March 28, 2020

Press Release

FOURTH CONFIRMED CASE AND COVID-19 UPDATE

As of March 27, 2020, the World Health Organization reported a total of 509,164 confirmed cases of COVID-19 globally with 23,335 deaths. There are now 81,137 confirmed cases in the region of the Americas. The affected region includes Dominican Republic (581), Haiti (8), Barbados (26), Jamaica (30), Cuba (80), Dominica (11), Grenada (7), Trinidad and Tobago (66), Guyana (5), Antigua and Barbuda (7), Bahamas (10), Saint Vincent and Grenadines (1), Guadeloupe (96), Martinique (81), Puerto Rico (79), Saint Barthelemy (5), Aruba (33), Saint Martin (13), US Virgin Islands (19), Cayman Islands (8).

As of this week Saint Lucia commenced testing for COVID-19 in country and the first batch of tests were conducted on Friday, March 27. To date, twenty-nine (29) tests were done with twenty-eight (28) being negative. On Saturday, March 28 the Laboratory Director at the Ezra Long Laboratory of the Owen King EU Hospital reported one positive case which brings our national total of confirmed cases of COVID-19 to four (4). This is the first positive case from local testing.

The individual is a 49 year old female national, nurse by profession, with a travel history to the United Kingdom. She returned to Saint Lucia on Saturday, March 21 and was placed in quarantine during which time she developed a cough and samples were taken for testing. Her results have confirmed that she is positive for COVID-19 and she has since been transferred into isolation. The individual is doing well and she is in good spirits. The Department of Health is currently undertaking routine contact tracing as required by our protocol.
As indicated in a press update earlier this week, the first two confirmed cases of COVID-19 were repatriated to the United Kingdom this week. The third case has recovered but has been kept in isolation as a precautionary measure to minimize any possible risk of transmission.

To date, Saint Lucia has over 300 persons in quarantine. This quarantine is a combination of home-based and facility-based quarantine; approximately 260 in facility quarantine and about 50 in home quarantine. Facility quarantine commenced on Friday, March 20 and to date, three facilities have been established for this purpose. Persons managed at the facility-based quarantine sites are managed at the expense of the state and this includes the provision of their boarding, meals as well as their medical assessments and monitoring. All persons in facility-based quarantine are doing well and have developed no symptoms of COVID-19 to date. As such, there has been no need for testing of these individuals. In keeping with global standards and protocols, testing is done only when persons develop symptoms of the virus to ensure accuracy of testing results.

Effective Monday, March 23, 2020, the Government of Saint Lucia instituted a national country scale down of national services for a period of two weeks. The public has been guided that this measure is put in place to reduce direct person to person contact and as such, reduce the potential risk of transmission of COVID-19. This measure requires the support and compliance of all to adopt an unusual physical distance from other persons or objects in public places. Though this may be seemingly difficult, the measure is one of the most effective and means of preventing local transmission and requires the input of every single individual in making our national response to COVID-19 effective. By each and every one playing their part during this scale down by remaining at home, avoiding social activities and public places together we will be better placed to prevent the spread of the virus.

We continue to advise the public to focus on the maintenance of standard recommendations to prevent the spread of infection. These include:

- regular hand washing with soap and water or alcohol based hand sanitizer where soap and water is not available.
- cover mouth and nose with disposable tissues or clothing when coughing and sneezing.
- avoid close contact with anyone showing symptoms of respiratory illness such as coughing and sneezing.
- seek medical attention and share your travel history with your health care provider if you have symptoms suggestive of respiratory illness either during or after travel.

The Department of Health and Wellness will continue providing regular updates on COVID-19.

For more information please contact the Office of the Chief Medical Officer or the Epidemiology Unit, at 468-5309/468-5317 respectively