



CAYMAN ISLANDS
TOURISM ASSOCIATION

CITA STATEMENT ON BORDER OPENING DELAY

September 15, 2021
For Immediate Release

The Cayman Islands Tourism Association (CITA) is dismayed by the Premier's announcement of the indefinite pause in the reopening plan and continued closure of the borders. This decision clearly demonstrates a complete disregard for the livelihoods of thousands of Caymanians, prolongs the agony of so many in our community, and steals hope for the future. It is incredibly disappointing that the Government has reversed course, responding to emotion and fear rather than remaining guided by sound logic and scientific evidence.

In the coming weeks and months, many tourism-dependent businesses will be forced to close, and livelihoods will be lost as we approach two years without visitors to our shores. The decision made now to remain closed to tourism does not only impact Cayman for the rest of 2021, but it also eliminates the possibility of a meaningful level of tourism in 2022 and sets the course for no less than 4 to 5 years for the industry to recover. The quality of life for all Caymanians and residents will be impacted due to decreased investment in community infrastructure and the need for increased Government support. Thousands of tourism employees and Caymanian business owners and operators will be dependent on Government stipends for survival for the long term which will impact all Caymanians and the level of services the Government will be able to provide.

Government officials have been stating for months that COVID is not going anywhere and would someday return to our shores. The virus has now been detected in the community – this should not be a shock. Cayman has been diligently preparing and we are ready to combat COVID. We have one of the highest vaccination rates in the world. We have world class health professionals and first responders. Our Public Health Department has done a remarkable job and will continue to enhance their protocols. The Government has now clearly demonstrated a lack of confidence in its own planning and advisors.

We echo His Excellency the Governor Martin Roper who said that “waiting out the pandemic is a forlorn hope”. At some point, we must understand that we cannot escape COVID and closing the borders to visitors indefinitely will have disastrous long-term repercussions for the Cayman economy and the Caymanian people. We also emphasize Chief Medical Officer Dr. John Lee’s statement based on his time in the UK that “we can live normal lives with COVID in the community” as many other countries with high rates of vaccination are now doing. We must have a national policy that protects both lives and livelihoods. We should be measured, calm and proactive rather than anxious, emotional and reactionary. We must have collective courage to chart a positive course forward for our Islands in place of the fear stoked by continual uncertainty.

Cayman Islands Tourism Association (CITA)
102 Regency Court, West Bay Road | P.O. Box 31086, Grand Cayman KY1-1205, Cayman Islands
T.345.949.8522 | C.345.926.4115 | director@cita.ky | www.cita.ky

The CITA feels that we must point out the inconsistencies in the Government's policy reversal. The borders are now closed indefinitely, and the quarantine period increased, yet the Government has not issued vaccination mandates for frontline workers, educators, and others at risk as many other countries have done. The Government has also not acted on opportunities to control and contain through combined layers of protective measures and the use of technology.

CITA has recommended to Government that measures such as rapid testing, smartphone-based contact tracing and vaccination requirements for large group gatherings be implemented. The choice to continue with an unsustainable policy of a broad border closure at the expense of sacrificing the livelihoods of thousands of workers, entrepreneurs and other stakeholders rather than deploying targeted measures and policies specific to the proven threats is illogical. We must also highlight, as the current transmission events demonstrate, that returning residents inherently pose a much greater risk for community spread within their homes, workplaces, and churches than vaccinated visitors.

The Premier has stated that a high vaccination rate is "key to us being able to manage COVID in our community and provide safety for our children" and the CITA fully agrees. However, we must ask how high a vaccination rate is needed? Cayman is already in the top 5% in the world. If we exclude children who are at extremely low risk for serious illness, over 93% of the Cayman population has received at least one jab (using the Government's own ESO population number).

According to UK data, children have less than a 1 in 50,000 risk for serious illness and less than 1 in 500,000 risk of death. In the average year in the US, more than 8 times as many children under age 18 die in car accidents than have died of COVID since the pandemic began. As has been widely publicized, the risks for the vaccinated population are incredibly low with the risk of hospitalization 1 in 20,000 and the risk of death 1 in 80,000 according to the latest CDC data. The Government should be reiterating these numbers to calm residents' fears.

Pausing the border reopening plan only moves the goalposts once again. It does not matter when the borders reopen, community transmission of the virus has already occurred, and it is not the result of tourism activity. The Government must develop plans and strategies to deal with the new normal now and not procrastinate further, not just for the sake of tourism but for the entire economy and the country's future.

We encourage members of the community to speak out and share their views. We need other community leaders to stand up and oppose the Government's abandonment of the reopening plan.


Lastly, we pray that those residents recently infected recover swiftly. We continue to urge unvaccinated residents to get their first jabs without delay.



Marc Langevin
CITA President
General Manager of the Ritz Carlton Grand Cayman
Phone: 1-345-325-7489
marc.langevin@ritzcarlton.com



Michael Tibbetts, MD
CITA Vice President
Managing Director of the Clearly Cayman Resorts
Phone: 1-345-916-0666 (Cayman), 1-609-937-6122 (US)
michael.tibbetts@clearlycayman.com



Markus Mueri
CITA Treasurer
Owner and Operator of NM Ventures Restaurants
markusmueri@nmventures.ky



Jay Ehrhart
CITA Executive Director
director@cita.ky

T A