



MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

By

Minister of Public Safety

The Hon. Michael H. Dunkley, JP, MP

NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH AND COMMUNITY ACTION GROUPS

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Mr. Speaker, a strong community needs equally strong public participation. Some of the key benefits associated with increased participation are the development of our youth, safer communities and stronger relationships.

Mr. Speaker, as the Minister for Public Safety, I have heard the increased voices within our community ask “How can I help?” Today, I would like to highlight how each member of the public can strengthen their individual community thus strengthen Bermuda as a whole by starting in their neighbourhoods.

Mr. Speaker, Neighbourhood Watch is one of the most effective ways to reduce crime and build better relationships between residents of a specific area. It also encourages members of the community to share the responsibility for the welfare and upkeep of their neighbourhood.

Neighborhood Watch teaches individuals the steps that can be taken to help protect their homes and communities. **Mr. Speaker,** it also organizes the neighbourhood into a group which can make crime prevention a part of their daily routine; just by looking out for each other.

Mr. Speaker, some of the key benefits of Neighbourhood Watch are Neighbours getting to know each other and working in mutual assistance; Neighbours working together to identify problems and propose solutions; Neighbours working together for sponsored cleanup programmes to rid the community of eye sores i.e. abandoned vehicles, trash, graffiti and etc; and Neighbours being trained to recognize and report suspicious activity in their neighbourhoods so when they see a crime or suspicious activity, it is reported immediately.

Mr. Speaker, the Bermuda Police Service's Community Action Team (CAT), led by Inspector Jerome Laws, has assisted in the implementation of over 115 Neighbourhood Watch Groups and Community Action Groups (CAG) all over the island.

Mr. Speaker, CAG is a multi - agency problem solving group consisting of faith based and business partners, helping agencies, and most importantly members of the local community. Each member brings different skill sets and knowledge. This enables a more cohesive plan of action to resolve the problems identified by the community.

Mr. Speaker, the purpose of having CAG are for targeting the main concerns of the community, members come together to plan, implement policies and programs; and focusing on the concerns that will reassure the community, improve safety, reduce crime and disorder.

Mr. Speaker, CAG can assist in community engagement, through public meetings, surveys and workshops, thereby identifying community priorities. Like Neighbourhood Watch Programmes,

they can also assist the police in problem solving, crime prevention and community safety projects.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to congratulate the residents of Cameron Close, Crisson Avenue, Convict Bay, Ducks Puddle Drive, Friswells Hill, Knapton Estates, Ord Road, Spring Benny Road, St. Monica's Road, and the Waterfront Properties' Business Watch to name just a few of the groups in existence. And more are being formed on a regular basis; the Loyal Hill area in Devonshire is one in its fledgling stage.

Mr. Speaker, as outlined in the Speech from the Throne, the vibrant Neighborhood Watch Programme must be supported as Bermuda's residents bravely commit to taking back their communities. The Government will further enhance the system's effectiveness by providing residents with information on what is happening within their neighbourhoods.

Mr. Speaker, soon the Ministry of Public Safety will be announcing a public/private partnership with a local vendor whose programme is aligned with international best practice standards.

Mr. Speaker, “Neighbourhood Watch 2.0” is designed to enhance the present Neighbourhood Watch Programme by using technology to connect neighbours and their communities. “Neighbourhood Watch 2.0” will notify residents via voice call and text message with public safety alerts. Smart use of technology is a best-practice tool in the fight for safer communities.

Mr. Speaker, “Neighbourhood Watch 2.0” will turn neighbourhoods into a network of awareness. The initiative will provide neighbourhoods with a real-time communication system connecting everyone who wishes to join. With one phone call or text message, a resident will have the ability to notify all of their neighbours regarding crime or suspicious activity.

Mr. Speaker, keeping Bermuda safe is not solely the responsibility of the Police. Each member of the community can play a vital role by getting involved in their neighbourhood. I salute each member of the community, each Neighbourhood Watch Group and each Community Action Group who have stepped up to the plate and welcome more to join and form throughout the Island.

Mr. Speaker, cooperation, participation and partnerships are paramount for the betterment of our community. It is respect for that which we have in common that must guide our actions.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.