



## **Ministerial Statement**

By

**Senator Lindsay Simmons, JP**

Junior Minister of National Security

### **National Fire Chiefs Council Peer-Led Review of the Bermuda Fire and Rescue Service**

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**Madam President,** I would like to provide Senators with an update on a key strategic initiative of the Ministry of National Security, stemming from the 2022 Speech from the Throne.

**Madam President,** Senators may recall that in that Speech, the Government pledged to invite His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services to conduct a review of the Bermuda Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS). Specifically, it was stated:

"The Bermuda Fire and Rescue Service serves as Bermuda's first responders, providing island-wide EMT expertise, firefighting capability, and specialist operations in support of critical infrastructure. To ensure the highest standards of fitness for role, His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services will be invited to conduct a review of the Service—the first since 2010. Upon completion, the

Legislature will be invited to take note of that review and its recommendations."

**Madam President**, following the announcement in 2022, the Chief Fire Officer engaged the Inspectorate in discussions about such a review. From these exchanges, it was recommended that the Government would derive added value from a peer-led review by the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) as a precursor to the formal review by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services. The Ministry of National Security concurred with this recommendation and directed the Chief Fire Officer to engage the NFCC to undertake the peer-led review at the earliest opportunity.

**Madam President**, the Ministry of National Security further decided that it would be prudent to conduct an internal review of the BFRS in preparation for the NFCC's visit in early 2025. Consequently, the Chief Fire Officer commissioned Management Consultancy Services to conduct an internal organizational and staffing review of the Bermuda Fire and Rescue Service in November 2023. The findings of this internal review have been instrumental in assessing staffing levels and operational efficiency of the BFRS. The Ministry of National Security greatly benefited from these insights in determining the BFRS' resource needs. The MCS report was subsequently submitted as part of the discovery phase for the NFCC review and will be referenced in NFCC's findings.

**Madam President,** to give some background and context, the NFCC serves as the professional voice of the United Kingdom's Fire and Rescue Service, with a mandate to improve and develop fire and rescue services across the United Kingdom. The NFCC's core objectives include:

- Strengthening professional and operational leadership of the Fire and Rescue Service;
- Enhancing national coordination;
- Reducing duplication and increasing efficiency;
- Supporting local service delivery; and
- Providing greater influence for Fire and Rescue Authorities and their services.

**Madam President,** I am pleased to report that in February of this year, the BFRS underwent a comprehensive organizational review conducted by a four-member NFCC UK team led by Chief Fire Officer Neil Odin, Chair of the NFCC's Prevention Committee. Their report, which was received this week and is currently being reviewed, is intended to support the BFRS in planning and prioritizing its resources to address evolving risks through to 2030.

The scope of the NFCC review included, but was not limited to:

- an assessment of the current organizational structure;
- staffing levels and shift patterns;

- the impact of the newly negotiated firefighter benefits package under the Collective Bargaining Agreement;
- training requirements; and
- technology and equipment needs.

**Madam President,** the review team worked under certain constraints. Due to the timing of their visit coinciding with Bermuda's general election, they refrained from engaging with elected Members of Parliament to maintain impartiality and to avoid the risk of perceived political influence. Their evaluation drew on comparisons with UK standards and best practices, while remaining sensitive to Bermuda's unique context as an island country.

**Madam President,** it is anticipated that a review by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services, which will be conducted later this year or early in 2026, will build upon the foundational work undertaken by the Ministry of National Security and the BFRS. This forthcoming final review will undoubtedly provide additional findings and recommendations to support continuous improvement.

**Madam President,** the ultimate objective of this phased review process is to modernize the Bermuda Fire and Rescue Service, in order to ensure that it remains effective, efficient, and fully capable of meeting the needs of the Bermudian public.

**Mr. Speaker**, the Ministry of National Security remains steadfast in its commitment to support the Bermuda Fire and Rescue Service. We will continue to provide the support and necessary resources to ensure that our Fire and Rescue Service remains modern, effective, and fit for purpose, and are well equipped to protect our people and save lives.

Thank you, **Mr. Speaker**.