



Ministerial Statement

By

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Minister of National Security

Bermuda Police Service Recruitment

December 9th, 2022

Mr. Speaker, the shadow of community violence is heavy over the Island today as another family mourns the loss of young life. The sound of gunshots shattered the peace of a Paget neighbourhood in this season of goodwill and in the wake of this terrible incident of violence, we must again seek to comfort a family who today have more questions than answers. The support we are providing from the Ministry of National Security will be strengthened by this House and the community keeping this family as the focus of our compassion at this incredibly difficult time.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members and the public will recall that in a Statement to this Honourable House on July 15th the Premier and Minister of Finance advised that Cabinet would shortly thereafter “*...be invited to approve further measures which will be directed to meeting the staffing shortages in key areas like the Bermuda Police Service...*”

Mr. Speaker, that Statement was made in support of the economic relief package provided to assist Bermudians in this period of economic challenges and included duty relief, additional funding for Financial Assistance and school support for parents.

Mr. Speaker, concurrent with this economic relief the Government has determined that fiscal prudence, community safety and staff wellbeing will be enhanced by providing funding to swell the depleted ranks of specific uniformed services, including the Bermuda Police Service.

Therefore, **Mr. Speaker**, I am pleased to advise this Honourable House and the public that as indicated by the Premier and Minister of Finance in July, Cabinet has approved almost \$2 million in additional funding to the Bermuda Police Service. \$499,000 will be allocated immediately in this fiscal year and a further \$1.49 million will follow in the next fiscal year. This additional funding will allow the Police to recruit twenty (20) additional officers.

Mr. Speaker, this additional funding complements an existing operational budget allocation approved by this Honourable House of sixty-two million one hundred and fifty eight thousand dollars (\$62,158,000), an increase from financial year 2021/22 and a capital allocation of three hundred thousand dollars (\$300,000) for vehicles and a further one million and thirty seven thousand dollars (\$1,037,000) for a new Island wide CCTV system.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members will be aware of the concerns often expressed by our constituents who desire police visibility in residential areas, providing overt support to communities. I can confirm that through this additional funding, the Police will provide an additional five (5) Officers dedicated to the Parish Officer function. These locally recruited Officers will be embedded in and work with the community. Community officers provide a deterrent to further crime, improve public safety, and further enhance public confidence.

Mr. Speaker, the balance of fifteen (15) Officers will enable the Service to increase the number of serious crime investigators as well as the number of authorized firearm officers. These are specialist areas of the Service in which highly trained officers are developed over time and in

which we need ample support to respond effectively to emergency calls and investigate crime properly leading to the gathering of evidence that will support prosecutions and bring justice to the victims of crime.

Mr. Speaker, the reduced numbers of Officers in the Bermuda Police Service is having a marked effect on the ability of the Bermuda Police Service to respond to crimes and bring persons who commit crimes to justice. Since 2006 there have been 92 murders with 31 open and under investigation, meaning that no-one has yet been charged. Additionally, there have been 171 attempted murders between January 2009 and June 2022 with 127 open and under investigation. The impact of these unsolved serious crimes is that there are as many as 157 criminals who have used firearms to either kill or attempt to kill another person and have not yet faced justice. Bringing those persons to justice will have a dramatic positive impact on the community's safety. As the public see more and more criminals brought to justice, their confidence in the police will increase and that will, in turn, lead to more crimes being solved as they become more emboldened to assist the police.

Mr. Speaker, whilst the Bermuda Police Service has aligned all available resources to front-line operational policing posts, an increase in the numbers of police officers is required to meet the extraordinary demand. Currently, the Serious Crimes Unit has three sergeants and seven constables. This is grossly insufficient to meet the demand and means that active murder investigations quickly transition to 'cold' cases as new murders occur and need to be resourced. Further, attempted murder cases are de-prioritized to maintain resources in cases where a death has occurred.

Mr. Speaker, this recruitment will require the Bermuda Police Service to advertise both locally and overseas. Considering the immediate

qualifications and experience required for some of the posts, overseas officers will be among those recruited. I have emphasized to the Commissioner, and I am confident in his full support of the Government's position, that we must cultivate and train local officers concurrent with the engagement of any overseas talent. The sustainability of the Service depends on an unwavering commitment to training those Bermudian Police Officers who are prepared to join these specialist areas. It is also important to note, **Mr. Speaker**, the provision of this additional funding comes with strict accountability. The people of Bermuda are investing in these services and this recruitment must be managed such that it has direct and positive impact on their safety and security. The Ministry of National Security will hold the Bermuda Police Service to account for the expenditure of these additional funds in keeping with our mandate contained in the 2020 General Election Platform, *"to bring lasting calm to Bermuda's communities"*.

Mr. Speaker, this recruitment effort will provide a measure of additional safety in the community and serve to reduce the overtime commitment of officers who have been on the frontline of law enforcement in some cases for several years.

Mr. Speaker, various platforms have featured recent discussions about the challenges of recruitment in the uniformed services and in particular the Bermuda Police Service, Department of Corrections, Bermuda Fire & Rescue Service, The Royal Bermuda Regiment and The Department of Customs. It is, perhaps, a unique feature of Bermudian life that despite the current economic climate the Services struggle to attract suitable Bermudians. What is clear is that we are competing with other employers including international business. In some ways that is a good thing, as Bermudians have options for their career choices but the vital work of border protection, policing, firefighting, patrolling our inshore waters and inmate rehabilitation must continue.

Mr. Speaker, in my short time in the Ministry I have visited the various Departments and had the pleasure of meeting with the women and men of the Services. Their level of professionalism and love of their job has been inspiring and it gives me comfort to know that they are there and providing excellent public service.

Mr. Speaker, law enforcement has a role to play in the fight against community violence, but the ownership of the problems does not rest solely with the men and women in uniform. Community Violence is a community issue and will be solved with a community solution. We cannot say in one breath that we proudly hail from a certain community while secretly protecting and supporting the perpetrators of the very activities that undermine the fabric of the areas we call home. There must be honesty in our actions and words so that there is no safe space for the commission of crime and no assurance to criminals that their actions will go unpunished.

Thank you, **Mr. Speaker**.