



MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

By

SEN. THE HON. JEFFREY C. BARON JP MINISTER OF NATIONAL SECURITY

BERMUDA FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE RESPONSE -STRUCTURAL FIRE- FRONT STREET

25TH JULY 2016

Madame President, Senators will be aware of the significant structural fire that destroyed an area of Front Street in the early hours of Thursday, 21st July. It is important to place on record the chronology of events as we know them and to set out next steps as regards any investigation of the circumstances.

Madame President, the events can be summarized as follows:

- At approximately 4:32 am on Thursday July 22nd, the Bermuda Fire and Rescue Service received -a report of a commercial building involved in fire on Front Street, Hamilton.
- BFRS responded to the scene of the incident with 16 fire appliances and 60 personnel.
- On arrival crews found that there were flames and thick smoke emanating from the alleyway between 75 Front Street, the offices of Freisenbruch-Meyer Group, and 77 Front Street, a retail store known as Onion Jack's.

- Due to the size and location of the fire, the Principal Officer (SAFO Renaud) on scene decided to call in all personnel to assist in the extinguishment of the fire.
- BF&RS set up 3 areas of attack, on Front Street, Reid Street and Chancery Lane, to not only fight the fire but to also protect neighboring buildings and other exposed areas.
- The fire was eventually controlled and extinguished at approximately 1:00 pm. Two crews remained on scene to address possible reigniting that could occur.
- There was major fire damage to 77-81 Front Street and partially to 75 Front Street.
- There was also minor heat and smoke damage to Innovation House on Reid Street, the current but temporary location of the Cabinet Office.

The cause and extent of damage is currently under investigation and we will be able to provide further details upon completion. Prior to any investigation being commenced it was necessary to shore up the walls between 77 and 79 Front Street and Freisenbruch-Meyer and to clear debris to ensure safety of all personnel.

Madame President, thank fully there was no loss of life or any injury as a result of what by any measure was serious fire. In my comments immediately following the incident I referred to the exceptional professionalism of the men and women of the Bermuda Fire & Rescue Service. I am especially pleased to reiterate that view today in their direct hearing as we are joined in the gallery by the crews who worked to extinguish this fire.

Madame President, Bermuda can be immensely proud of the emergency services that provide safety and security for the island. Fire fighters endure arduous and painstaking training and we take for granted how important that training is to real life scenarios. In simple terms, these men and women significantly reduced the potential for damage to other buildings through their constant effort and determination to see the job done.

Madame President, I wish to record my thanks as the Minister responsible for BFRS and to also salute these men and women for exceptional manner in which they discharged their duties on this occasion.

Thank you, Madame President.