

COVID-19: PHASED REOPENING

CONTRIBUTING TO RESTORING THE BVI ECONOMY / HELPING MITIGATE COVID-19'S ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL IMPACT

PROTOCOL III: DECOMPRESSION / INTERNAL TOURISM / STAYCATION

Background.

1. COVID-19 has impacted the BVI – Lives and Livelihoods. It will also have an unseen impact on families' and individuals' mental health and well-being. The immediate health impact can likely be defined in months. Given the Territory's reliance on tourism and forecasts, albeit possibly pessimistic, that suggest a 2-3 year downturn the economic impact will strain a fragile economy, businesses, communities, families and individuals. Given the impact (seen and unseen) options that support efforts to save lives and save / sustain livelihoods need to be identified and considered and, where / when appropriate, implemented.

Proposal.

2. Identified resorts / hotels are granted permission to operate (exploiting strict COVID-19 protocols – including social distancing)¹ to provide:
- a. An opportunity for BVI residents to decompress (i.e. enjoy a change of environment) contributing to their well-being (health); and
 - b. A springboard for the BVI's economic recovery (in particular the tourism and hospitality sectors) as COVID-19's global economic impact starts to wane and restrictions relax and appetite for international travel returns.

Recommendation.

3. GoVI endorses an intra-island hospitality policy and protocol (Attachment 1) that allows identified resorts and hotels to operate (discounted rates) for BVI residents, noting that it would likely operate until the appetite for international travel (visitors) had returned, that:
- a. Enables identified resorts and hotels to open their doors (albeit limited) to BVI residents;
 - b. Protects the BVI (peoples and place);
 - c. Sustains jobs and businesses across the BVI (Direct and Indirect);
 - d. Delivers beneficial health outcomes (well-being);
 - e. Provides a springboard for the BVI's economic recovery; and
 - f. Gives travellers (visitors) confidence that the BVI is a responsible, clean, healthy and safe destination.

Implementation.

4. Implementation would:
- a. Support efforts to sustain:

¹ It is proposed that there would be a phased approach to the protocol's implementation which would see it applied initially on sister islands to demonstrate / review the approach.

PROTECT

- (1) Licenced ferry / boat operators; and
 - (2) Hospitality related businesses across the Territory.
- b. Provide respite (support well-being) for residents.
- c. Be underpinned by effective and recorded testing of all staff and contract workers employed by the identified resorts and hotels.

Oversight

5. Given anticipated sensitivities (in particular fear of a resurgence of COVID-19 in the BVI), the protocol would be subject to regular and robust review to ensure effective oversight and mitigate risk. Oversight would be delivered by the Safe Tourism Programme Working Group (STP WG), or an approved sub-committee thereof, working in collaboration with the Social Distancing Task Force (SDTF).

6. In addition to oversight, the STP WG, working with the BVITB and BVICCHA, would assess the programme's need making appropriate recommendations to GoVI (e.g. Advice as to when the programme could be amended, extended or terminated).

Attachment:

1. Resorts & Hotels– Decompression / Internal Tourism / Staycation Protocol.

RESORTS & HOTELS – DECOMPRESSION / INTERNAL TOURISM / STAYCATION PROTOCOL

Headline	A protocol to enable resorts and hotels to deliver a limited offer for residents by providing effective guidelines for operating safely given the threat of COVID-19 and thereby sustaining the hospitality sector (business) and contributing to wellbeing
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1. Overview.

- a. Resorts, hotels and tourism accommodation establishments:
 - (1) Are no more susceptible to contagion than other places (e.g. supermarkets and banks);
 - (2) Are places where guests stay temporarily in close cohabitation and where there is interaction among guests and workers; and
 - (3) Can exploit a robust protocol enabling them to operate and mitigating the risk to staff and guests service involves¹ and the associated interactions.²
- b. The hospitality sector is critical to the BVI's livelihood. Prolonged shut down will cause significant detrimental impact to lives and livelihoods.
- c. This protocol is designed to support the internal (phased) opening of the Territory's intra-island hospitality sector noting:
 - (1) Implementation will need to be monitored closely;
 - (2) It will evolve to reflect outcomes / changing circumstances; and
 - (3) Should act as a springboard sustaining the sector (livelihoods) in anticipation for the return of international visitors. Its successful implementation will be an important element of marketing the Territory as a responsible, clean, healthy and safe destination.

2. Intra-Island Transport.

- a. Although movement between islands by private boat should likely be allowed, intra-island movement by registered / licenced ferry / boat operators would be the preferred and advertised option.³
- b. Ferry / Boat operators will:
 - (1) Monitor actively their employees' health (including checking employees' temperature at the beginning of the working day / prior to departure to the first sailing and keep a record of all checks).
 - (2) Provide their employees with appropriate / approved COVID-19 PPE (e.g. face mask and gloves).
 - (3) Conduct and record weekly 'briefings' with their employees to ensure that they understand the protocol (process, procedures and implications).

¹ Food and beverage, cleaning, activity organization, etc

² e.g. Guest-guest, guest-staff, and staff-staff

³ This is to ensure that movement between islands can be / is controlled. In addition, it ensures that licenced operators' businesses are sustained. Given this exclusive approach, consideration should be given to discounted ticketing.

- (4) Check passengers' temperature prior to embarkation.
- (5) Brief passengers on the requirement for effective social distancing (which will be enforced by the crew) on boat transfers.
- (6) Clean their ferry / boat daily (after the last run) iaw COVID-19 cleaning requirements.
- (7) Exclude any employee or prospective passenger who they believe shows signs of possible COVID-19 infection (e.g. temperature, flu like symptoms, dry cough etc).

3. Resorts / Hotels.

- a. The protocol builds on best practice and identifies specific measures that participating resorts and hotels would need to satisfy in order to be authorised to operate. The measures are designed to mitigate the risk posed by COVID-19. As such they are predominantly **health and safety** related. Participating resorts and hotels would need to agree to regular (unannounced) inspections acknowledging that they would be 'closed' if they were found to be in breach of the protocol.
- b. It is anticipated that smaller businesses may need help. BVICCHA / the Oversight Committee would act as the focal point for support.
- c. Eligible businesses⁴
 - (1) Should develop 'discounted packages' to encourage internal tourism noting that these must demonstrate / ensure that:
 - (a) Appropriate social distancing protocols can be applied and enforced at all times⁵;
 - (b) Robust COVID-19 cleaning protocols are completed / recorded;
 - (c) Robust oversight (management) is assured and that it:
 - i. Understands their duty of care to the resort, their staff and their guests wrt the COVID-19 protocol; and
 - ii. Ensures that staff and guests satisfy the COVID-19 protocol.
 - (2) Promote (supported by a public communications campaign likely led by GIS) online bookings⁶ noting that this would support:
 - (a) GoVI's digital transformation programme and wider betterment; and
 - (b) Effective tracking and tracing should that be necessary.
- d. Monitor actively their staff's health (including checking employees' temperature at the beginning of the working day / their shift).
- e. Record employees' health checks and submit this record weekly to the oversight committee.

⁴ Resorts, hotels and restaurants proposed by BVITB and endorsed by the Protocol's oversight committee.

⁵ e.g. Open-air dining with tables appropriately spaced and only able to seat 4 guests.

⁶ It is anticipated that this should exploit an internationally recognised and used app (e.g. Booking.com) as this would support work to give travellers (visitors) confidence that the BVI is a responsible, clean, healthy and safe destination as well as supporting wider tracking and tracing should this prove necessary.

- f. Ensure that their staff receive appropriate COVID-19 training (in particular with respect associated protocols and standards) and understand that they:
 - (1) Will be checked regularly for COVID-19 symptoms;
 - (2) Must:
 - (a) Wear appropriate protective clothing (e.g. gloves and face mask) when at work noting that this PPE must be provided by the business;
 - (b) Practice social distancing; and
 - (c) Use hand sanitizers on arrival at their place of employment and regularly throughout their shift / working day (iaw COVID-19 advice).
 - (3) Can be excluded from the resort / hotel (work) if they:
 - (a) Show signs of possible COVID-19 infection (e.g. temperature, flu like symptoms, dry cough etc); or
 - (b) Breach the protocol.
- g. Ensure that staff working in reception / front of house are able to:
 - (1) Explain the protocol / establishment's policy to guests;
 - (2) Signpost other services that guests may require (for example, medical and pharmacy services available in the area or at the establishment itself); and
 - (3) Provide immediately the telephone numbers of the health authorities, medical centres, public and private hospitals, and assistance centres for use whenever there is the possibility that a guest may be ill.
- h. Develop an appropriate site-specific Op Manual, if necessary, with advice from the oversight committee and / or SDTF, for review and approval prior to being authorised to operate under this protocol.

4. **Staff.** Staff:

- a. Must observe the basic protective COVID-19 measures (e.g. hand hygiene, physical distancing, avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth, practice respiratory hygiene and to heed the advice to stay home and seek medical attention if they have symptoms consistent with the disease).
- b. With underlying conditions should be employed in positions that minimize risk, specifically areas which are not in direct contact with guests. In addition, they should be in receipt of medical clearance from a doctor (held on file) that permits them to work.
- c. Must agree to be tested daily (e.g. temperature test) noting that the results will be recorded, kept on file (e-file) by the establishment, and= submitted weekly to the oversight committee.

5. **Reception / Front of House.** Reception / Front of House should have easy access to a medical kit that includes the following:

- a. Germicidal disinfectant/wipes for surface cleaning Tissues;

- b. Face / eye masks (separate or combined, face shield, goggles)⁷;
 - c. Disposable gloves;
 - d. Protective apron (disposable);
 - e. Full-length long-sleeved gown; and
 - f. Biohazard disposable waste bag.
6. **Sanitization.** Businesses would need to establish appropriate hand wash stations and sanitizing stations at strategic points for use by guests and by staff (e.g. entrances, lobby, dining room, stairwells etc).
7. **Cleaning / Housekeeping.** The resort's Op Manual would need to articulate a COVID-19 conscious approach to housekeeping noting that these should be merely an extension of / enhancement to extant best practice. Of note:
- a. Notwithstanding an absence of COVID-19 cases, businesses should enhance hygiene services – in particular in common areas (e.g. restrooms, halls, corridors, lifts, etc.) as best practice / a preventive measure given that this can reduce the risk of infection.
 - b. Special attention should be given to objects that are frequently touched (e.g. handles, elevator buttons, handrails, switches, doorknobs, etc).
 - c. An enhanced cleaning protocol (Annex A) must be enacted should a guest or member of staff become infected / sick or contact tracing show that the business (establishment) is linked to a case.
8. **Technical and Maintenance Services.**
- a. Water. The concentration of disinfectant in water for consumption and in pools or spas should be checked regularly and should be kept at the upper limit of the permissible range.
 - b. Dishwashing & Laundry. Dishwashing and laundry equipment must be checked (in particular operating temperatures and the correct dosage of cleaning and disinfecting chemicals) and recorded before approval to operate under this protocol is granted.
 - c. Air-conditioning. Although COVID-19 is not transmitted by air attention should be given, as in normal circumstances, to monitoring the condition of filters and maintaining the proper replacement rate of indoor air and the proper functioning of ventilation, air exchange, and dehumidification equipment should be checked.
 - d. Dispensers. Soap and disinfectant solution dispensers, hand dryers, disposable tissue dispensers, and other similar devices must be checked and recorded regularly. Defective units must be repaired or replaced as quickly as possible.
9. **Food.** Resorts / restaurants must comply with the extant Restaurant & Cafés Protocol (Protocol II) in order to be approved to serve food.
10. **Contractors / Suppliers of goods and services.**
- a. Contractors and suppliers of goods and services must demonstrate that have adopted / are following safe systems of work and have systems in place for the prevention of the spread of COVID-19.

⁷ Note that disposable face masks can only be used once.

- a. Anyone coming into the resort / restaurant involved (e.g. delivering food and supplies) must undergo a recorded temperature check;
- b. Supplies being brought into the site (e.g. food) must be washed and sanitized; and
- c. Wherever possible, site staff should 'offload' to minimise contact with personnel potentially subject to a less rigorous protocol.

11. **Guests.**

- a. Guests with underlying conditions should be discouraged from exploiting the opportunities offered by this protocol unless they can provide appropriate medical approval / clearance from their doctor;
- b. Guests will agree to be tested (e.g. temperature) on arrival at a hotel noting that the hotel has the right to exclude guests who shows signs of possible COVID-19 infection (e.g. temperature, flu like symptoms, dry cough etc).
- c. Guests who develop COVID-19 symptoms (e.g. temperature, flu like symptoms, dry cough etc) will immediately self-isolate and inform the establishment (reception) immediately.

12. **Oversight.** Given the risk COVID-19 poses effective oversight is essential. As such a public / private sector oversight committee (a sub-committee of the STP WG) is proposed noting that it would have to be effective and agile.⁸ Of note:

- a. The Committee would:
 - (1) Operate (virtually) under an independent chair (nominated by The Premier) and involve representatives from the key stakeholders;
 - (2) Be required to endorse the initiative and procedures prior to implementation⁹.
 - (3) Review and note resort / hotel specific operating instructions; and
 - (4) Following a successful inspection of the resort by the SDTF), authorise the resort / hotel to operate.
- b. Stakeholders would be required to:
 - (1) Review and endorse procedures relevant to them (their organisation);
 - (2) Review regular reporting (including stock-takes) providing timely comment / feedback; and
 - (3) Identify appropriate points of contact within their organisations for day-to-day / out of committee communication.
- c. It is anticipated that the Oversight Committee would comprise:

Ser	Dept / Organisation	Rmks / Focus
(a)	(b)	(c)
1	Independent Chair	Nominated by The Premier (with casting vote)
2	BVIHSA	Nominated by MoH
3	BVITB	Tourism / Marketing

⁸ Given the extraordinary circumstances (COVID-19) committee members would not be remunerated.

⁹ It is anticipated that Chair would need to (a) propose implementation to The Premier's Office and (b) provide regular updates on the initiative.

Ser	Dept / Organisation	Rmks / Focus
(a)	(b)	(c)
4	BVICCHA	Stakeholders / Wider economic impact (halo effect)
5	Resorts / Hotels	Proposed by sector
6	SDTF	Nominated by MoH
7	Secretary	Ex Officio / Programme Manager (possibly found by BVICCHA)

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ENHANCED COVID-19 CLEANING PROTOCOL

1. The following should be implemented for rooms or specific areas exposed to COVID-19 cases:
 - a. Surfaces.
 - (1) Any surface that has been soiled with respiratory secretions or other body fluids of the ill person(s)¹ must be cleaned with a regular household disinfectant solution containing 0.1% sodium hypochlorite (that is, equivalent to 1000 ppm).
 - (2) Surfaces should be rinsed with clean water after 10 minutes contact time for chlorine.
 - (3) Surfaces should be rinsed with clean water after sufficient contact time for the chlorine.
 - b. Cleaning Materials.
 - (1) When use of bleach is not suitable² 70% alcohol could be used.
 - (2) Whenever possible, only disposable cleaning materials should be used.
 - (3) Any cleaning equipment made of cloths and absorbent materials (e.g. mophead and wiping cloths) should be disposed of as hazardous waste after use.
 - (4) When pertinent, disinfect properly non-porous cleaning materials with 0.5% sodium hypochlorite solution or according to manufacturer's instructions before using for other rooms.
 - c. Textiles, linens and clothes. Textiles, linens, and clothes should be:
 - (1) Put in marked laundry bags and handled carefully to mitigate potential risk of contamination of surrounding surfaces or people.
 - (2) Washed in a hot cycle (70°C or more) with appropriate detergent.
 - d. Training.
 - (1) Staff may require additional training in the preparation, handling, application, and storage of these products (e.g. bleach) which may be at a higher concentration than usual.
 - (2) Staff must know how to make sure the bleach is not disintegrated and how to rinse it off after 10 minutes.

¹ e.g. toilet, handwashing basins, and baths.

² e.g. telephone, remote control equipment, door handlings, buttons in the elevator, etc.