



GOVERNMENT OF SAINT LUCIA

Statement by Minister for Commerce, Industry, Investment, Enterprise Development and Consumer Affairs, Hon Bradly Felix on the Reinstatement of Liquor Licenses for Businesses Approved to Operate

On Monday March 30th 2020 our Government took the decision to suspend all classes of liquor licenses in Saint Lucia. It had become necessary to impose the temporary restriction at the height of the battle against COVID-19 when we were beginning to see a rise in the number of cases which were locally transmitted and our country was also in a state of partial shut-down.

Saint Lucians will recall that we faced challenges with some people breaking the social distancing protocols and the police were stretched in terms of manpower in trying to manage large social gatherings; especially at our beaches and rivers.

The decisions we have taken as a Government have always been made after consultation with officials from the Ministry of Health, and with the view of containing and managing the spread of COVID-19. Our country has registered some success and thankfully we have had no deaths. However, we must remain on guard and vigilant if we are to overcome the scourge of this pandemic.

Recognizing that Saint Lucians have for the most part been abiding by the established guidelines and protocols, our Government has worked with health officials to relax some of the partial shutdown measures. We have begun to reopen certain sectors, while also establishing specific protocols to guide the resumption of activities in areas such as the construction sector, public transportation, hardware and home supplies stores and more recently religious services and ceremonies.

Over the last few weeks our country has been learning to live with COVID-19. It has not been an easy road by any means and it has required sacrifices by all.

As a Cabinet of Ministers we continue to meet and assess the situation on a daily basis in consultation with stakeholders to review certain issues relating to the operations of the country. Among these issues is that of the suspension of Liquor Licenses.

There are several factors which had to be considered in our decision making. Chief amongst our considerations was whether the population had understood the need to practice social distancing.

Another factor we had to consider is the need to balance between maintaining the gains we have made in limiting the spread of the virus and minimizing the impact on the local beverage manufacturing sector, especially with regard to the number of persons employed in the sector.

Generally, we are pleased with the cooperation we have received from most Saint Lucians, but acknowledge that there are some who continue to breach the prescribed protocols.

As of this coming Friday, 8th May 2020, the Government of Saint Lucia, will reinstate Liquor Licenses in Saint Lucia for sale of alcoholic beverage. This measure will allow for the sale of alcohol by only licensed businesses from the list of approved business that are currently permitted to operate under Statutory Instrument (SI) # 56 of 2020, namely; supermarkets, mini-marts, small grocery shops, wholesalers and gas stations. However, the resumption of sale of alcoholic beverages from approved licensed business outlets will be governed by strict protocols.

These protocols are as follows:

- There shall be no loitering, assembling, socializing at the business premises where alcohol is sold and purchased.
- There shall be no consumption of alcohol at the place of purchase.
- Alcohol sales can only take place between the hours of 7:00am to 6:00pm.

The public is also reminded that a person who contravenes the Emergency Powers (Disasters) (COVID-19) (Curfew) Order commits an offence and is liable to imprisonment with or without hard labour for a term not exceeding six months or a fine not exceeding one thousand dollars or both and forfeiture of goods or money in respect of which the offence has been committed.

Therefore as we lift the ban on the sale of alcohol we urge Saint Lucians to drink responsibly.

Keep in mind we are still in a battle against COVID-19 and its only by adhering to the protocols we will be successful.

End.