



Government of Bermuda

Ministry of Health and Environment

**Ministerial Statement to the
House of Assembly
by the Minister of Health, Seniors and Environment
The Honourable Jeanne J. Atherden, JP, MP
On 18th July, 2014
"RESIDENTIAL LONG TERM CARE IN BERMUDA"**

Mr. Speaker,

As Honourable Members are aware, my Ministry has responsibility for Seniors which includes the provision of residential long term care in Bermuda. The Residential Care Home and Nursing Home Act 1999 and the Regulations of 2001 set out the standards of care to be provided by these homes.

A residential care home, which is defined by the Act, is often referred to locally as a "Rest Home", so that's the term I'll use. Rest Homes typically provide independent living or assisted living accommodations for persons 65 years and older or for disabled persons.

Nursing Homes provide care to seniors or disabled persons who require a higher level of medical care and attention. As you can imagine, the level of staffing and the facility requirements for a Nursing Home are more stringent than for Rest Homes.

Concern has recently been raised regarding the quality of care provided by some of our Homes, and those concerns warranted looking into.

So that's what I did. I did some digging, and I took the opportunity to visit some of the islands Rest Homes and Nursing Homes.

Mr. Speaker,

I'd like to take this opportunity to share some of what I found (the good and the bad) and to provide Honourable Members with a bit of information on what I, as the Minister responsible for Seniors, am planning for the future.

Mr. Speaker,

The National Office for Seniors and the Physically Challenged (NOSPC) is currently responsible for inspecting and registering all Residential Homes and Nursing Homes.

I have learned that when homes are inspected, they are visited by a team of professionals which can include staff from NOSPC, the Environmental Health section of the Department of Health, a Community Health Nurse, the Bermuda Fire Service, a Government Nutritionist and sometimes an occupational or physical therapist.

The inspections are thorough and document, in writing, the findings of the inspection team have reviewed a number of the inspection reports and I can confirm that they record positive and negative outcomes. Where a home is deficient, the Administrator is given a deadline for making improvements and follow-up inspections should take place.

I have asked NOSPC to review their documentation and especially their follow-up inspections to make absolutely certain that deficiencies are addressed. Plus, I have asked that NOSPC's procedures for following up on complaints and concerns be expanded to ensure timely communication on the status of the investigation so that those who raised the concern are kept in the loop regarding the resolution.

Mr. Speaker,

The three most senior staff at the National Office are all retiring this year, so we are viewing this as an opportunity to review the role and responsibilities of the National Office - which, in my view, have never been clearly set out.

Management Consulting Services has been asked to review the organizational structure and role of NOSPC which is currently responsible for seniors and Bermuda's disabled population as well as the management and operation of Orange Valley and the Opportunity Workshop.

We will also be reviewing a number of reports and recommendations which were developed on the management and operation of residential care in Bermuda. We need to take a close look at how Sylvia Richardson, Lefroy House, the Continuing Care Unit and the Alzheimer's Unit at the Hospital are managed to ensure that we take advantage of combined purchasing power and the possibility of sharing staff between facilities. Although these reports were not implemented at the time, I'm going to go over them to see if they contain recommendations that I want to take forward.

Mr. Speaker,

Before her untimely passing, Mrs. Louise Jackson was instrumental in assisting the then Minister of Health and Seniors with the establishment of a Seniors Advisory Council. The Council, with the assistance of a Policy Analyst from the Ministry, worked with focus and dedication to develop an Ageing Plan for Bermuda.

I am currently reviewing the outline of that Plan which urges that our ageing demographic be considered when any and all policies are being developed. We speak about "Health in all Policies", and we need to include "Ageing in All Policies" as well.

I have to stress, **Mr. Speaker**, that the proposal is not just about what the Government can and should do for Seniors. It is also about what young people need to do to plan for their old age.

We shouldn't grow old expecting someone else to take care of us. We have to plan and prepare. We have to make sure that we save, contribute to our pensions, modify our homes to meet our needs as we grow older, and ensure that we maintain our health insurance coverage even when we retire.

Finally, **Mr. Speaker**, this country needs to make plans for those among us who do not have the resources necessary to cover their own costs in their old age. Not everyone can remain in their own home as they grow older, so there will always be a need for residential care facilities. But we need facilities, not just for the elderly, but also the "young disabled" - those young people who may suffer from physical, mental or cognitive disorders and need special care. There are also young people who, through accidents and injury, become disabled and require long term residential care.

Let me be clear, Mr. Speaker, this care is expensive to provide, and someone has to pay whether it be the individual or the Government.

So, the decisions that have to be made are difficult, but they are also important. I want to explore ways that we can partner with the private sector to develop new care homes and to make those that are already operational less expensive.

Thank you, **Mr. Speaker**.