital, but our Island. This overwhelming [of hospitals] is a tragedy we have witnessed in other places where confinement was not as swift. So we

must be sure as best we can that our medical professionals do not fall victim. Doctors must not become patients.

It is also important from a constitutional perspective to caution that none of the regulations passed in recent weeks by the Government have been tabled before Parliament—not the initial regulations setting out the health precautions and restrictions, or the regulation providing for the broader lockdown. None have been tabled in this House to allow for debate on them.

Mr. W. Lawrence Scott: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Scott Pearman: It should properly be tabled today.

The Speaker: Let us take a point of order. We will take a point of order.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Mr. W. Lawrence Scott: Yes, yes, Mr. Speaker. This is the Government Whip.

The point of order on the Member is that the Member is misleading the House. The regulations are hardly ever tabled in the Chamber. We always do the legislation, and the regulations then come afterwards. And the regulations have been made public, which is actually something that is moving forward and different for . . . and actually, timely in the situation that we are in.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, if I may, as a point of order?

The Speaker: Premier.

POINT OF ORDER

Hon. E. David Burt: Just to correct the Shadow Attorney General. The regulations of which we are discussing under the Emergency Powers Act are subject to the royal prerogative. And they are not subject to parliamentary scrutiny. And that is something that is important to recognise and to understand. I think that was relayed to the Opposition on the first time around, or the second time. On these particular instances, these matters are regulations made by the Governor, not regulations made by the Government. And they are not subject to parliamentary scrutiny.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Mr. Speaker, that has never previously been conveyed to me or to the Parliament. And if that had been conveyed, we welcome the clarification as to when that occurred. But it is wrong to

deny this Parliament the right to debate the regulations that apply to each and every citizen in Bermuda. They should be tabled; and we hope the Government will do so, so they can be taken up for debate at the next sitting.

Mr. Speaker, secondly, I speak to the motion today. The motion seeks to do two things: to extend the shelter at home provisions for two weeks (we support that); secondly, it seeks to do a second thing, to extend the Premier's and Cabinet's emergency powers for ten and a half weeks to the 30th of June. We respectfully do not support that. Any extension of emergency powers can be for the same two-week period as the Shelter at Home Regulations are continued, and this House can properly and should properly come back in two weeks and debate any further extension.

We are balancing two of the things held most precious by all human beings. We are balancing life and liberty. But the burden on the limitations of liberty, the burden on those seeking to restrain human freedoms must be justified by those seeking to restrain. Restraint of liberty must be justified. We, the OBA, the Opposition, support the extension of the shelter at home provisions proceeding. I want to make that clear. But we do not—

The Speaker: Lost him.

Mr. Scott Pearman: We do not know what the terrain will look like.

[Crosstalk]

Mr. Scott Pearman: Mr. Speaker, can I be heard? I'm sorry. For some reason, it went off for a moment. I will repeat: We the OBA—

The Speaker: Yes.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We the OBA, the Opposition, support the extension of shelter at home provisions by two weeks. We do not support the extension of emergency powers for ten and a half weeks to the 30th of June. We do not know what the terrain will look like in May or June. The House could easily come back in two weeks' time or in four weeks' time, and we are due back anyway on the 8th of May. So there is no need for draconian emergency powers for ten and a half weeks. And we call upon the Government to amend the motion so the extension of emergency powers is considered again before the 2nd of May.

Mr. Speaker, turning to the third matter, which is, what are the plans for the future. Coming through the storm of this virus will take some time. People need urgent relief now. Almost four weeks ago, on Monday the 23rd of March, my OBA colleague, the Leader of the Opposition, Craig Cannonier, MP, called

for a bipartisan economic relief commission to be chaired by the Minister of Finance. They would work outside the often cumbersome process of the government. It would bypass red tape. We commend the Government's existing unemployment relief, but more needs to be done, particularly so in the area of payroll and tax relief.

The OBA proposed that consideration be given to payroll tax relief including, specifically, the first quarter of 2020, at the very least to small and medium-sized Bermudian businesses. Bermudians are struggling and continue to meet health insurance and other costs of employees who are not at work, as stores to businesses are shuttered and no customers or money are coming in. Shelter in place is a very wise precaution, and we support it for the next two weeks. But it comes with financial consequences for all Bermudians.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, we must also plan for the future, which is void [for] uncertainty. The truth is we cannot wait to plan for Bermuda's recovery. Planning for how we will restore Bermuda's economy should have started weeks ago, and it cannot wait any longer. My OBA colleague, Pat Gordon-Pamplin MP, Shadow Minister of Finance, urgently called for a bipartisan commission to create a strategy for the economic recovery of Bermuda once the COVID-19 is over. She said this, and I quote: "While it is right and proper that Government concentrates on ensuring the health and safety of . . . its citizens, we must at the same time plan ahead. Once this is over, we must be able to bounce back." She concluded her comments: "We must be proactive and ready to hit the ground running."

Her clarion call to be prepared was almost a month ago. With the greatest respect to the Minister of Finance, we have heard virtually nothing until his speech only two days ago. The World Health Organization declared COVID-19 to be a public health emergency of international concern on the 30th of January. Bermuda was afforded the opportunity to prepare not only in terms of being ready to confront the virus, but to plan for the necessary recovery afterwards. We tried to fill the void of uncertainty.

It is now the 17th of April. A plan for recovery was desperately needed then and remains desperately needed now. Let us get going, together. Bermuda was not in great shape before COVID-19. Things are going to get worse before they get better. And we need to come together as an Island and a nation to do our utmost to make sure that we have anticipated problems before they happen. We must chart our course now, and we must prepare now. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP Pearman.

I believe Minister Caines, if I am correct, would like to contribute at this time.

Hon. Wayne Caines: Yes, sir.

The Speaker: Mr. Caines, feel free to join in.

Hon. Wayne Caines: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can I be heard, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: Yes. We can hear you.

Hon. Wayne Caines: Mr. Speaker, over the last two weeks, or before, we have seen the Honourable David Burt put together the pandemic plan that has prepared this country to deal with some of the worst circumstances in over 100 years.

We have seen, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health mobilise a Health Ministry and health professionals and deal with a pandemic, exercising yeoman leadership. We have the opportunity to keep our country, at a most difficult set of circumstances, managing all these circumstances with aplomb. The Premier at every occasion has taken the opportunity to leverage the relationship with the Opposition, with the business community and with the general public.

We have heard from members of the public who have shared that they are pleased with the amount of information that is being given to the members of the Bermuda public, whether it is good, bad or indifferent. We have seen daily press conferences outlining the plans that the Bermuda Government has for the country.

Mr. Speaker, with reference to the national security of this country, we have seen the Bermuda Regiment, the Bermuda Police Service, the Department of Immigration, Customs, the Bermuda Department of Corrections and the Bermuda Fire Service. They have enveloped this country with leadership, with discipline and with honour to make sure the people of Bermuda are safe.

Mr. Speaker, it has been the sole purpose of our leader, the Honourable David Burt, MP JP, to make sure that our country is safe and that our country is protected during these difficult times. I must highlight that on every occasion we have been conversing with the Opposition on many different fronts. Several Members of the Opposition reach out to me on a daily basis, giving me advice, giving me guidance and helping us to get through some circumstances.

I take advice from Members on our backbench and in our caucus. Together we have put on the backbench our ego, self-aggrandisement and partisanship to make sure that our country is balanced, is protected and that we can fight through the pandemic.

Today should be no different. Mr. Speaker, the extension of the emergency order is simply to make sure that the Government is flexible, the Government is nimble to deal with any emergency that arises. It is a person who does not understand the benefit of a nimble Government who would suggest that the Government is trying to take away the civil

liberties of the members of the public. We understand the importance, the sanctity of freedom of movement, the sanctity of having the ability to go to and from. But we also understand that we are living in perilous times.

This should not be the opportunity for any Member of Parliament on either side to get on a soapbox and fight against the Government simply because that is the partisan nature. That is how we have been raised through tribalism. We cannot privately online and in our private conversations say that you support the movements of the Government and the direction of the Government, and publicly now proclaim that we are doing things that really are not in good and best keeping of the market.

We have an opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to walk this country through a difficult set of circumstances. We have heard this week where the Minister of Finance has indicated that he will set up a committee made of key business stakeholders and to fast-forward a plan. We need to allow us to put together the plan.

We support the opportunity for us to continue to work together as a team, as a country, bringing together all sides to work through this difficult set of circumstances. Mr. Speaker, I believe that together we can get through it. We will leave no stone unturned. We realise now that "Bermuda Incorporated," all of us, must work together. Mr. Speaker, there is no desire, there is no plan, there is no sinister plot to be vague, to take away, eliminate the rights of the citizens of Bermuda. The Premier of this country has a delicate balance to protect the civil liberties, but also to make sure that we can do everything possible to prevent the spread of this pandemic.

I would like to thank all of the Members of Parliament who have been reaching out to the Ministry of National Security. We value your input. We value the bipartisan approach. I would like to thank the Members of our backbench and our caucus who daily reach out to me and give me guidance and to the members of the public through emails, on Instagram, on Facebook—ideas, suggestions. We will continue to work together as a team. This is not about any individual. This is about making sure that our country thrives, that we thrive and that we put a plan together for the future.

It will not be easy, Mr. Speaker, but I believe together we will do it. The extension of the emergency powers is not a flight of fancy. It is simply . . . what we want to do is to make the Government more nimble, for us to be able to consider everything and to move without having to mobilise the entire Parliament to make our next move. Mr. Speaker, with that I say thank you.

[Pause]

The Speaker: Mr. Caines, you are complete?

Hon. Wayne Caines: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you for your contribution, Mr. Caines.

I now recognise the Member Ben Smith. Honourable Member Smith, would you like to make your contribution at this time?

Mr. Ben Smith: Yes. Good morning, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Good morning.

Mr. Ben Smith: I first would like to thank Minister Caines for the communication that I have had with him going back and forth during this time period. And I would like to echo his sentiments thanking all of the Members within our National Security—the Regiment, the Police, Customs, Fire and Prisons. Because when we are in the situation that we are in presently, it is important that we realise that this group that has put themselves forward to protect this country are in a situation where they have to put themselves at risk in order to protect us. So it is important that we thank them for their continued service to the country in making sure that we all feel a little more safe and secure.

But, Mr. Speaker, it is also important that we understand that during this unprecedented time the country is feeling anxious. We were in the midst of a two-week shelter in place. Many people are in a situation where for the first time in a long time, they are without work. They are used to schedules, they are used to being up early and being able to put forth their ability to work, their ability to be part of this society. And now they are at home, and they are feeling the anxiety.

So what happens is, we do have communication. There was information that has been presented by the Government. And it is not our position to just criticise or say that the Government is not doing their job, because that is not correct. We have seen the leadership making sure the population is informed on an ongoing basis. But there are some times that maybe a little more detail would be helpful, because as we carry on a situation where we have sheltered in place for two weeks, and now we are extending for a further two weeks, part of the process is going to be are we testing at the level that is needed for us to take care of the country. Because if we do not have the swabs which allow us to test aggressively, how will we come out of the two-week shelter in place and then be able to get back to some normalcy?

So that is why it is an important point for us to know what that capacity looks like. We hear, we understand that the Premier has said to the country that they are trying to ramp up the testing. But we also all understand that there is a shortage worldwide. So as we continue to push forward this shelter in place, the level of anxiety will continue to go up, because people

are without the level of money that they would have had. People are now dipping into their savings. Businesses that were feeling the weight of our economy prior to COVID-19, specifically our retail sector, they were already facing the brink of going underwater, and now they have been shut down.

This is a part of our economy that really has a large number of Bermudians working, where most of those positions are closed. So when we are making decisions to continue to move forward with shelter in place, it is important that we give some clarity of how we are going to be able to not just thoroughly test at an aggressive level, but also be able to show how we can test for temperatures so that we have the scanners and thermometers that will allow us to make sure that, as we open, we know whether people are going to be healthy or not healthy. Because obviously, these are the pieces that are going to allow our community to feel comfortable as we start to re-emerge. If we are not prepared to do that, then we will continue to have to be in a situation where we are going to have to shelter in place for longer periods of time.

I believe that getting more information about those particular supplies . . . so the amount of swabs which allow us to know how much testing we have, the ability to scan our frontline workers, the people who are working in our grocery stores and our pharmacies, to make sure that the people in our nursing homes and the workers in our nursing homes . . . we have to test ourselves by checking our temperature on an ongoing basis. We need to make sure that those supplies are available widely so that everybody is in that position.

Because I think that what happens now is people are sheltered at home. And they are seeing that the numbers are going up even though we have been in in this position. And that is where the anxiety starts to happen. Once you hear numbers like we are going to continue to be moving forward until June 30th, that anxiety level will continue to grow. And I understand that this is a balancing act. And it is difficult because nobody really has an answer of how we are going to be able to come out of this.

But as we are here, what is happening is the balancing part is that the economy is going to continue to falter while we are trying to balance saving lives in Bermuda. But on the other side of this, if we do not have a way for us to come out of this with aggressive testing and with an ability to scan our population, and we have to stay closed longer because of the limited supplies, we will end up in a situation where we stay in this position longer than we really need to or really should. Then it is going to be difficult for us to come back.

So if we could have more information on how the retail sector is going to be supported, I think it is important for everybody to know how we are going to be able to come out on the other side of this not just from a health issue, protecting our population, pre-

venting deaths, but also so that people will continue to be able to work hard and contribute to our society.

I would like to thank all of our frontline workers. I would like to thank everybody who has been reaching out and being supportive. I understand that for the Government Ministers and the Premier, this is a very difficult task that you are going through. And we give you the full support. But we also need to make sure that we have the ability to continue to communicate, which is the reason why we would like to have the opportunity to give our full voice to this conversation. And that is going to happen by our having this opportunity to come back with this virtual House of Assembly. It means that we can have debate at any time.

So we support May 2nd, and we would also support coming back so that we can continue in this fashion and be able to get information not just coming out from the Government on a daily basis, but also the ability for questions to be asked, which allows a broader part of the community to understand the details of what is happening and why these decisions are being made.

And with that, I would like to thank you, Mr. Speaker, for this opportunity.

The Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Smith. I appreciate your comments.

Would anyone else wish to speak?

I have Mr. Dunkley, MP Dunkley, down as the next Member.

Mr. Dunkley, would you like to speak now?

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Okay. Go right ahead.

MP Dunkley has the floor.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as I start my comments this morning, let me start out by giving thanks to all of those, starting with the Premier and colleagues who have worked so hard to try to put us in a better position, especially all of the frontline workers, or the essential workers, everyone who has been hard at work to make sure that we can stay as safe and healthy as possible.

Also, Mr. Speaker, with a very heavy heart, and I am sure I am speaking for all Members of the House, let me extend my prayers and blessings to everyone who has been infected and been fighting the virus. Certainly, Mr. Speaker, condolences, publicly, to the families and the friends of the five who have tragically lost their lives in fighting the battle of this deadly virus. It goes to show, as colleagues have said, that this virus knows no boundaries.

As we head through this very rough and rocky journey, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to see that collaboration and communication have been at the forefront.

And I want to thank the Premier and his colleagues for ensuring that this is the case. It has not always worked out as we would expect because some of the meetings have not been able to be conducted in an appropriate place. But still, we have tried. And I think generally in a dark time for our community, people are very happy to see politicians from both sides of the aisle coming together to face this crisis head-on and move this community forward. So we generally support that.

And I would like to especially thank Minister Caines for all of his energy in taking comments and advice, and some criticism from time to time, from our colleagues as we have moved forward.

Mr. Speaker, it is important in this crisis that we have unity as a community. But as my colleague, the Honourable Scott Pearman, said in a column the other day, "acts of solidarity" does not mean that we should not give advice and offer constructive criticism as we move forward, because the decisions that are made are made in the best vein when people have the ability to input into that. Unity in crisis means that we have to speak frankly to people from time to time, as we can move forward.

Let us face it, Mr. Speaker and colleagues. This Island has been paralysed by COVID-19. COVID-19 does not discriminate between black and white, between east and west, between Bermudians and non-Bermudians, between rich and poor. It can infect any one of us at any time if we do not take the precautions.

So I commend the Government for the shelter in place. But, Mr. Speaker, as my colleagues have said, we have challenges here today because, while we support the shelter in place, we are still trying to grasp the reasons that the Government has asked for the state of emergency to be extended until the end of June. And at this point, the Government has not said the [reason] why it needs to be extended to the 30th of June clearly, because we can come back to the House with these virtual meetings. We can discuss important topics in relation to this. The People's House can operate virtually, as we have proven here today, and the people still need to have a voice.

And why is that critical, Mr. Speaker? Because we are going through something which we all agree we have never seen before in our lifetimes. And certainly this country has not seen it for over 100 years, where we are so paralysed, where people live in fear. And while the Government is trying to put information out to allow us to be in a better position to understand it, there are still so many unanswered questions and so much fear and so much concern that people have every day.

The model that the Government is using has only just started to see some scope within the community. My colleagues have mentioned the Opposition had a chance to get on to a meeting Wednesday to discuss it. But unfortunately, some of us did not have

the ability to get online and get it sorted out to review the model. And having said that, because the model has not been understood enough, has not been questioned enough, people still live with grave concern. We need to accept, Mr. Speaker, as I think we all have, that information is the key.

And as we go through something that is so critical in our lives that very few people understand . . . certainly most of the public that we serve day to day do not understand what is next for Bermuda. Where are we? Where do we stand on that curve of infection? When is our worst period of time on infections for hospital care going to be? All of those critical questions need to be answered.

And with this information, Mr. Speaker, I contend that it will help people accept and appreciate the conditions that are imposed on us by staying in place. It will help people learn more about the ever-changing environment that we live in today. It will help people understand what we need to see to progress. Because, Mr. Speaker, I ask a question to the Honourable Premier and colleagues: In two weeks' time as we come to the end of the extension to May 2nd, what does the Government need to see to be able to ease restrictions on the shelter in place? What is the progress line that we need to see?

And with all of this information, it provides people hope as they go through the day-to-day when they are sheltering, when they are shut in. It brings them along through tough times, Mr. Speaker. And I think that is important. With information, we can bring people along through these tough times. It gives them some hope when constantly, from day to day, they are challenged with feeling positive about the next step. When they have their down days, when their strength is tested, when their stamina is tested, when their mental well-being is put under the test, it allows people to say, *Yes, we are facing a very rocky journey. But it will get better as we move forward.*

So, having said that, Mr. Speaker, I would hope that the Government would provide more information on the model. It has taken some time to roll out to the public. It needs to happen forthwith for people to have understanding and move forward on that. But we need to also understand, as my colleagues said, that this is going to be a multistep process. The first step is getting through the shelter in place. The second step is the rebuilding of the economy. Because, having said that, Mr. Speaker, COVID-19 is going to affect all of us no matter who we are. And our economy was not in great shape before that. And we need to realise that while people struggled before, they are going struggle even more after we come through this because of the impact of COVID-19.

And I applaud the Government to date for some of the programmes that they put in place with the unemployment benefits. But the road to getting back on our feet is going to be a difficult one because the immense challenge reaches so far into our com-

munity, and there are no simple answers or simple programmes that we can enact to help people get through the challenge that we face.

And, Mr. Speaker, as we look at this state of emergency that is about to be continued till the 30th of June—and the Opposition does not agree with it—one of the reasons why it is more important than ever that this House continues to meet is because the regulations under the royal prerogative are discussed by the Premier and colleagues nationally when they come to their broadcast. But they are only laid, and the House never gets a chance to debate them. It is critically important that the People's House has an opportunity to debate important information as we go through this journey of the state of emergency.

I fully expect, Mr. Speaker, over the next two weeks, for it to be very difficult at times. I would hope we would see some progress. But I understand and accept, because of what this virus has done in countries throughout the world, Mr. Speaker, that we probably still have some upward trajectories to face on this curve of infections. And I fully expect that easing of restrictions is also going to be a long journey for us as we go through. And that makes it even more critical that the 36 Members elected can have an opportunity to speak for the people whom they represent and that Government has an opportunity to listen to what all Members have to say.

And I know that Government is trying very hard. I cannot speak for my honourable colleagues, Mr. Speaker, but I can say that I am sure we have all been inundated in the past couple of weeks, and certainly the past couple of days, when they realised we were having this virtual [sitting]. People have been inundating and saying, *Please ask these questions. Please make these points for us.* We need to keep open the channels of communication, and we need to keep open the ability for you, Mr. Speaker, and the House of Assembly to call meetings where we can discuss this matter and we can make suggestions to the Premier and his colleagues.

Now, my colleagues have asked some very important questions. And I hope we get those answered going forward. One is, we would like to see more clarity over the next couple of days and weeks on what our aggressive testing regime is going to mean. How many tests a day will be conducted? What is the focus on these tests? Will they be focusing on our frontline workers, our health care workers? Will they be focusing in on hot spots in the community? Things like that are important for people to understand where we are and where we are going next.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, there has been a lot of talk of contact tracing. And we applaud contact tracing 100 per cent. But it would be very helpful for the people whom we serve to get some understanding of the success of contact tracing, what information it has brought to bear that impacts our model and how we are in a better position because of it. So people need

to know and understand what contact tracing means and how successful we are on tracking it down. Obviously, if contact tracing is successful, we could limit the spread of the virus in any way because we can find out the roots of where it has been spread.

Mr. Speaker, I believe it would also be a benefit for the community if the Government was able to tell us what the infection rate is, because if the infection rate is 1 to 1.5, we have serious issues. And easing up restrictions cannot be considered in any sustainable way unless that infection rate gets down somewhere below 0.9. And even at that time, easing of restrictions will have to be done very carefully because that infection rate can go back up again. And that is what we always worry about. Once you ease restrictions, the virus can come back.

And so this is a slow process as we go through it. I applaud the Government on providing information, but there is much more information that needs to be provided.

I will conclude, Mr. Speaker, by saying that I support the Opposition Leader and colleagues when we talked about having the bipartisan committee to look at the way forward. We need to start talking about when the airport is going to be opened up. How we are going to support tourism? Because tourism at this point in time, like many other jurisdictions, is dead on the vine, and many properties will not be [able] to even open their doors in the coming months and perhaps until next year unless we do something to help them move forward.

As my colleague, Ben Smith, talked about, retail businesses are struggling. They will need a life-line. And as we all know, there are many people who are getting unemployment insurance. But when that 12 weeks ends up, the sun will rise, but they will still be in a very difficult position.

And so, here we are in the Opposition. We are ready to work with the Government. We are ready to provide advice to the Government. We are ready to support the Government. But we cannot today, Mr. Speaker, support the state of emergency being extended to the end of June when we have the ability to come back any day we want to Parliament to debate things, to discuss things and approve an extension going forward. We support shelter in place to May 2nd. We look forward to what will be announced on easing restrictions. And we will continue to support the Government. But we will make sure that we stand up and say what concerns we have.

So in closing, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to the Honourable Premier when he has an opportunity to wrap up, and I hope that he is getting the rest and the nutrition that he needs to continue to work those long, tough days like we all are doing. This is a long journey. And we cannot think that we are super-people and we will get through it without taking care of ourselves. We need to take care of ourselves as well.

We would look for the Premier and his colleagues to say why it needs to be extended till June 30th, why we cannot extend it till May 2nd, come back and meet again and let the people's voice be heard through all 36 Members of Parliament.

Mr. Speaker, thank you. And to you and colleagues, I wish you health and safety. And together we will get through this and we will rise again because Bermudians and our residents are strong.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP.

The next Member who has indicated that he wishes to speak at this time is Minister De Silva.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I have a point of order.

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

Hon. E. David Burt: And I am just going to raise it at the end of the Honourable Member who just spoke for purposes of clarification, because it has been raised a number of times. And I put it in at that, Mr. Speaker.

There keeps being this conversation/discussion about the issue of the debate of regulations inside of the House. And it has to be continually reminded, as I said before, that these particular regulations are made under the power of the Crown and are not subject to parliamentary scrutiny.

As I indicated to Members of the Opposition when we met with them on Wednesday, and I indicated the fact that we were going to look to extend the emergency powers until the end of June, which is the longest possible amount of time, we said at that point in time that it is to give us the time and opportunity to come up with public health Acts that allow us to impose the type of restrictions which are necessary in order to ensure that the country can manage this type of thing.

Other countries have the ability to do these restrictions without emergency powers. Unfortunately, in Bermuda we do not have those particular abilities under our own Public Health Act. So the view is to put in place new legislation, and when new legislation is put in place the emergency powers can be rescinded.

The fact is, however, Mr. Speaker, that the point to take it all the way to the 30th is the maximum allowable time because, as is stated, we are looking at a peak under the better-case scenario of September. And we will need to be flexible on and off again. And what is important is that the Government is focused on managing this crisis.

So I am sorry for that long intervention, Mr. Speaker. I hope that other Members will be guided by that. I am happy to answer Members' questions when we come towards the conclusion.

The Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Premier. We look forward to having your right to reply at the end of the motion.

I believe Minister De Silva, would you still like to speak?

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Point of order?

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Or a point of clarification to what the Honourable Premier just said.

The Speaker: Is that Mr. Dunkley?

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes, Mr. Dunkley.

POINT OF CLARIFICATION

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the clarifications that the Honourable Premier has just provided. However, having said even what the Honourable Premier said, that does not mean that we cannot come back as a Legislature and discuss regulations that have been, or are being, enacted.

The Government obviously has the ability and the authority to enact legislation, and the Governor will have some hand in that as well. Our point is that as Members of the Legislature, we should have the ability to speak for the people to discuss these regulations. And because we can meet virtually, we can meet at any time you call a meeting, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for that point of clarification and order.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have to clarify. It is very important, Mr. Speaker.

I agree with the Honourable Member that it makes sense for the House of Assembly to be able to debate these items. And that is the precise reason why we are going to bring into place legislation that will subject this to parliamentary scrutiny. Nobody wants to be in the position where we are currently right now.

However, the fact is what we are dealing with is a public health crisis that our modelling says is going to take us at least all the way to September, even in a better-case scenario. So we have to make sure that we are focused on this. So I accept that Honourable Members want to have this type of scrutiny; it makes perfect sense in order to do that. But right now the Government must have the flexibility that it needs in order to continue to manage this particular public health crisis. And that is what we laid out.

I find it actually surprising, as we went over this in a meeting on Wednesday, and I explained the rationale and the amendments that would be coming to the Public Health Act to ensure that the requisite parliamentary scrutiny can be given as we move forward. It is not the perfect situation where we are now, Mr. Speaker. It is not. We do not like this situation. But we have to do it because these are the only laws that we have right now which enable us to put in the protections to make sure that we do not reach that dreaded 700 number that our modelling is showing us.

The Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Premier.

We will move on to the next Member who has indicated. I believe it is Minister De Silva.

Minister De Silva, I am going to unmute your microphone now.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Mr. Speaker, just a short point of order.

The Speaker: Try to be mindful of the time that is left here. We are trying to get the others who have indicated that they would like to speak the opportunity before we have to wrap up.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Okay. Twenty seconds, Mr. Speaker, if you will abide me.

The Speaker: I will abide you 20 seconds, and that is it. The seconds are now.

POINT OF ORDER

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I appreciated the Premier's explanation. When will the legislation be coming (as all Members were not in that Wednesday meeting for technical difficulties)? If the Opposition has an understanding of when, then we can consider that.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, the legislation is one of the urgent parts of this Government as the current situation is not ideal and we do not like it. At the point in time when that legislation is brought to the House of Assembly and passed by the Senate, the Cabinet will ask the Governor to revoke the emergency powers declaration. But it is extended for its full period in time because we do not know what may happen. There could be an outbreak. There could be Members of the House of Assembly who come down with it. There are lots of different things that may or may not happen.

But the thing that I told Honourable Members was that we are going to bring the legislation as quickly as possible so that we can have the power underneath the regular process in order to implement these things, as everyone must recognise that an emergency powers resolution and an Emergency Powers Act

is not the best way in which to handle it. However, unfortunately, it is the only way that we can actually put inside the requisite controls to preserve lives in the country.

The Speaker: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. De Silva, would you like to . . . That is your contribution, Minister?

[Crosstalk]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Can you hear me, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: Loud and clear.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: No. I would defer and wait for the Leader's comments.

Whilst I have the floor, I would just like to thank all the people not only on the front line, Mr. Speaker, but we have had many people who are what I call unsung heroes who are working behind the scenes delivering food and supplies to our people who are immobile. So I would just like to take that opportunity to thank them. And of course, I think when the Premier replies, he will cover all bases.

Thank you very much.

The Speaker: Okay.

The next Member is . . . the Honourable Member Atherden has indicated.

Would you like to speak now? Member, would you like to speak now?

Hon. Jeanne J. Atherden: Yes, please, Mr. Premier [sic].

The Speaker: The microphone is on me—Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, here.

Hon. Jeanne J. Atherden: Mr. Speaker. Yes, please, Mr. Speaker. (Sorry.)

The Speaker: All right. You have the floor.

Hon. Jeanne J. Atherden: First of all I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that I think it is important for us to understand that the concern that the Opposition is raising right now is not a partisan issue. We too have had people out there, members of the public, asking us about why regulations are in place, why they are not able to do certain things. And therefore, it is important for us to get clear that we are representing the people of Bermuda when we express their concerns.

I think that with respect to understanding the benefits of a nimble Government, yes; we all know that the Government has to make decisions. And we know that they are trying to get as much input, which is why the Opposition has felt that it could freely give

suggestions, come forward and ask questions so that the people of Bermuda can believe that we are trying to make sure that Bermuda survives this.

But I think what we have to understand is that for the people of Bermuda, we hear things about testing. We hear things about orders. We hear things about tracing. But the bottom line for them is that they want to understand why we are doing what we are doing, what can be expected. Because they want to ensure that it works. They want to understand what the results are supposed to be. And they want to understand if they will be sufficient to keep this virus from spreading further. Or will we have to do something more? And unless we have the ability to be able to have a target, know how well we are meeting it and know what changes that we have to make, the people of Bermuda are wondering if we are doing enough. Could we be doing more?

And you know what Bermuda is like, Mr. Speaker. Everybody hears something, and in the absence of definitive statements they make up their own conclusions. And I want to say something, because I think we forget that it is our job. And I say it is our job as the Opposition. It is our job as *people of Bermuda* to understand the process and to question what is being targeted, because we need to ensure that it is going to meet the desired results.

We also need to understand that if problems are coming up, then we know that the Government has put in some modifications to achieve the results that we need and to make sure that these things are done in a timely manner. And, Mr. Speaker, I thought to myself, *We do not realise it, but this is the equivalent of Bermuda's performance measure*. At budget time we have performance measures here. And we tell the people of Bermuda, *This is what we're going to do*, and then [one] year later, we go back and we see how well we achieved it. In some cases we achieve it; in some cases we do not.

But this performance measure for Bermuda has some very significant and important targets in the sense that if we do not do this right, more people are going to get this virus. If we do not do this right, more people not only are going to be infected, but unfortunately the numbers of death are going to increase. So when we ask the questions, we want to make sure that the targets that we set are achievable. We want to make sure that the basis on which these targets have been set are also logical in the Bermuda context. Because whether we like it or not, Bermuda has some unique characteristics in terms of what we have to do in terms of getting test kits here or what we have to do in terms of being able to do the tests. What are we going to have to do with respect to tracing, et cetera?

I have said to someone at some point in time, that I thought that Bermuda had a unique opportunity because of our size. Once we closed our borders down we were then able to stop our overseas transmission. We then could turn around and focus on local

transmission. I also said that because of our size we should have been able to trace it and have—

An Hon. Member: Yeah, yeah. I was coming in because I had to print something that I cannot print at home. So I had to come in to this event.

Hon. Jeanne J. Atherden: Sorry, Mr. Speaker.

[Crosstalk]

The Speaker: Somebody's microphone is on. Somebody's microphone is on. Please turn your microphone off.

Hon. Jeanne J. Atherden: We have the ability when it comes to tracing to know that we do not have an unlimited population. Our population here is fairly manageable, in my opinion. But you have to make sure that the resources are there. We also have to make sure that the people understand very clearly the questions that they are being asked and be as honest as they can in terms of who they have been in touch with or where they have been, because that is the only way that tracing is going to work.

I also have a real concern, Mr. Speaker, because knowing from the get-go that the people who are going to be most affected are those people who are vulnerable, those people who have medical problems, but also those are the people who, just by virtue of the fact that they are the elderly, are the individuals who are going to be most affected by coming in contact with other people who, based on their age, are probably able to manage it. This is how we get the issue of people being asymptomatic and just going along and not understanding, and other people coming in contact with them and being wiped out.

So, Mr. Speaker, when we ask questions about at what point in time were the rest homes and nursing homes told to stop having people come in there, when we ask questions about where do we stand with respect to having anybody who was a staff member at the nursing homes and rest homes being tested, when we ask questions about how we were doing with respect to tracing, and you do not get—

Hon. Wayne Caines: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: We will take a point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Hon. Wayne Caines: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Member is misleading the House. The Minister of Health answered every question with reference to when people were asked about visiting in the nursing home. She has been very clear publicly and talking directly to the Opposition with reference to

testing and testing procedures, who will be tested and when they will be tested and why they were not being tested. It is incorrect to say that we have not been clear about those procedures.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Hon. Jeanne J. Atherden: Mr. Speaker, with no respect . . . or I should say, with all due respect, I am going to say that we have been asking the questions about this, asking long before the Minister started to tell us [answers], because the initial questions were about nursing homes in general. It was not about a specific nursing or rest home. And I think what people need to understand is that when you ask these things, the answers that you get are not as precise as they could be. And that is where we have the problem.

Mr. Speaker, as we go forward, one of the concerns (and this is the conclusion that I have drawn) is the fact that we have not been able to aggressively test as the Premier wanted us to do or said we were going to do. It is because we did not have the number of tests. And because we did not have the number of tests, we had to manage with what we had. Or we had to decide who the test would be given to in terms of people most likely to be affected and spread. I understand that.

But let us be honest with all of this, if you have an issue in terms of testing, [the] number of tests, you therefore have to say that there was some degree of prioritisation, and let the people of Bermuda understand. Even if we have to say we did not intend to have a restriction on the number of tests we had, we were out there doing what we wanted, but our efforts did not result in the timeliness of what we have found. That at least lets the people know why the numbers of tests are . . . I mean, most people who understand the science would say, *Okay. If these are the numbers of tests you have* (just 10 or whatever else, the number that you had in the beginning) . . . you knew that they were not going to be that strong, because you had 80 tests, and you are going to spread them all out? You cannot do 80 in the first. You have to try and give them to the people who have most logically been exposed to see whether you have to do something about managing them.

Because we understand that it is managing and we understand that it is important for us to try and test those people.

[Crosstalk]

Hon. Jeanne J. Atherden: I think, Mr. Speaker, what we also understand, which is something that we are all learning, Bermuda learned, the same way the rest of the country learned, is the fact that, you know, the people who are asymptomatic . . . we realise now that they are out there. They do not realise what is hap-

pening. But they are exposing other people. And therefore, this whole thing about tracing is so important. This whole thing about people understanding how you protect yourself in terms of washing your hands and going out there and having masks on, and not going out and visiting your vulnerable people, whether they are elderly or not . . . all of these things, I know the Government has been trying to get the people of Bermuda to understand. But unfortunately, like everything else, not everybody understands. And, therefore, we have got to keep saying it over and over.

But getting back to where we are today, Mr. Speaker, I think it is important to realise that in order for the people of Bermuda to say, *Let me be comfortable with the fact that I am not going to be able to have the ability to assemble and do what I want . . . And I am going to turn around and say that there is a regulation that says I cannot do all of these things until the end of June.* They need to understand the logic of doing this and what the Government hopes to achieve. And when I say *what the Government hopes to achieve*, they have to see how . . . I know it is too early to talk about how the curve is bending. But you have Public Health England telling us certain things. They obviously have some projections, and we have to know . . . are we meeting those projections?

And they also have to know that in terms of the testing, in terms of the isolation and those other things, are we doing that in a manner that [states] that the parameters, the presumptions . . . because when you do this, when you come up with modelling, you have some presumptions. And you have to make sure that those presumptions are actually real. The presumptions are in terms of the tracing, the presumptions in terms of the numbers of tests that you could do.

I am really pleased that we are actually going to have another lab open up. I am disappointed when I hear some of the things that we do not have, which means that having the kit means that you do not actually have as much of what you think you have because there are some things here that are what I call limiters. And those limiters mean that you cannot do the whole process until everything is there.

So, Mr. Speaker, I am, like my colleagues, supportive of what the Government has to do with respect with having us staying inside, having us being in place, going out, not making sure that we do anything to impact on—

The Speaker: Member, you have less than a minute on your time.

Hon. Jeanne J. Atherden: Okay. But what I do think, Mr. Speaker . . . and I appreciate what the Premier said with respect to the legislation. And I think that this is why it is important, because if legislation is coming, until that comes, the people of Bermuda have to know

in the interim how are you doing in terms of what you want to achieve when you are telling us, *Stay at home.*

Are we achieving that goal, that target? If we are, they will feel more comfortable. If [we] are not, they will want to know what else we are doing differently. What are we changing to make sure this happens? Mr. Speaker, without that, there is a degree of uncomfortableness in terms of extending this.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.

The next Honourable Member is the Deputy Speaker. Deputy Speaker, you have the floor.

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Let me see if we can get your microphone open for you, Deputy. One second.

[Pause]

The Speaker: There you go. Yes, you are on now, Deputy.

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, again I want to thank all those who are on the front line, all the health care workers, the caregivers, our sanitation workers, the Bermuda Regiment, the Police, the Chief Medical Officer. And also, Mr. Speaker, I would like to give thanks to the local business community, the international business community for all the assistance they have given us and the people of Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, let me just say that the order until the end of June to me is not an issue. Because if it was an issue, the Governor, who resides on Langton Hill, would have informed the Premier it is too long. And it is only there as a provision if we need it. So it is not an issue to be debating and saying we do not agree or disagree. To me it is nonsense, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, when the Opposition are calling for more information, the information is given daily. The Premier and his team are there, and they are there as long as it takes, necessary questions coming from the press and everybody else and giving that information. Mr. Speaker, all the policies and regulations for this pandemic that we are dealing with have come from the medical health professionals. Let me be clear, because it seems like some of the Opposition feel that we sit down and just make decisions amongst ourselves.

An Hon. Member: Oh, come on!

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: We are guided by—

[Crosstalk]

The Speaker: Your microphone is on.

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: No one else. Let us be clear about that.

And, Mr. Speaker, let me say this here. We have been getting approval from just about everyone whom I have talked to about the leadership of this situation we have. We have been applauded from all walks of life. And to come and say that some of the comments I have heard this morning would have somebody think a little differently. The Premier has made it quite clear he has been in touch, talking with the Leader of the Opposition. And I know, as the Opposition Leader said himself this morning, he has talked to the caucus of the OBA, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, let me say this here, that any plan you put in place, whether it be in Bermuda, United States or the UK, you are not going to please everybody. That is just the way it is. But it does not stop us from trying to please everybody, Mr. Speaker.

Let me say, Mr. Speaker, I forgot to say earlier, that we pray for those who have been afflicted with this virus. We hope they have a very speedy recovery, and let us get Bermuda back to where we should be.

Mr. Speaker, people have got to realise that we must abide by the rules which are in place. The Premier has enunciated daily, people are dying. We do not want that. And I suppose some people say, *Well, if people want to die, then they do what they want to do.* But that is not where we are as a Government. We want to save everybody regardless of whether you hear or you cannot hear. So, Mr. Speaker, discipline is the key. And, you know, if you think about years ago the older folks during World Wars I and II, what they had to go through, we have so much more than they had. But they subscribed to discipline. They did not have any television at home and computers and all that type of stuff. But they did what they were directed to do, and they came through it, Mr. Speaker.

So I would just ask everybody . . . Let me say this first. It appears to some if the Government says, *Let's start this at one o'clock*, some would say we should have started at twelve-thirty. We should not do that. If the Government says start at one, let us start at one. And again, Mr. Speaker, we ask everybody to practice discipline. Because if we practice discipline, we can get out of this situation quicker than we envision. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Deputy.

Members, we have been mindful that we are trying to have this day wrap up around noon today, and it is 10 [minutes] to noon now. We would like to have the Premier do his closing, his reply to the motion. And then we can put the motion.

Mr. Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, there have been a number of comments from Honourable Members. And so I will do my best to answer them while keeping in time, recognising it is 11:50 and the motion that you passed at the beginning limited this sitting to two hours. So I want to ensure that I answer as many questions as possible.

Mr. Speaker, I want to again pay tribute to you for organising this. I think it has actually worked pretty well. And while this is a surprise that it has worked as well as it has, I hope that people have been able to listen and see Parliament at work.

The Speaker: Well, we are all under learning curves under these conditions.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you, sir.

I think that it is . . . I just want to start my statements by saying that as someone who sat in the House of Assembly for the first time in Opposition and was there for four and a half years, I recognise the important value that the Opposition plays in a democracy. And holding the Government to account and asking questions is what makes our democracy vibrant and strong. And there is no way, shape or form that I will ever want to curtail that effort whatsoever. And so I welcome the scrutiny and I welcome the questions of the Members of the Opposition, because they may be questions that people certainly want answers to.

And I do also want to make sure that I am quick with my reply today, as there is the second meeting this week with the Members of the Opposition and officials for the Ministry of Health to go over further modelling information and to answer further questions of which they may have, which is actually scheduled at twelve o'clock.

But what we are going to continue to do is we are going to continue to give that information, and we are going to continue to keep up that collaboration. Because one of the things that is most important is that, as we move past this phase of shelter in place, and as we move into a new phase of long-term social distancing, trying to get our tourism economy back, trying to make sure that our domestic economy is sound and making sure that we stimulate investment, we are going to need all hands rowing . . . or sorry, all persons rowing in the same direction. And so from that particular perspective, Mr. Speaker, I am not going to admonish any Member of the Opposition for asking their questions; I am going to do my best to answer them.

I am going to turn over a new leaf as the leader of this country, and I am going to try to engage in the best bipartisanship that is possible as the leader of this country. And that is what I am going to do be-

cause that is what the people of this country require for us to get through this particular thing.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you.

There was a question from Honourable Members regarding more help with contact tracing. I think that came from the Shadow Minister of Health. Health has been given the full resources that they do require, as the government itself is not closed, but government is working from home. Government departments and additional resources have been given to the Ministry of Health. I have told the Minister of Health that any particular person whom she needs or requires she will have. And so that is working particularly well.

As has been stated publicly, there is new software that has been installed to make this contact tracing more efficient. This afternoon I have a meeting with Dennis Pitcher, who is marshalling public and private sector resources in order to build one of the apps for contact tracing, as we have seen in other particular countries. And we are examining whether or not we are going to use the Google/Facebook model or build off of the open-source protocol that we have for Singapore. So these are things which are also important.

But what is key to note, Mr. Speaker, is that widespread testing is the one thing that is going to assist us in not only contact tracing, but isolation. And so the Members speak about the fact that we need to test more and isolate; that is correct. Now it is important to note that this week we would have done far more tests than we have done in the previous two weeks combined. We have increased our testing capacity. We were able to test all of the persons at Matilda Smith nursing home. We are increasing our capacity to test front-line workers and persons in other rest homes.

And I am not going to announce it today, because I am waiting for Dr. Carika Weldon to confirm, the volume of testing, which she will be able to do. But Dr. Carika Weldon is working to make sure that as of next week, we will be able to deliver 200 tests per day. Now, this will be something that will be, hopefully, very good. But we do not have the confirmation of that verification process yet. But that is what we are working towards, Mr. Speaker.

And I want us to recognise and to understand that the only way that we are going to be able to cut out the shelter in place and make the economy work is to make sure we have widespread testing. And as I have indicated to Members, and as I indicated in my opening speech, it has occupied the entirety of my time, making sure that we can pull out the stops. I cannot tell you, Mr. Speaker, how frustrating it is for there to be officials in certain places around the world where you get a bill of lading and you expect that you will have swabs on a shipment, and it gets to the air-

port and it is not there, because someone may have swiped it at the airport. That is just what happens. It is this type of stuff . . . not at the airport here, but at the airport overseas. It is this type of stuff that governments are challenged with around the world.

However, I did inform members of the public, and I am happy to inform Members of the Opposition that on Wednesday night we received a shipment of 10,000 swabs. I think I actually told that to a person inside of the meeting that we had on Wednesday, that we got a shipment of 10,000 swabs. Those are being validated today, and hopefully they will work. We had a shipment earlier this week or last week of 1,000 swabs. And we got our hopes up, and those ones did not work. So it is something that we have to make sure we validate and go through that particular process.

If those swabs get validated, we have the capacity on Island right now, and with additional supplies which are en route, to make sure that we continue an aggressive testing regime. And it is at a minimum that I expect for us to test 500 persons next week. But I expect that maybe we will be able to test more persons next week. And that I think is particularly important.

There was a question about what is needed to end the shelter in place. The shelter in place was scheduled to end on May 2nd. We had two complete incubation cycles, or suppression. And after the shelter in place ends on May 2nd, it is likely that we will revert. It is likely that we will revert back to where we were prior to going to the shelter in place, where there are going to be restrictions on retail, curbside pickup, delivery, et cetera. So we are going to do it in a rolled-back and controlled fashion, followed thereafter—if it is safe to do so and if we see falling numbers that we are managing to control the infections of which we have, which we fully expect to do if we have a very aggressive testing regime—we will be able to start opening other services like the government and schools as well. Because these are things that are particularly important to make sure we get our economy back to full productivity.

During this particular point in time, as well, we are making sure that we are bringing in PPE. There are 600,000 surgical masks which are due to arrive in Bermuda either today or on Monday. So these are things of which we are certainly working on. And so this is a process.

Members of the public and Members of the Opposition have said that we need to have public and private sector collaboration. We are doing that. I asked the Leader of the Opposition for a Member to join the Procurement Committee, of which we are setting up to help merge public sector and private sector resources in this. And he has given a person to sit on that committee. So that is the type of leadership of which the Government is trying to provide, recognising that the only way that we are going to get through this

as a country is if we use the collective talents of both Government, Opposition, public sector, private sector, work permit and Bermudians all together to make sure that we can get through this particular situation.

Now again, Mr. Speaker, there were a lot of questions about an extension of this state of emergency until the 30th. The reason is, Mr. Speaker, that we are anticipating (as I shared) that the peak of this infection currently right now with the data that we have will be with us until the late summer, September. And in that particular case and instance, Mr. Speaker, as they are saying, you have to continually be able to adjust. So if you reach a peak, a point where there are more infections than you expect, there might be a cluster that may have been undetected. It might be a particular individual who manages to spread it to a lot of persons. And you have a large outbreak. You will have to come back and control these things very quickly.

And unfortunately, the only mechanism underneath our laws in Bermuda as they are currently constructed is the state of emergency and emergency powers underneath the Emergency Powers Act 1963. That is the reason why the Cabinet will be considering shortly, probably even on Tuesday, a paper to issue drafting instructions for amending the Public Health Act. It will be the most urgent Order of Business of which we are looking to get to when the House of Assembly comes back on May 8th so that we can go ahead and get that done.

And as I have given Honourable Members the undertaking here, and as I have given persons the undertaking of his Excellency the Governor, the minute that we get those things through the House and the Senate and into law, the Cabinet will ask the Governor to rescind his declaration of a state of emergency, as that will no longer be required as we will be able to manage these things under the Public Health law.

We are not expecting persons to stay in their house after May 2nd. We are expecting persons to follow the rules and laws as they are going to be laid out at that point in time. But we have to have the ability in order to make sure that we are flexible in the case of an outbreak. We have seen that happen across the world, where they think that they might have to let up, and they have to push back again. We do not want to find ourselves in that predicament. And though I am a great believer in the views in respect of Parliament, it is also particularly important, Mr. Speaker, to recognise and remember that inside of this effort there is an incredible amount of work to do. And we are making sure that we keep the Opposition informed at every single point in time.

The final thing I will say is on the issue of testing. As I have said, Mr. Speaker, testing has not been up to my ideal. But there is light at the end of the tunnel. So the incredible work that Dr. Desiree Spriggs has done at Helix right now to this point, and our be-

ing able to bring on a second lab, which is going to the verification PAHO as we speak, will get us to a point where we are able to certainly ramp up our regime. We are in the top 25 per cent of testing around the world, and we aim, by the end of next or the week following, by the time we come off the shelter in place, to be in the top 10 per cent.

The policy of the Government is to aggressively test. We are going to use every resource at our disposal to make sure that we aggressively test. And I want to say that I believe that we will get there.

So in closing, Mr. Speaker, I want to echo the sentiments of colleagues that this has been an incredibly difficult situation. I want to thank colleagues for their support. I want to thank the Members of the Opposition for their questions. I want to give homage also not only to those on the front line, but also to extend the collective condolences of the Government and the people of Bermuda to all those who have lost lives, and those ones who are actually now battling this particular infection.

We will get through this as a country. And I do believe, Mr. Speaker, that this debate has made us stronger and has helped the country to know and understand what it is we are facing and how it is that we will get through it together. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Premier.

With that, Members, we will now put the matter to the floor. And for those who were on the session last night, it will be done by polling. I am about to send you the polling now. And you just respond accordingly.

[Pause]

The Speaker: Just bringing it up back on to the screen.

[Pause and inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Members, you should have received the question on your page now. And you can tick A, B or C.

[Pause]

The Speaker: Members, just for information, when we take a vote in the House under a vote call, you know we have a time limit for everybody to be able to get in their seat to vote. And then once that time limit has passed, you cannot vote if you are not in your seat.

It is similar here. There is a time limit for the vote to be taken, and we are just letting that time limit run its course right now as you indicate your desire.

[Pause and inaudible interjections]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Mr. Speaker, one or two on our team are having a little difficulty finding the poll. If you could bear with us a minute.

The Speaker: Oh, okay. It should . . . I will walk you through it now. On their screen, to find it they should be—

An Hon. Member: Left button.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Just a second. If you have at the bottom of your screen the five or six circles down in there . . .

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes.

The Speaker: You should have . . . at the bottom of your screen there are about six different circles. The second circle in from the right, the black circle with the three little dots . . . you click on that. It should open it up for you.

Hon. Lovitta F. Foggo: Mr. Speaker, once you submit, the poll question disappears. Maybe that . . .

[Crosstalk]

The Speaker: If they have answered it, right. It will disappear from your screen once you've answered it, and once all the results are in, I can send it all back to you.

Hon. Patricia J. Gordon-Pamplin: If you look at the polling with poll questions, all it says is that the vendor has not shared the poll results. But for anybody who has not seen the question, it is not showing what the question is, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: You should have gotten . . . before you have seen . . . I have not shared the results. You should have had the question first.

Hon. E. David Burt: Yes, Mr. Speaker, my Members are voting.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Ours as well. I believe it is only one person who may be having difficulty. But all of ours are . . .

The Speaker: Okay. I have got 47 seconds left on that timeline. Is anyone else still having difficulty finding it?

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Twelve seconds left, and then we will close up the poll and send the result.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: The poll just closed. And I am going to send the poll results now. Have you received them?

Hon. Michael J. Scott: Yes, we can see them, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

The Speaker: Okay. And it looks like the yeses have outdone the noes. So the motion has passed. And the motion, again, is as follows:

BE IT RESOLVED that, pursuant to section 14(6) of the Constitution, that this Honourable House approves the continuation of the state of emergency until 6:00 am on the 30th of June 2020; and the continuance of the Regulations until 6:00 am on the 2nd of May 2020, pursuant to section 18(2) of the Emergency Powers (COVID-19 Shelter in Place) Regulations 2020.

[Motion carried by majority: The House of Assembly resolved to continue the state of emergency to 30 June 2020 and the Emergency Powers (COVID-19 Shelter in Place) Regulations 2020 to 2 May 2020.]

The Speaker: Members, I want to thank you for your participation this morning on this historic occasion for us to be able to meet under these conditions of sheltering in place and social distancing, where we have been able to exercise the virtual space platform. And I sincerely appreciate all of us for the effort to get it to make it work for us today.

There have been a few stumbling blocks. But I am sure that as we, if we are called upon to use it more or during this period we will improve our performance on it as time goes on.

Again, to the listening public, I want to thank you for once again tuning in and bearing with us as we work down through the process of making this session possible for you today via this virtual space.

I just want to close by encouraging each member of the public to practice the safety measures that are in place, as it is for each of us to carry our own responsibility in ensuring that this virus does not spread. Because it only takes one of us to ignore the process, and we could be that one person who is spreading it around our community and causing death to others. Please, please—I cannot say it enough times to our public, please—practice proper safety precautions.

The Speaker: With that, Members, I think we stand adjourned right now until May 8; otherwise, we [might] need to come back should there be a need, under the emergency of the virus, to come back. But at this moment, the House now stands adjourned.

Hon. Michael J. Scott: Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, with the leave of Mr. Speaker, Michael Scott.

The Speaker: Yes?

Hon. Michael J. Scott: Mr. Speaker, the Clerk has just indicated that we need to move a motion to send a message to the Governor.

The Speaker: Yes, yes, yes. Yes.

Hon. E. David Burt: Yes, thank you very much.

The Speaker: Yes.

Hon. E. David Burt: I appreciate that.

The Speaker: Thank you, Member Scott.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, if I may?

The Speaker: Thank you, Member Scott.

Mr. Premier, can you move that the motion is passed and send a message to the Governor?

Hon. E. David Burt: Absolutely, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, having considered the resolution which has been agreed by this Honourable House, I now move that a suitable message be sent to His Excellency the Governor.

The Speaker: Are there any objections to that?

No objection. It is so moved.

An Hon. Member: It is so moved.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Appreciate that, Members.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Honourable House do now adjourn until Friday, May 8th.

The Speaker: Friday, May 8th. Thank you, Mr. Premier.

The House now stands adjourned. And, Members, remain safe. Thank you.

[At 12:12 pm, the House stood adjourned until 10:00 am, Friday, 8 May 2020.]

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