



6th January 2010

BERMUDA DEMOCRATIC ALLIANCE

1. Arrival of US & UK Law Enforcement - Statement by Michael M. Fahy JP

2. Murder rate statistics – Statement by Craig Cannonier

Press Release

Michael Fahy said in response to the announcement by Government of the arrival of US & UK law enforcement:

“The Alliance is pleased that there seems to finally be some action in respect of dealing with the gang violence that has seen four deaths in a month and eighteen people shot since May 2009. Whilst such violence is unprecedented in Bermuda, the writing has been on the wall. There has been a breakdown in family values, a decline in the education system and a rise in disrespect for law enforcement over the last number of years. We are concerned that the initiatives unveiled are too little too late. If proper budgetary support had been provided to the Bermuda Police Service then perhaps we might not now have to rely on overseas help. It is strange that suddenly, when we are hitting rock bottom, the Government is finally able to find the necessary funds to assist the Bermuda Police Service and that relations with Government House are reportedly at the best point ever under this Government. Perhaps if there had been close cooperation as there should have been in the first place between the Government and Government House then we would be in a better place.”

“We do believe that the violence can be stopped. However, we are not as upbeat as the Premier regarding the effect violent crime will have on our economy. Whilst tourists may not be specific targets, let’s be real. If a child is "accidentally" murdered, or if a tourist is in the wrong place at the wrong time and is killed, or if a high powered international business executive is gunned down in a drive-by shooting by the self-styled gangsters, make no mistake about it - Bermuda will face the toughest economic challenges it has ever faced in its 400 year history.”

“When Bermuda appears on the AP news wire or CNN in the same story as Puerto Rico relating to violent crime, this has a profound effect on the psyche of a safety conscious US tourist. Bermuda has spent lifetimes positioning itself as a safe place for tourists and the guest workers who fuel our economy. When that reputation is lost it may be lifetimes before it is regained. Whether the threat is real or not, the perception is already there that it is real. The problem is a national emergency and should be treated as such. The

Alliance has made a number of positive suggestions and believes that anti-gang legislation should be explored, in addition to ensuring the Police Service has the resources and technology to fight back using 21st century policing tools. We agree with Col. Burch however, in that the community must play its part by stepping up and reporting criminal activity to the Police Service or Crimestoppers. We must all get involved before it is too late.”

Craig Cannonier said in response to the murder rate per capita:

"The figures speak for themselves. It is a sad day indeed when huge metropolitan centers have a lower per capita murder rate than Bermuda. Whilst statistics can easily be skewed when in a small jurisdiction like Bermuda and there is an outbreak of violence, we cannot escape from the fact that this kind of statistic can easily change the perception of Bermuda and make it seem far more unsafe than it actually is. It is these kinds of figures that concern visitors, locals and guest workers alike. It is foolish to believe that this violence does not effect the economy. The very fabric of our society is under threat and statistics like these harm us even more. We need to stay focused on the issues at hand and not just address the immediate concern of containing the criminal element, but find proactive and long term solutions to ensure that Bermuda does not see the murder rates for 2010 be even higher. We cannot afford for the numbers to rise."
