



OFFICE OF THE  
PREMIER  
CAYMAN ISLANDS GOVERNMENT

**COVID-19 vaccine remarks**

**By Premier Hon. Alden McLaughlin, MBE, JP, MP**

**2 p.m. Thursday, 7 January, 2021**

**GIS studio**

Good afternoon and thank you for joining us on this momentous occasion.

As you can see, I and the rest of the panel are doing quite well having received our COVID jabs at the Health Services Authority this morning. One again, I assure the public that the vaccine is safe. We did this because it was our duty to do so. We are also leading from the front to encourage everyone living here to also take it.

It is my firm belief that the vaccine is the way out of this pandemic, not just for Cayman, but for the world.

If we all do our duty and play our part by being vaccinated we should be in a position by the end of March to have immunized enough of our residents for Cayman to resume an even greater sense of normalcy, to be able to travel much more freely and to allow people into our country without too much trepidation.

The vaccine has been a long time coming and I am grateful to the Governor and his staff as well as the UK Government for working with the Government to arrange for the free doses of vaccine. I will leave the specifics of how the vaccination programme will be given out to the Chief Medical Officer Dr. John Lee, but I will tell you that the order in which the vaccines will be delivered will help to ensure that Grand Cayman, Cayman Brac and Little Cayman are safer. There is a nurse from Public Health from Cayman Brac here this week learning about the vaccine and she will return to the Brac with the jabs on Saturday.

We became concerned about the COVID-19 virus in January and my Government, together with Public Health and the Health

Services Authority, began meeting and setting out a plan that would keep us safe. Indeed, we have always said that our primary objective would be to save the health and lives of our people and residents. We did this first by starving the virus of new hosts, slowing transmission and eventually stopping transmission all together. We always knew that the stage we are at now is essentially a holding pattern while we waited for a vaccine. The vaccine is here and we now have to collectively, once again, come together to do the right thing and get vaccinated and protected against the virus.

Every time someone thanks me for the leadership that we provided over the last year as we took the hard decisions and fought off COVID, I remind them that the success was due to all of you who did your duty, made sacrifices and followed the guidelines that Government laid out. It was the collective act of everyone who lives here and who fought to save the health and lives of our families, friends and communities.

I remember the doubters saying publicly that I and the Government were deranged because we would never be able to eradicate the virus in the community. They doubted the fighting spirit and the good sense of the Caymanian people to overcome the virus - I never doubted that the people who live here and who truly love this place would stick together and win. This is the same opportunity we have again with this vaccine. But I am afraid that the doubters are again raising their heads and creating unnecessary fear and concern around the safety of the vaccines. We did not let the doubters win last time and I implore you to not let them win this time. I, the Governor, the minister and other elected members as well as senior doctors took the vaccine this morning because we know it is safe and we know it is the right thing to do.

We know the hardships we have faced because our borders have, for the most part, been closed for over nine months. Today everyone coming here must be quarantined at not insignificant

cost for two weeks. They must be tested on arrival and again before they can leave quarantine.

This is a process that we cannot keep up indefinitely. Our borders cannot remain closed forever and we will not be able to maintain the bubble that we have created indefinitely. This vaccine is our best hope in the long term to continue protecting health and life for Cayman and the world. Those of us who can should take the vaccine.

Last year was a tougher time than any of us can remember and we are not out of the woods yet. Too, a new strain of the virus that is much more infectious is an additional challenge. As a country we have come through the worst of this crisis but we now need to provide everyone the best chance possible to maintain the gains that we have made - to do so requires us to take the vaccine and protect ourselves, protect our families and protect our community. And in so doing we will also protect our way of life and help get back even more of the life we once knew.

As we face 2021 let us do so with a proud self-confidence that we can come back stronger. But to do so will require all of us to take the vaccine. It was our collective action and our sense of duty and responsibility that brought us to the position we are in today. And it will take a similar resolve and unity of purpose in taking the vaccine to deliver us the rest of the way.

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