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Barbados Confirms its First Two Cases of Coronavirus

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BARBADOS — The Ministry of Health and Wellness on Tuesday confirmed the first two cases of the coronavirus in Barbados.

Minister of Health and Wellness, Lt. Colonel Jeffrey Bostic, in a statement delivered from his office Tuesday morning said that the patients were a 48-year-old female visitor and a 39-year-old Barbadian woman, who both arrived from the United States, where there are confirmed cases of the respiratory illness.

Both patients were experiencing symptoms of a viral infection and were referred to the team at the Ministry of Health and Wellness for further evaluation, the health ministry said.

Mr. Bostic revealed that the test results returned by the Best-dos Santos Public Health Laboratory early this morning were positive for the viral illness.

He said the two were among 14 people tested yesterday. All the others were negative for the virus.

Both patients are being managed for COVID-19 and have been placed in isolation where they will remain until they recover, he reported.

Mr. Bostic further revealed that the Ministry of Health and Wellness had initiated contact tracing to identify every individual who came into close contact with these patients. These persons will be placed in quarantine for 14 days.

He said that Barbados had now entered Stage One of its implementation plan, which means that there are confirmed cases that were imported, but there is no confirmed evidence of human to human transmission in the island.

The Minister of Health and Wellness stressed that at this stage the primary focus was containment of the disease to prevent spread.

Several steps were taken today in pursuit of this objective, including restricting public gatherings to 100 persons, the suspension of visits by the public to geriatric institutions and the introduction of reduced visiting hours at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

He also spoke to the readiness of Barbados' isolation and quarantine facilities at the Isolation Centre at Enmore, the Paragon Base in Christ Church and the Elayne Scantlebury Centre, River Bay, St. Lucy.

The Field Medical Facility has also been stood up and work is continuing at Harrison's Point, St. Lucy, where additional quarantine and isolation facilities will be available within weeks, he advised.

The minister assured the public of his commitment to doing all in his power to protect the health of all residents, adding "there is no need to panic. This is the time for vigilance and being our brother's keeper".