



**MINISTERIAL STATEMENT
To the House of Assembly**

by

**The Hon. Tinee Furbert, JP, MP
Minister of Social Development and Seniors**

UN International Day of Older Persons

Friday, 13th November 2020

Mr. Speaker, on 1 October 2020 the United Nations (UN) observed the 30th anniversary of the International Day of Older Persons. This year's Theme is "Pandemics: Do They Change How We Address Age and Ageing?".

The UN reported that globally there were 703 million persons aged 65 or over in 2019 and over the next three decades, the number of older persons worldwide is projected to more than double, reaching more than 1.5 billion persons in 2050.

In 2016 the Department of Statistics reported that out of Bermuda's total population of 63,779 there were 10,704 persons 65 years and over. This number continues to grow, especially due in part to the greying Baby Boomer demographic, improvements in health care, vital nutrition, and advances in medicine. Prevention and early detection in health care, healthier lifestyle choices, and health and safety in the workplace, also contribute to prolonged life expectancy.

Mr. Speaker, the COVID-19 (COVID) pandemic that is sweeping the world will continue to change the way we live in Bermuda until we can see the light at the end of the tunnel. During the last ten months, we have learned that our seniors are at greatest risk during a pandemic, and therefore it is paramount that the community makes every effort to minimize risk to this vulnerable group. We have also learned that we must include in our strategic planning for pandemics, considerations for the isolation and care of our seniors.

There is much that is not known about COVID and pandemics in general, but we must not let that fear overtake us. We must instead focus on what we do know and what we can control. We also know the actions that we can take and the care, compassion and respect we must show: especially as it relates to our seniors.

Mr. Speaker, while some seniors in Bermuda are quite wisely self-isolating and others are keeping a healthy distance from the community, in the difficult months ahead, it is important that we make every effort to ensure that even though they are in isolation, our seniors do not feel isolated from society.

Mr. Speaker, some things that family and friends can do are:

- Find ways to “keep an eye” on the seniors in our lives. Drive by the house and talk to your parents/grandparents/senior friends as they stand in the driveway or on the porch. Drop off a meal or medications if needed, following masking and social distancing guidelines. Use technology to communicate through video, text or simply pick up the phone and call them.
- Make sure they are getting appropriate medical care and that they continue to go to healthcare providers for chronic conditions and health screenings and ensure that they have their appropriate medications.
- Urge seniors to stay active and engaged.

The adage that “it takes a village” applies to all of us as we deal with COVID. Working together, we can provide the best care to each other, especially our seniors.

Mr. Speaker, you would be aware that the Ministry of Social Development and Seniors is a new Ministry. In closing, I take this opportunity to advise that the Ministry Headquarters is located on the ground floor of the Government Administration Building at 30 Parliament Street, Hamilton. Operating hours are from 8:30 am until 4:45 pm and the telephone number for the office is 444-2466.

Thank you, **Mr. Speaker**.