



Ministerial Statement
by
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Junior Minister for Health and Cabinet
Ageing Well Committee
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Good Morning Madame President,

Bermuda's seniors represent the fastest growing segment of our population and are set to rise by 38% to approximately 12,000 by 2020. An ageing population on the one hand is viewed as a positive indicator of the availability of healthcare; on the other hand it is viewed as problematic in relation to health, welfare and the provision of services. For effective services to be delivered to older persons there is a need to move away from consideration of older persons as a problem and towards consideration of them as a resource in terms of caring for themselves and others.

Madame President, according to the United Nations, "Population ageing is poised to become one of the most significant social transformations of the 21st century, with implications for nearly all sectors of society, including labor and financial markets, the demand for goods and services, such as housing , transportation and social protection, as well as family structures and intergenerational ties. Worldwide countries are faced with the many challenges of an ageing population specifically having a major impact on publicly funded health and welfare services and also long term care services and accommodations."

Madame President, the PLP in their platform made a commitment to “Putting Our Seniors and Vulnerable people first. Every government has a responsibility to ensure that its senior population enjoys a quality of life that reflects the values we place on them as citizens. The PLP is proud to have introduced Future care for our seniors to assist them in their golden years. The PLP will continue to ensure that or seniors are able to live in dignity.”

Madame President the Ageing Well Committee operates under the guidance of the Cabinet Office to focus on seniors and ageing and will be responsible for reviewing and revising the ageing well strategy. In December 2019, I was appointed by Premier Burt as the new Chair of the Ageing Well Committee. The Committee’s vision is for a Bermuda to be a society for all ages that celebrates and prepares responsibly for the ageing process throughout their life course. The AWC is a government and private sector collaboration. It will also serve as a watch dog for residential care homes and nursing homes. They will also address the issue of senior abuse.

Madame President, the following are Ageing Well Committee’s nine goals and their underlying beliefs.

1. COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

We believe that coordinated planning and oversight on the part of government and the community are required to fulfill the vision of ageing well in Bermuda.

2. STRATEGIC WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION

We believe that a strong, age-balanced labor force is necessary to ensure quality of life for all people as our population ages.

3. EMPLOYMENT AND FINANCIAL SECURITY FOR OLDER ADULTS AND FAMILY CAREGIVERS

We believe that Bermudians should have access to employment and financial resources that meet their needs in their senior years.

4. HEALTHY AGEING

We believe that people must be supported to maintain, manage or improve their health and well-being as they age, irrespective of income or health.

5. AGEING AT HOME

We believe that all people should have access to suitable housing that enables them to age at home for as long as it is appropriate for their needs and circumstances.

6. QUALITY LONG TERM CARE

We believe that all people should be able to access and afford an appropriate range of long term services and supports that prioritize ageing in place and promote overall quality of life and well being.

7. ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORTATION

We believe that transportation is essential to participating in the community and should be accessible to all regardless of age, ability and economic status.

8. SAFETY AND SECURITY FOR OLDER ADULTS

We believe that people should feel safe and secure in their homes and communities and are protected from abuse and neglect as they age.

9. INTERGENERATIONAL AND INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES

We believe that an intergeneration and inclusive community is one that actively respects, encourages and supports the involvement of all people in its social, political, cultural, educational, recreational and economic activities.

Madame President, as our Premier Burt said “As a country, we have a moral and social responsibility to care for our seniors and ensure seniors that they have access to affordable healthcare, a decent place to live and services that support them as they age. Seniors are an important segment of our community. It is not enough to say it, but we must demonstrate it by implementing and crafting policies and legislation that will provide care for those Bermudians who are currently 65 years and older and prepare for those who turn 65 in the coming days, months and years ahead”.

Madame President, the Progressive Labor Party Government has passed the following legislation, crafted policies and is developing new legislation:

- Annual increase based on rate of inflation for pensioners
- Retirement age increased to 68 years old for civil servants
- Amendments to the Residential Care & Nursing Home Act 1999
- No custom duty on mobility aids, appliances and fitting for seniors, rest homes and nursing homes
- Increase in War Veterans pensions
- Interest free loans for home improvements for seniors
- Introduced Future care for seniors
- Improved home care providers process for Future Care claims
- Can qualify for reduced land tax
- 50% off of vehicle license fees for qualified seniors
- Increased service at Aged & Disability Services Department
- Primary homestead exempt for stamp duty
- Charter of Rights and Responsibilities for the Elderly and Adults in need of Long-term Care and Assistance
- Initiatives to reduce energy costs
- Proposed Health Care reform that will increase benefits, cap co-pays and reduce out of pocket cost for health care
- Proposed amendment to the Cost of Living Commission Act
- Amendments to the Bermuda National Pension Scheme which will allow up to 25% of their account balance soon to come into effect.

Madame President and members of the Senate, I wish to again thank the former Chair of the Ageing Well Committee Derrick Burgess for his dedication to Bermuda's seniors. I also thank government departments, rest homes, nursing homes, banks, groceries, insurance companies, pharmacies, gas stations, seniors clubs, churches, Age Concern and other groups, organizations and individuals for their commitment by either working, volunteering, advocating and or offering discounts to our ageing population.

Finally **Madame President**, I believe that Bermudians will rise to the challenge. Everyone has a role to play in supporting our ageing population including Government, individuals, families, the private and third sectors. This is a community issue, not a political issue and will impact on each of us. It takes village.

Thank you, **Madame President**.