



Ministerial Statement

By

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

Airport Fire Rescue Services

February 3rd, 2023

Mr. Speaker, today I will table the Fire Safety Amendment Act 2023 which will address the minimum duty strength required at the airport.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill will amend the Fire Safety Act 2014 to clarify that the National Fire Protection Agency Codes (NFPA Codes) do not apply to airport operations and that the UK Air Navigation (Overseas Territories) Orders (OT Orders) and any Overseas Territories Aviation Requirements (OTARs) do apply to airport operations. This was always the intent of the Act and this Bill will provide the clarity needed. This affects the resourcing requirements at the airport and in particular the minimum duty strength.

Mr. Speaker, as I have previously advised this Honourable House, the Bermuda Fire and Rescue Service operates the Airport Rescue Firefighting Services which provides aircraft rescue and firefighting services for the L.F. Wade International Airport. This is an essential

service that enables the airport to serve commercial flights. I also advised of the increased requirements in respect of the minimum duty strength and the need in the short term to bring in overseas firefighters to meet that revised requirement to ensure that airport operations continued uninterrupted.

Mr. Speaker, since my last statement to this Honourable House on this matter, I am pleased to report that we have advertised and recruited a further 11 local firefighters, 10 of whom are currently overseas in the UK receiving specialist training to be certified aircraft rescue firefighters. I have met with them on a number of occasions and was pleased to see them off at the airport. I am impressed with both their caliber, enthusiasm and the support and training they are receiving from the management team.

Mr. Speaker, not all jurisdictions hire raw recruits and train them for the fire service. Some will only hire trained and qualified firefighters. Bermuda, however, hires raw recruits and trains them to be firefighters. It typically takes 24 weeks for the foundation training and then there is further specialist training. With this cohort, the intent is to have them certified aircraft rescue firefighters and on duty replacing some of the overseas firefighters by 31st March 2023.

Mr. Speaker, we currently have 19 overseas firefighters and this will leave us in March with the need to retain some of the overseas firefighters until further Bermudians can be hired and trained to replace

them. I am pleased to advise that we are advertising to fill more posts within the Service including firefighters, Sergeants, Crew Commanders and substantively filling the Fire Chief's post.

Mr. Speaker, we are committed to ensuring that there are sufficient resources at the airport to maintain operations. We are also committed to recruiting and retaining Bermudians in the Service. This essential service provides a challenging and rewarding career and I encourage people to apply to join.

Mr. Speaker, in closing I would like to thank the women and men of the Bermuda Fire and Rescue Service for their service and in particular to those who have stepped up at the airport. I would also like to thank the executive of the Fire Service Association for their support in ensuring that the Airport requirements were met.

Thank you, **Mr. Speaker**.