



Ministerial Statement

By

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Minister of Housing and Municipalities

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Housing Rehabilitation and Repurposing: Expanding Bermuda's Housing Stock

Mr. Speaker,

I rise today to update this Honourable House on an important component of the Government's broader housing strategy: the rehabilitation and repurposing of existing assets to expand Bermuda's housing stock and better meet the needs of our community.

Mr. Speaker, when people think about expanding Bermuda's housing stock, they often think exclusively about new construction.

New construction remains critical and will continue to form an important part of our approach to addressing Bermuda's housing challenges. However, some of our greatest opportunities already exist around us. They exist in homes that can be rehabilitated. They exist in properties that can be restored. They exist in buildings that can be repurposed to meet modern needs. For that reason, the Ministry has placed increasing emphasis on ensuring that existing housing assets and underutilised properties are not overlooked as we work to increase housing opportunities for Bermudians.

Mr. Speaker, housing rehabilitation is one of the most practical and cost-effective ways of expanding available housing stock.

Every housing unit that is restored and returned to productive use is a housing unit that does not need to be replaced. Every property preserved through timely investment represents a valuable asset retained for future generations.

More importantly, rehabilitation allows us to put our money where our mouth is. If we are serious about expanding housing opportunities, then we must be equally serious about protecting and improving the housing assets already under our stewardship.

Mr. Speaker, our commitment to rehabilitation is not merely theoretical.

Significant investments are currently being made across the Bermuda Housing

Corporation portfolio, with projects underway in multiple parishes and at various stages of completion.

At the Chelsea development, units comprising three two-bedroom and two three-bedroom homes are approaching completion, with delivery anticipated later this month.

At 18 Battery Road, work continues on twelve additional affordable units comprising four two-bedroom apartments, two one-bedroom lofts and six studio apartments. While the project has experienced contractor delays and material shortages, it remains an important addition to the housing stock within the St. David's community.

At the Harmony campus, construction commenced last month on the rehabilitation of Harmony Terrace North, which will deliver sixteen refurbished studio units. This work is being supported by a comprehensive electrical infrastructure upgrade currently underway to ensure that the site is capable of supporting future residential growth and occupancy.

Elsewhere within the portfolio, work is advancing at 9 King Street, where plans are being finalized to convert two apartments into three two-bedroom units; at 13 Middle Town, where the refurbishment of two three-bedroom units is now underway; at Swanston Apartments, where five two-bedroom units are being

prepared for refurbishment; and at 45 Elliott Street, where two three-bedroom apartments will be rehabilitated once relocation arrangements for existing tenants have been completed.

Additional rehabilitation works are also progressing at Gulfstream Transitional Living, including upgrades to residential facilities and kitchens, together with the refurbishment of twelve rooms that will be converted into family suites with private bathrooms. At Langley Rooming House, twenty rooms have already been refurbished, with further phases now underway, alongside improvements to kitchens, bathrooms and laundry facilities.

Mr. Speaker, these projects may not attract the same attention as a new development or a groundbreaking ceremony, but they are every bit as important. They represent a practical commitment to preserving existing housing stock, extending the useful life of valuable public assets and ensuring that more Bermudians have access to safe and suitable accommodation.

The Ministry's commitment to rehabilitation extends beyond Government-owned properties, **Mr. Speaker**, as it has also sought to support the continued preservation of affordable seniors' housing through strategic partnerships. This includes support for the work of the Bermuda Housing Trust and initiatives

designed to encourage private sector investment in the refurbishment of existing properties.

Through the Private Sector Refurbishment Programme, we are partnering with private property owners across Bermuda to return vacant and underutilised units to productive use. Current projects include homes and apartments in Sandys, Pembroke, Smith's and Somerset, together with the rehabilitation of sixteen one-bedroom units at Dr. Cann Park.

We are also working with several additional property owners whose projects have the potential to bring further residential units back onto the housing market in the near future.

Taken together, these initiatives recognise an important reality: preserving housing can be just as valuable as creating housing.

Mr. Speaker, alongside rehabilitation, the Ministry has also focused on the repurposing of underutilised assets to address housing and social challenges in innovative ways.

One of the most compelling examples of this approach is the redevelopment of Channel House.

Mr. Speaker, Channel House represents far more than the renovation of a building. It represents a practical solution to multiple challenges facing Bermuda. Through collaboration involving the Ministry of Housing and Municipalities, the Ministry of Health and other key stakeholders, Channel House is being transformed into a sixty-bed accommodation and care facility for individuals who have been deemed medically fit for discharge from hospital but who continue to require supportive accommodation and care.

At present, some individuals remain in acute-care hospital beds despite no longer requiring acute medical treatment because suitable accommodation and support services are not readily available elsewhere.

This creates challenges not only for those individuals and their families, but for the healthcare system as a whole. Acute-care hospital beds are among our most valuable healthcare resources and are intended for patients requiring urgent medical treatment and ongoing clinical intervention. When medically fit-for-discharge patients have nowhere appropriate to transition to, those beds remain occupied, limiting capacity for new admissions and placing additional strain on healthcare services.

Mr. Speaker, the consequences of this are felt throughout the system. Pressure on bed availability can result in patients awaiting admission or treatment for urgent health concerns spending extended periods in emergency department treatment areas and, at times, receiving care in hallways rather than in more appropriate clinical settings. This impacts more than operational efficiency.

It affects patient dignity. It affects privacy. It affects comfort. It creates additional challenges for healthcare professionals seeking to provide care in the most appropriate clinical environment possible. Most importantly, it has the potential to affect the overall patient experience and health outcomes. By providing appropriate accommodation and care in a supportive environment, Channel House will help address an important gap in Bermuda's continuum of care while freeing valuable acute-care bed capacity for patients who require hospital-level treatment.

Mr. Speaker, this initiative demonstrates the value of looking beyond traditional approaches to housing. Sometimes the best opportunities are found not by constructing something entirely new, but by reimagining the purpose and potential of assets that already exist. Channel House is therefore not simply a housing initiative. It is a housing initiative that supports healthcare objectives. It is a healthcare initiative that improves the utilisation of public resources, and it is

an example of how collaboration across Ministries can produce outcomes that benefit the entire community.

Mr. Speaker, the concept of repurposing extends beyond public assets. It also applies to derelict and underutilised properties that currently sit vacant across Bermuda. Too many buildings with the potential to provide housing remain unoccupied, deteriorating over time rather than contributing to the housing market and the vitality of our neighbourhoods. The Ministry therefore continues to advance work on its Derelict Buildings Consultation Paper, which is now approaching completion and is expected to be published within the coming weeks.

Mr. Speaker, this initiative has required thoughtful consideration because the issues involved are both complex and sensitive. While there is broad recognition that derelict properties should, wherever possible, be returned to productive use, the Government is equally mindful that questions relating to property rights and land acquisition must be approached fairly, responsibly and with appropriate sensitivity.

We recognise that these matters carry important historical significance for many Bermudians. Accordingly, considerable effort has been devoted to ensuring that

any proposals balance the public interest in expanding housing opportunities with the rights and expectations of property owners.

Our objective is not to create conflict. Our objective is to create opportunity.

The Government also recognises that it cannot solve Bermuda's housing challenges alone. Success will require partnerships with property owners, developers, charitable organisations, community groups, financial institutions and the private sector more broadly. It is for this reason, **Mr. Speaker**, that the proposed Derelict Buildings initiative and the Ministry's Private Sector Refurbishment Programme are intended to complement one another. Together, these initiatives are designed to encourage investment, facilitate restoration efforts and support the return of currently vacant properties to productive residential use. Even a modest increase in the number of derelict and vacant properties brought back into use could make a meaningful contribution to Bermuda's housing stock.

Mr. Speaker, when people think about expanding Bermuda's housing stock, they often think exclusively about new construction. New construction remains essential, and this Government remains committed to delivering new housing developments across the island. However, some of our greatest opportunities already exist around us. They exist in buildings that can be rehabilitated. They

exist in properties that can be restored. They exist in assets that can be repurposed to meet modern needs.

Whether through the rehabilitation of existing housing units, the refurbishment of privately-owned properties, the redevelopment of Channel House, or the return of derelict buildings to productive use, this Government is pursuing every practical avenue available to expand Bermuda's housing stock.

Through rehabilitation and repurposing, this Government is not only creating housing opportunities. We are preserving valuable assets, supporting our healthcare system, strengthening communities and making better use of the resources already available to us.

That is good housing policy. It is good stewardship.

And it is an important part of expanding Bermuda's housing stock for the benefit of current and future generations.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.