



The Settlement of the Pay Award Dispute with the Bermuda Police Service Remarks by:

The Minister of National Security

Sen. the Hon. Lt. Col. David A. Burch, OBE, ED (Mil), JP

Good morning and thank you for coming. For some time, some might say too long, the everyday workings of the men and women of the Bermuda Police Service have been punctuated by the background noise of wage disputes and a divergence of views on some of the historical compensation issues unique to this uniformed service.

At various times the Government and the BPS have met on opposing sides in the adversarial confines of tribunals and even the Courts. While both strongly believing in the competing principles under discussion, the effort has occasionally diverted our attention from the real focus of our unified purpose: protecting Bermuda and her people and providing safe communities.

After a round of fresh negotiations which began in January of this year, I am pleased to advise the people of Bermuda that the Government and the Bermuda Police Association, representing the officers of the BPS, have reached a comprehensive agreement on those issues that have been outstanding between us.

It will no doubt be recalled that the then Ministry of Public Safety and Housing appointed the Permanent Police Tribunal to hear the various arguments on the issues in November 2007. An Award, largely ultra vires was made on 11th June 2008 and since that time we have been engaged in legal arguments in various forums. Today, I am pleased to confirm that all legal action has been discontinued. This includes the action before the Privy Council which was to have been heard later this year.

That action before the Privy Council was on the issue of the combined allowance and whether or not it is pensionable. I don't think the BPA will mind me saying that we are unlikely to ever agree on the point, but we are agreed that irrespective of the Privy Council's findings, the issue would not go away.

Therefore, I can also advise that the combined allowance will be abolished as at 1st January 2010 for the purposes of this settlement and from that date the salary of a police officer will be taken to mean what we had referred to as the salary proper, plus the combined allowance. Accordingly, also with effect from 1st January 2010 that salary will be pensionable, with equal matching contributions made by employer and employee to the Superannuation Fund.

The Award also set out pay increases for officers for the years 2005-2008 of 1.5% per year. Those amounts will also be paid to officers as required, in equal installments over a three month period from April through June 2011.

I can confirm that this sum is budgeted and will cause no additional expense to the public purse.

Perhaps the most positive aspect of today's announcement is the fact that in addition to disposing of those issues that have been outstanding, I am pleased to also announce that we have agreed a new wage contract for the period 1st October 2009 through 30th September 2013. In so doing we are breaking new ground as the formula for the annual percentage increase is now founded in a higher degree of certainty than can sometimes be said of pay negotiations within the Public Service.

There will be an annual percentage increase based on a retroactive formula with inflation based on Consumer Price Index (CPI) to be the annual increase. In the case of the years 2009/2010 that is an increase of 1.8% and for 2010/2011, an increase of 2.4%. 2011/12 and 2012/13 will of course be awarded once those figures are known as calculated by the Department of Statistics.

These terms and conditions have been endorsed by an overwhelming majority of the members of the BPA and I should like to thank them for their willingness to put an end to these matters.

I must also note that the contract agreements reached to 2013 set a new paradigm in contract negotiations Island-wide that I encourage other unions to follow.

With these issues resolved no further valuable time and energy will be devoted to questions of money and wage increases.

The certainty that this agreement brings is in the best interests of Bermuda as it will permit the men and women of their Police Service to focus squarely on the prevention and investigation of crime.

As such, the leadership of the BPA and I will sign formal documents giving effect to the agreements outlined above.

Thank you.