



MINISTERIAL STATEMENT
TO THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY
BY THE HONOURABLE KIM N. WILSON, JP, MP
MINISTER OF HEALTH
RESIDENTIAL CARE HOMES AND NURSING HOMES AMENDMENT
BILL 2017
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Mr Speaker and Honourable Members,

I am very pleased that today I will be tabling the Residential Care Homes and Nursing Homes Amendment Bill 2017.

Mr Speaker, this Government is keenly aware of the need to address challenges facing our long term care system. Long Term Care includes a range of services to meet the care needs of persons throughout their lifespan due to reduced physical, cognitive or functional capacity.

Care homes, also known as rest homes and nursing homes, are a central component of this system. **Mr Speaker**, the Ministry's policy direction is to prioritize people's ability to age in their own home and age in place by improving the quality and sustainability of our health and long term care systems. However, while ageing at home is often optimal, there is no doubt that care homes remain a necessary component of our long term care system. Quality residential care is necessary for those unable to safely remain in their own home or when the costs of care are unsustainable in a home setting.

The Ministry, through the Chief Medical Officer and Ageing and Disability Services, has regulatory responsibility for 22 care homes. Across these homes there is a total of 395 residents with a wide range of personal and medical care needs. Currently, the majority of residents are seniors; however care homes also include adults under 65 years of age with intellectual or physical disabilities.

Mr. Speaker, this government does not take lightly the realities of an ageing population and the challenges facing our long term care system. Currently, care homes are at capacity with an ever

growing demand. Some struggle financially to meet the reality of the high cost of this type of care. It is because of these demanding challenges and our commitment to our elders and most vulnerable in society that we have ensured the continuation of strategic initiatives that address long term care.

The 2017 Long Term Care Action Plan is one such initiative. The Plan targets some the most pressing issues facing the sector, focusing on solutions achievable in the short term. It identified actions that could be achieved within a year or groundwork necessary to set the stage for longer term goals, such as financing reform and development of a 3-5 year Long Term Care strategy. Accordingly, Goal 5 of the Action Plan is to modernize the current regulation of care homes. Efforts to update this legislation had many false starts over the years that fell victim to changing governments and priorities. **Mr Speaker,** We will not repeat this pattern, as updating this legislation is an essential component of protecting persons in care.

The purpose of the Residential Care Homes and Nursing Homes Act 1999 and the 2001 Regulations is to ensure residents' overall health, safety and well-being through setting minimum

requirements. However, **Mr Speaker**, since the introduction of this legislation almost 20 years ago, there have been substantial advancements in the expectations of care and service provision. The mechanisms available for compliance and enforcement therefore need to be enhanced in order to continue raising standards and move towards international best practices.

Mr Speaker, Today, best practices promote care homes to be person centred and focused on quality of life. This means ensuring services and programmes revolve around the individual's comprehensive needs and preferences rather than an exclusive focus on medical needs and the institution's daily routines. To promote this shift in service delivery requires a regulatory framework that is responsive to a home's model of care, level of care and the specific needs of the residents. In addition, the compliance monitoring and enforcement methods must be adapted to this framework while establishing more effective regulatory mechanisms in light of capacity and financing limitations.

Accordingly, **Mr Speaker**, the Amendment Bill laid in the House today is to address these fundamental issues: improving the

minimum standards of care and enforcement capacity. The Bill creates a more flexible and efficient regulatory framework to raise standards over time and focus on quality. The amendments also aim to incentivize compliance and address non-compliance; and ensure a transparent and fair process for care home operators. Significantly, **Mr Speaker**, the Bill includes fundamental components of the Protection of Persons in Care Act that I proposed earlier this year, whilst in opposition, to enhance reporting of abuse and powers to intervene.

Enhancing the regulatory environment for care homes will be an ongoing process, **Mr Speaker**, and these amendments set the stage for continued progress in improving standards and regulation. Future phases of amendments will update the Regulations and continue to enhance the Code of Practice to better respond to broader long term care initiatives.

Mr Speaker, Consultation on these changes has been ongoing since December of last year, and was built upon many years of previous reviews and recommendations. Working groups were formed of key stakeholders from community-based and government long term care professionals, providers and

advocates including care home administrators. We have been grateful for the time and effort put in by stakeholders and their ongoing commitment to this work.

Mr Speaker, I am most pleased to table this bill today and look forward to discussing it in detail during the second reading and debate in the coming weeks.

Thank you **Mr Speaker**.