
MEDIA RELEASE

Public Interest Report March 2021

Today, March 5, 2021, the Auditor General tabled her first public interest report on the work undertaken to support Parliament in its examination of the Government of Bermuda's coronavirus (COVID-19) response. We undertook this work not only because of queries from the Public, but also because of the nature and significance of the impact of the pandemic, the Government's unprecedented spending of public moneys and because the Office recognises the importance of independent reporting to Parliament and the Public.

This public interest report - which was compiled from various government sources and interviews – provides a factual summary of known Government's activities and financial costs to October 2020, and is the first of a multi-part programme of work scheduled. Interviewees were invited to review and comment on this report and we thank them for their time.

The Government has spent approximately \$30.1 million in responding to COVID-19 to October 2020 as follows:

- ❖ \$13.7 million by Cabinet Office which largely went to Bermuda Economic Development Corporation (BEDC) as a grant to support small to medium businesses, and also covered quarantine monitoring and laboratory services;
- ❖ \$7.6 million by the Ministry of Health, covering equipment, testing, call centres and laboratory services;
- ❖ \$7.3 million by the Ministry of National Security, for support of the embodiment of the Regiment, quarantine facilities, security and other related services; and
- ❖ \$1.5 million other support for database development, loan facility fees and other related services.

There were approximately 50 regulations, amendments, orders and proclamations made that guided the Government's pandemic response and assisted the effort to suppress and curb the spread of COVID-19, including impositions of curfews, shelter-in-place and the closure of L.F. Wade International Airport.

There were also several supplies and services received from the UK Government totaling approximately \$1.8 million (£1.3 million) donated to the Government of Bermuda.

Ms. Thomas said, 'It's important to note, that the information in this report was not audited by her office. Given the scale and emergent nature of the pandemic and government's continued

response, her Office will continue to update these numbers while auditing specific programs of the government's response and, support Parliament in holding Government to account.'

"What's Next for the Office is an examination of the Government's Unemployment Benefit Program, as a part of the Office's COVID -19 multi-part programme" said Ms. Thomas.

Reports of the Office of the Auditor General are made available on the Office of the Auditor General website, www.oagbermuda.bm

About the Office of the Auditor General of Bermuda

The position of Auditor General is established under the Bermuda Constitution Order. The specific mandate and responsibilities of the Auditor General are set out in the Audit Act 1990, and include carrying out audits of Government and its organizations and reporting to the legislature.

The mission of the Office of the Auditor General is to add credibility where appropriate to the Government's financial reporting and to promote improvement in the financial administration of all Government Ministries, Departments and all other entities for which the Government is accountable to Parliament.