



Government of Bermuda
Ministry of Youth, Social Development and Seniors

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

by

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National Seniors Strategy, 2024-2030
“Celebrating Life and Ageing Well!”

Friday, December 13th, 2024

Good Morning Mr. Speaker, Honorable Members, and fellow Bermudians,

Today, I am honoured to announce the launch of Bermuda's first National Seniors Strategy. It brings me great pride to share the progress made in fulfilling the Government's 2020 Throne Speech initiative which was to develop a National Seniors Strategy with an emphasis on Dementia Care.

Mr. Speaker,

This strategy aims to not only address the challenges faced by our seniors, but also to guide collaborative efforts across all sectors of society— the government, community, and beyond —to uncover opportunities that will enhance the health, well-being, and quality of life of our seniors and future generations. This landmark Strategy represents a significant milestone in our dedication to supporting Bermuda's ageing population, ensuring they can age with dignity, independence, and a high quality of life.

Mr. Speaker,

With seniors projected to represent approximately 25% of our population by 2026, this Strategy comes at a crucial time. The Ministry's extensive consultation process reached community stakeholders in the public, private and charitable sectors who were invited to participate in various focus group sessions, town hall discussions and also to complete surveys. The consultation process concluded with a draft copy of the Strategy placed on the Government's Citizens Forum website for a further 4 weeks during September and October to obtain input and feedback from the general public.

Mr. Speaker,

The National Seniors Strategy was made available for public consultation from September 23rd 2024 until October 18th 2024. During this time, the Ministry received a variety of feedback responses. Many of the public's responses were consistent, highlighting issues such as the implementation and governance of the strategy, the financial challenges faced by seniors due to the high cost of living, healthcare, and caregiver support, as well as the need for improved accessibility and stronger community support for seniors.

The feedback received from the public was thoroughly reviewed and it was very pleasing to find that the draft Strategy already included provisions for many of the issues pointed out. For example, **Pillar 1** tackles the affordability of healthcare and long-term care services, while also aligning initiatives to promote healthy lifestyles throughout the life course, as outlined in the Bermuda Health Strategy. **Pillar 2** focuses on caregiver support and addresses cost of living concerns, including pensions and retirement savings. **Pillar 3** covers accessibility, and **Pillar 4** emphasizes community support, engagement, and collaboration.

Mr. Speaker,

There was concern expressed about ensuring the Strategy would not just be a document placed on file but would be living. We agree, **Mr. Speaker.**

To support the successful governance of this National Seniors Strategy, a project manager will be hired and appointed to steer the execution of the action items. Under the strategic oversight of the Ministry Headquarters, the project manager will be responsible for overseeing the implementation, coordination, and regular reporting necessary to achieve the desired outcomes outlined in the Strategy. We are committed to making continuous progress toward the goals set forth in the National Seniors Strategy over the six years 2024 to 2030.

Mr. Speaker,

The information gathered from the consultation process helped shape a comprehensive framework for a National Seniors Strategy built on four key pillars:

1. Pillar One - **Healthy Ageing,**
2. Pillar Two - **Empowered Citizens,**
3. Pillar Three - **Age-Friendly Environments** and,
4. Pillar Four - **Community.**

Mr. Speaker,

Let me now expand on the elements of each of these four Pillars.

Pillar One – Healthy Ageing, emphasizes the importance of a robust system of governance, effective coordination, and ensuring equal access to affordable and essential services for our seniors. These services aim to enhance overall health,

quality of life, and well-being throughout all stages of life. This comprehensive approach highlights:

- **Governance and Coordination:** Establishing clear policies, regulations, and structures to oversee and integrate health and social care systems efficiently.
- **Accessibility and Affordability:** Ensuring that everyone, regardless of socio-economic status, can access services necessary for maintaining health and well-being.
- **Life Course Perspective:** Addressing the needs of individuals at every stage of life—childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and old age—through tailored support and services.

Mr. Speaker,

Healthy ageing depends on access to affordable, person-centered long-term care services that assist individuals with daily activities over an extended period. To ensure sustainable and effective progress in this sector, a thorough evaluation of health, social, and long-term care system funding is essential. Additionally, caregiving plays a vital role in the current health and long-term care framework, making it imperative to prioritize and support caregiver well-being.

This integrated perspective acknowledges that healthy ageing is not just about the individuals receiving care but also about ensuring the sustainability of the systems and the well-being of those providing care.

Mr. Speaker,

Pillar Two – Empowered Citizens, champions the right for seniors to actively participate in, contribute to, and benefit from economic, social, cultural, and political activities. Protecting the rights of our seniors fosters dignity, well-being, and inclusion, which together build a society of empowered individuals—citizens who

confidently exercise their right to self-determination, make decisions about their lives and access the support needed to live independently for as long as possible. Active participation in society, particularly in economic activities, plays a crucial role in ensuring financial security. Through this pillar, the Government commits to taking action to strengthen income and economic security for all.

Mr. Speaker,

Pillar Three - Age-Friendly Environments, emphasizes the enhancement of age-friendly environments that prioritize accessibility, safety, and inclusivity, ensuring they cater to the needs of individuals of all ages. Our Seniors desire to continue doing the things they love and value for as long as possible. This means that spaces open to the public should be accessible, allowing us all to navigate comfortably, despite age or ability. Accessible and dependable transportation options must be made available to ensure our seniors can easily reach the places they need to go. In addition, housing options should be both affordable and diverse to accommodate the various needs of our ageing population. Whether the desire is to age at home, live with family or choose living spaces designed for seniors, housing options must evolve to meet the needs of our residents.

Finally, **Mr. Speaker,**

Pillar Four – Community, underscores the importance of community. When our community is connected, we are better able to address common challenges that limit our ability to age well and support and protect our most vulnerable.

John Donne, a known poet and scholar famously wrote, *“No man is an island, entirely of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main.”* His words highlight the interconnectedness of humanity; and, Pillar Four echoes this idea, urging us to foster close-knit communities where everyone can feel a sense of

belonging and support. Pillar four calls on the Community to reclaim the village spirit, embracing empathy and a culture of mutual care, where we look out for one another, share knowledge, and work together to reduce social isolation and loneliness—two significant challenges many seniors face.

Mr. Speaker,

The Bermuda National Seniors Strategy 2024-2030 is a comprehensive framework that requires extensive collaboration across ministries, sectors, and stakeholders. Its successful implementation depends on coordinated efforts between various government ministries, departments, non-profit organizations, healthcare providers, and community partners. As detailed in the strategy's implementation section and stakeholder alignments, each pillar—from Healthy Aging to Community Engagement—requires multiple entities working together to achieve the stated goals. The strategy acknowledges that no single organization can tackle the complex challenges of an ageing population alone.

This is demonstrated by the extensive cross-referencing of initiatives and action items that span across organizational boundaries, such as the coordination between healthcare services, housing development, transportation infrastructure, and social support systems. A cohesive partnership between the public, private, and charitable sectors is essential to create an age-friendly Bermuda that supports the well-being and quality of life of our seniors.

Mr. Speaker,

Today's launch marks the culmination of dedicated work involving a wide range of stakeholders across our community, including seniors, caregivers, healthcare providers, and many other organizations. This Strategy incorporates insights from successful initiatives, such as the dementia care services pilot program that

commenced in October 2023, which provided a valuable understanding of the specific needs of our senior population. The Ministry is currently collaborating with the Bermuda Health Council to develop an Integrated Care Pathway for Dementia Care Services that will form a critical branch of the Seniors Strategy.

Mr. Speaker,

We listened to our seniors during the consultation process. Many shared their personal stories and emphasized the need for greater access to dementia care services. Thus, the Ministry with the technical support from the Bermuda Health Council is taking a strategic approach to provide a comprehensive, evidence-based assessment of current dementia care practices on the island to develop an Integrated Care Pathway for Dementia. This strategic approach will result in recommending actional steps for enhancing dementia care in Bermuda in alignment with international best practices. Key deliverables that will help shape the Integrated Care Pathway for Dementia include:

1. The Completion of the Patient Journey Map;
2. Development of Patient Personas;
3. Service Mapping and a Gap Analysis;
4. A Desktop Review and Documentation of Best Practices; and,
5. A Workshop Series for Stakeholder Engagement and Feedback.

Mr. Speaker,

The development of the Integrated Care Pathway for Dementia will span an estimated six months from November when the preliminary work commenced.

Mr. Speaker,

The National Seniors Strategy 2024-2030 outlines concrete actions and measurable goals for the next six years. Implementation will begin immediately for those action items within the remit of the Ministry of Youth, Social Development and Seniors, with regular progress updates to ensure accountability and effectiveness.

However, **Mr. Speaker,**

You will recall and I have shared this previously that all of us have a part to play.

The implementation of the strategy actions will require a coordinated and collaborative approach by different Government Ministries and Departments and a whole community approach involving different private and charitable agencies. The action items are achievable. The vision of the National Seniors Strategy is “*An inclusive Bermuda that celebrates and prepares responsibly for ageing;*”. We are all ageing. I challenge each of us to take ownership of this Strategy and let’s work together, to prepare responsibly for ageing.

Mr. Speaker,

Bermuda’s first-ever National Seniors Strategy 2024-2030, is available on the Government’s website at www.gov.bm. Hard copies can also be obtained from the Office of Ageing and Disability Services and the Ministry Headquarters Office. I encourage my Honourable colleagues and the public to review the National Seniors Strategy as it will affect all of us as it provides a blueprint for supporting Bermuda's seniors to ensure that they Celebrate Life and Age Well!

Thank you, **Mr. Speaker.**