



REMARKS BY:

**The Hon. Michael Weeks, JP, MP
Minister of National Security**

National Security Overview of Budget Plans

9th March 2023

Good morning everyone, and thank you for your presence today.

I wish to highlight some key initiatives for the Ministry of National Security for the 2023/24 fiscal year and then would be happy to answer any questions you may have on the budget.

For budgetary purposes, the following Departments fall under the Ministry of National Security:

- Ministry Headquarters
- The Bermuda Police Service
- The Department of Corrections
- The Bermuda Fire & Rescue Service
- The Royal Bermuda Regiment; and
- The Customs Department

The Ministry has been allocated an operational budget of one hundred and thirty-one million, three hundred and thirty-four thousand dollars (\$131,334,000) – which is an increase of six million, six hundred and twenty-one thousand dollars (\$6,621,000) or five percent (5%) over the current fiscal year.

In addition, over five million dollars (\$5,000,000) has been allocated for capital expenditure, as part of our commitment to “working together to keep you safe”.

The Ministry has allocated over one million dollars for CCTV upgrades for the Bermuda Police Service and Corrections. This allocation includes funds for an island wide CCTV system, which you have heard about in recent weeks.

I'm excited about this technology as it will help identify suspects in the event of criminal activity, serve as a deterrent to potential criminals and provide increased safety for our Community.

Some three million dollars in the Budget will be used to acquire new equipment, including vehicles for the Bermuda Police Service, Corrections and the Bermuda Fire & Rescue Service to replace vehicles at the end of their service life.

Concerning the Police Service, the Ministry is acutely aware of the challenges to the Service when it involves maintaining its large fleet of vehicles, which the Service relies upon to carry out its operations.

I'm pleased that next year's funding is an increase on this year's and will enable even more vehicles to be replaced.

The Ministry's operational Budget represents a more than six million, six hundred thousand dollar (\$6,600,000) increase over this fiscal year.

These funds will be used to hire additional firefighters, police officers, customs officers, corrections officers and staff for the Coast Guard.

Some forty-one (41) posts are being refunded over the current financial year. These will provide job opportunities for Bermudians and meet our mission statement of "Working together to keep you safe".

Violence and anti-social behaviour continue to affect our island home. Sadly, more recently, we have seen males and females as young as fourteen (14) involved in violent exchanges to resolve their disputes.

Tackling this problem continues to be the Ministry's focus, and the Budget for the 2023/24 fiscal year reflects that.

This Government continues to support the Bermuda Police Service, which is critical in our multi-pronged approach to combating gangs and violence. The Bermuda Police Service budget is being increased.

The increase will allow the Police Service to boost its resources to investigate crime and to ensure that professional officers with the necessary experience are a crucial part of its response to serious crime.

This includes funds for hiring additional dedicated Parish Constables.

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. To this end funds have been provided to hire experienced detectives to help solve these cases and bring these criminals to justice and get them off our streets

We are also spending an additional three hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars (\$325,000) on the Gang Violence

Reduction Team to boost several focused programmes for at-risk youth. This increase will provide much-needed assistance to vulnerable youth, giving them better life choices and options away from a life of gangs and anti-social behaviour.

The funding will also enable an increase in counseling services being offered for those that have been affected by violence.

Increased funding is also being provided to the Department of Corrections to expand programmes for inmates to better prepare them for successful reintegration into society upon release.

We are boosting spending to hire more officers within the Customs Department and the Coast Guard to tighten our borders – something I have repeatedly said would help to stop the flow of the importation of weapons and illicit drugs into our community.

As we move further from the height of the pandemic, we've seen an increase in travellers both at the airport and on cruise ships. The trend is for even more over the next fiscal year. This inevitably leads to the increased risks for Bermuda and it is important that the Customs Department is staffed to mitigate those risks.

The Customs Department has been given additional funds to bolster the number of personnel and intends to run two (2) recruitment exercises during 2023/24. This boost will support the activities across the Department but with a particular focus on enhancing marine and airport operations.

During the 2023/24 fiscal year, the Government has allocated fourteen million, eight hundred and eighty thousand dollars (\$14,880,000) to the Bermuda Fire and Rescue Service. This allotment reflects an increase of one million, six hundred and sixty-eight thousand dollars (\$1,668,000) or thirteen percent (13%) over the previous fiscal year.

Funds have been set aside during the budgetary year to ensure the Bermuda Fire and Rescue Service will recruit 21 additional firefighters for airport operations. The application period for these posts has just closed and the successful applicants will be trained to replace the overseas firefighters at the airport.

Ten (10) local recruits from the last recruitment drive have recently completed six (6) weeks of intense training in the United Kingdom. I look forward to their passing out parade on Monday.

The new Fire Fighters returned on the 26th of February, having successfully obtained certification as Aircraft Rescue Fire

Fighters. These Fire Fighters will provide fire protection for the L.F. Wade International Airport and replace ten (10) of the temporary contract firefighters from overseas.

The increased 2023/24 budget will enable the Ministry to meet our mission of “Working together to keep you safe”.

I would now be happy to take any questions.