



BELIZE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE & INDUSTRY

4792 Coney Drive, 2nd Floor Withfield Tower, P.O. Box 291 , Belize City, Belize, Central America

OUR REF: BCCI/PRES 05/03-2020

March 31, 2020

Hon. Dean O. Barrow
Prime Minister
Office of the Prime Minister
Belmopan City
BELIZE

Dear Hon. Prime Minister,

Organized State of Emergency Planning Proposal

We recommend that the Government of Belize consider organizing a state of emergency for the country according to the following.

Goals:

1. Allow time to carry out health surveillance in order to better assess the extent to which COVID-19 has spread across the country. This allows for better planning in order to reduce the likelihood of overwhelming our Health Care system.
2. State of Emergency should be announced under the theme of prevention of the spread of COVID-19, as it is the proven method of fighting this pandemic. Elder persons and at-risk persons should be the most restricted.
3. After this temporary period of shut down for health surveillance and self-isolation to control the spread, communities will be better assured of the state of the spread of COVID-19 across the country and economic activities can commence in a safe and systematic manner to revive the economy -and restore jobs- as quickly as possible.

Time Period:

Initial period of 14 days is deemed necessary to carry out health surveillance and enforce self-isolation as much as possible. During this period there should also be a curfew in place from 8:00pm to 5:00am.

Essential Services that need to work beyond curfew hours must seek permission from authorities.

Essential Services to Remain Open:

The following business categories and their employees should be regarded as essential during this crisis: food wholesalers, grocery stores/supermarkets, producers/distributors of cleaning products, bakeries, banks, credit unions, remittance services, insurance companies, hospitals, clinics, pharmacies and pharmaceutical importers/wholesalers, and other health care providers including caregivers, utility companies, cable and internet

providers, media houses, security firms, gas stations, delivery services for grocery and pharmaceuticals only, courier services, food services (restaurants) for curbside pickup and delivery only, tire repair shops, tradespersons such as plumbers, electricians, ongoing construction related projects, and import and export related businesses including brokerage and the cargo ports (land, sea and air cargo).

The food producing agricultural sector, the agro export sector and its support industries including cargo, packaging, along with transport and delivery.

Public Servants of the Government of Belize and Statutory Bodies essential to maintaining health, safety, public order and transit of food and exports. Can include Judges, Air Traffic Controllers, Police Officers, Coast Guard, and Soldiers (BDF).

Access to food markets to be controlled based on social distancing standards.

Businesses and offices of the Public Sector that are able to institute work from home protocols should be encouraged to do so such as Call Centers, Law Firms and Consultants. These are service exporters and foreign exchange earners.

Transport Sector can be restructured to address safe transport protocols using methods as follows:

- Drivers of buses and taxis shall wear masks and all passengers are asked to follow social distancing standards of 3 feet between each other (1 person per seat instead of 2);
- GOB pays for half the seats in each bus scheduled to reinforce mandatory spacing;
- Modify schedules along with processors/employers to spread out departures and avoid peak crowd;
- Add buses to the schedule for peak hours;
- Repurpose parked government vehicles to transport medical/healthcare workers.

Social Distancing should be practiced at every open establishment – minimum of 3 feet and management shall ensure that workers have enough time to get home before designated curfew times.

Paperwork or ID's permitting movement to and from work shall be provided by businesses to all workers and workers to provide such paperwork or ID's to the authorities upon request. Businesses to provide list of authorized workers to Labour Department who in turn will circulate to the relevant authorities.

We submit this paper in the first instance, and commit to sharing in the very near future a plan to recalibrate and jumpstart the Business Ecosystem. The BCCI is steadfast in its support to further collaborate to ensure that Belize comes through this never before seen crisis.

Sincerely,


Nikita Usher (Mr.)
President

cc: *Hon. Senator Carla Barnett (Czar)*
Mr. Christopher Coye (Czar)