



17 December 2009

## **BERMUDA DEMOCRATIC ALLIANCE**

### **Crime: Gang Violence**

#### **Statement from Mark Pettingill, JP MP**

“The Alliance supports the renewed efforts of the Bermuda Police Service under our new Commissioner of Police, Michael DeSilva to protect and serve the community. We wholeheartedly endorse the move to have all police officers on operational duties and can only now hope this has the desired effect of ending the violence.”

“Three killings in twelve days is exceptionally disturbing and is an indication of how we as a community are peering into the abyss. It is frankly only a matter of time before the international press reports on the violence. Whilst it is bad enough for Bermuda’s reputation when Bermudians are killing one another I shudder to think how Bermuda will be tarnished forever by the international media as a dangerous destination for tourists or for doing business if a tourist or exempted company executive is caught up in this madness and killed. We may as well close up shop if that happens. We live in very precarious times. This violence has potentially very major ramifications not just for the families of those killed by the maniacs, but for the very existence of Bermuda as a tourist destination and safe haven to do business. For the sake of our very survival as a country we hope and pray that the Bermuda Police Service is successful in the coming days and weeks.”

“Whilst the Alliance understands the concept of a ceasefire raised by others, the fact is that the gang members have no desire to consider this. The young men involved have no interest in solving the problem - they are the problem. They love the life style and now have leadership, structure and loyalty as part of their make up. They are using these skills to terrorize the community and treat Bermuda as their personal fiefdom. They care not for the police or the concerns of the community or the lives of others. The gunmen care nothing for the peace marches which are great to rally the community but sadly do very little to stop the violence as we have seen. We are in a crisis situation. The community MUST step up with any assistance it can give. People in the community know the shooters. The community must stand up to these cowards.”

“Rather than complain about lack of operational control, despite major influence through the budget here is what the Government can do to help solve the problems we are facing:

- The Government must provide necessary funding for the Police force, this is key to allow for over time pay and police presence.
- We need more officers asap on the force and deployed on the streets. This can happen with money.
- Our police officers are under paid, under staffed, lack modern technology, work in deplorable conditions and need the appropriate financial support of the Government. Government can fix this through adequate funding.
- The Government can convene a Crisis Task Force involving all political sides and the police to implement an immediate ACTION plan.
- The Government can introduce anti-gang legislation.
- In short funding MUST be given as a priority to the police. The fact is police funding has gone down and violent crime has increased. We must do what is right and support the police in every way! That is the better way of doing things.”