



GOVERNMENT OF BERMUDA
Ministry of National Security

Department for National Drug Control

Ministerial Statement

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

**15th Annual Meeting of the
Bermuda Drug Information Network (BerDIN)**

November 29th 2024

Mr. Speaker, the 2024 Annual Meeting of the Bermuda Drug Information Network (BerDIN) was hosted by the Department for National Drug Control on November 1st at the Bermuda Underwater Exploration Institute (BUEI). This was the 15th meeting of this information network.

Mr. Speaker, the BerDIN is comprised of individuals who either represent themselves or an agency, with the objective of delivering factual, impartial, and comparable information regarding alcohol, drugs and alcohol/drug addiction in Bermuda, along with their repercussions. The meeting was attended by thirty-one (31) BerDIN members and invited guests which included twenty (20) professionals from the Bermuda Addiction Certification Board (BACB). This year's meeting was the first collaborative effort between BerDIN and the Bermuda Addiction Certifications Board (BACB).

Mr. Speaker, the gathering facilitated discussions and allowed participants to gain insights into the developments that occurred on

the Island over the past year, presenting a comprehensive overview of the current situation regarding alcohol and drug use in Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, stakeholders attending the meeting represented both governmental and non-governmental agencies, such as:

1. Bermuda Hospitals Board
2. Bermuda Police Service
3. Bermuda Sport Anti-Doping Authority
4. Department of Child and Family Services
5. CADA
6. Department of Corrections
7. Department of Court Services
8. Department of Health
9. Department for National Drug Control
10. Financial Intelligence Agency
11. Customs Department
12. Department of Public Prosecutions
13. The Supreme Court
14. Shift

Mr. Speaker, I, as Minister of National Security, under whose remit the National Drug Control now falls, commenced the event with opening remarks, which were followed by presentations from experts in their respective disciplines. This year's agenda focused on updating members regarding the latest activities and initiatives from agencies involved in both demand and supply reduction efforts. Participants also had the opportunity to hear from an

international guest speaker who addressed emerging trends in drug use.

Mr. Speaker, there are significant health and safety concerns arising from the misuse of alcohol and drugs that I would like to highlight for your consideration.

In the initial presentation led by Mrs Joanne Dean, the Director of the DNDC, the achievements of BerDIN were emphasized, and appreciation was expressed to the members for their ongoing support. Key insights were communicated concerning the data outlined in the ten (10) chapters of the Annual Report. Notable points included:

- alcohol, cocaine, and marijuana continued to be the three (3) most preferred substances, with users indicating that these substances are easily accessible.
- a significant number of individuals sought assistance from Turning Point, Salvation Army, and Men's Treatment.
- A total of 5.5 million liters of alcohol were imported, with a valuation of \$30.7 million. This importation generated \$19.3 million in customs duties.
- Additionally, there was a significant increase of 53.9% in the number of individuals who did not pass the breathalyzer test.

Mr. Speaker, concluding the presentation, Mrs. Dean addressed the significant data gaps identified in this year's report and the various organizational challenges that agencies have encountered over the past year. Furthermore, she urged the members to persist in their vital efforts to collect high quality data, despite current circumstances.

Mr. Speaker, Officer Jermaine Galloway, from Texas, delivered a comprehensive presentation regarding the latest drug trends observed in the United States, Canada, and now Bermuda. The day before his presentation, Officer Galloway performed an environmental assessment of various local stores to evaluate the Bermuda drug market. Attendees were shown a series of images and videos depicting the different drugs that are appearing in stores across the Island such as Kratom, Micro jelly, Amanita Muscaria (mushrooms), Shisha, THC-M and THC-O products and Zyn packs (these go between the teeth and gums).

Mr. Speaker, he also addressed the harmful effects these products could have on our community, particularly in terms of marketing strategies aimed at young people, the high potency of items and the use of vape devices. Many of the identified items are synthetic cannabinoids or precursors to more potent synthetics that may arrive on island as per the trends in the U.S.A and many are in bright packaging and flavored thus, potentially attracting our youth.

Mr. Speaker, the representative from the Department for National Drug Control (DNDC), Stephanie Tankard, who serves as the Research Officer, delivered an update regarding the Department's six (6) survey initiatives which included: Public Amenity, Treatment demand indicators, Consumer experience, Employee experience, Stakeholder feedback, and the Drug Abuse Monitoring Survey (DAMP). A detailed summary was presented regarding the DAMP.

Mr. Speaker, it was emphasized that alcohol, marijuana, and cocaine are the three (3) most commonly used substances among people who are sentenced to incarceration. Notably, for the first time, eight (8) people tested positive for morphine upon reception

into the Department of Corrections. Additionally, 12% of inmates upon intake, reported using prescribed medication for mental or emotional issues within the last year. Reports of physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, and abandonment before the age of 18 were made by 20 inmates. Furthermore, drugs and alcohol were linked to 23.9% of both current and past offenses, and 14.5% of inmates indicated they experienced an intermediate to severe drug abuse problem.

Mr. Speaker, Dr. Celeste Maycock, an emergency room physician, presented a collaborative initiative between the Bermuda Hospitals Board and the Department for National Drug Control. This anonymous study aimed to investigate the types and prevalence of substances consumed by individuals involved in road traffic accidents (RTAs) who sought treatment in the Emergency Room from May 1, 2023, to April 30, 2024. Key findings revealed that out of 167 participants (16% female, 84% male, aged 16-90 years), 119 individuals, or 71%, tested positive for substances. Among these, 53 participants (32%) had only alcohol in their system, 32 (19%) had only drugs, and 34 (20%) had both alcohol and drugs in their system. The positive drug tests identified substances such as THC, cocaine, methamphetamines, benzodiazepines, and/or opiates. Notably, 20% of accidents occurred on Fridays, followed by Saturdays, and a significant proportion of the RTAs were single-vehicle incidents (62%), predominantly involving motorbike riders (81%).

Mr. Speaker, Mrs. Nadine Kirkos, a Government Analyst at the Department of Health, presented several case studies from the past two (2) years in which alcohol and/or drugs were possibly related

to death. She detailed the analysis of drugs found in toxicology reports and DUI samples.

Mr. Speaker, in 2022, following the suspicious deaths of 48 males and 11 females, the substances identified included ethanol/alcohol in 9 cases, drugs in 15 cases, and a combination of both alcohol and drugs in 13 cases. Additionally, there were 22 instances where no substances were found. Among the female cases from 2022, the presence of cocaine, benzodiazepines, fentanyl, norfentanyl, and morphine was noted in one individual's blood. In the male case study, substances such as zolpidem, citalopram, tramadol, oxycodone, and codeine were detected in both blood and urine samples.

Mr. Speaker, in contrast, in 2023, the analysis of substances following the suspicious deaths of 51 males and 12 females revealed similar findings: ethanol/alcohol was present in 9 cases, drugs in 20 cases, and both alcohol and drugs in 5 cases. However, there were 29 cases where no substances were detected. The 2023 male case study identified Delta-9 THC, Hydroxy-THC, Carboxy-THC, MDMA, MDA, morphine, and benzodiazepines in their blood and urine.

Mr. Speaker, Chief Inspector Robert Cardwell from the Tactical Support Division of the Bermuda Police Service (BPS) delivered a presentation on the procedure for conducting roadside sobriety checks and the relevant legislation that underpins this practice. He also outlined the legislative amendments he has proposed, which are aimed at enhancing the authority of BPS officers during vehicle

stops and addressing public awareness regarding the timing and locations of these sobriety checks.

Mr. Speaker, the final presentation of the day was delivered by Dennis Lister III JP, MP, the Chairman of the Bermuda Road Safety Council (BRSC). His presentation centred on the initiatives and strategies aimed at combating impaired and substance-related driving. Mr. Lister highlighted that a significant number of accidents are linked to alcohol or impairment, primarily caused by drunk and/or drugged driving, speeding, distracted driving, and reckless behaviour. He emphasized the negative effects of impaired driving on our close-knit community and stressed the necessity for behavioural and cultural changes to achieve meaningful progress. Attendees were reminded of the various short- and long-term campaigns and initiatives established to tackle impaired driving. In conclusion, Mr. Lister outlined the anticipated outcomes and objectives of the BRSC.

Mr. Speaker, the 2024 Annual Report of the BerDIN and all the presentations can be accessed on the Government portal at www.gov.bm/sites/default/files/2024-10/BerDIN-Report-2024.pdf We encourage policy makers, stakeholders and the community to utilize the data to direct actions and /or programme development to address areas of concern.

Thank you, **Mr. Speaker**.