



**Summary of Proceedings
Public Hearing**

Joint Select Committee on Social Services and Public Administration

Held on Wednesday November 16, 2016

[10:17 a.m. to 12:45 p.m.]

Inquiry: An inquiry into the existing arrangements and possible options for regulating geriatric care facilities/old age homes in Trinidad and Tobago.

Objectives of the inquiry

The objectives of the inquiry are:

- 1. To assess the systems in place to regulate and monitor geriatric care facilities/ old age Homes in Trinidad and Tobago;**
- 2. To determine the prevalence of cases of abuse and negligence of the elderly at Geriatric Care Facilities/ Old Age homes;**
- 3. To assess the efficacy of existing legislative framework relative to Geriatric facilities;**
- 4. To determine whether there is a need for an expansion in the capacity of geriatric care facilities/ old age homes in Trinidad and Tobago.**

Venue: The J. Hamilton Maurice Room, Mezzanine Floor, Office of the Parliament, Tower D, the Port of Spain International Waterfront Centre, 1A Wrightson Road, Port of Spain.

Committee members

The following committee members were present:

1. Dr Dhanayshar Mahabir – Chairman

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Community Development and other Social Services)*

2. Mr. Esmond Forde, MP – Vice-Chairman
3. Brig. Gen. (Ret.) Ancil Antoine, MP
4. Mrs. Christine Newallo-Hosein, MP
5. Mrs. Glenda Jennings-Smith, MP
6. Ms. Nadine Stewart
7. Ms. Khadijah Ameen

Witnesses who appeared

The following officials of the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services appeared before the Committee:

- i. Mrs. Jacinta Bailey-Sobers – Permanent Secretary
- ii. Ms. Natasha Barrow – Permanent Secretary (Ag.)
- iii. Mr. Vijay Gangapersad – Chief Technical Officer (Ag.)
- iv. Dr Jennifer Rouse – Director, Division of Ageing
- v. Dr Barry Ishmael – Legal Officer II
- vi. Ms. Anra Bobb – Project Coordinator/Geriatric Partnership Programme.

Key Issues Discussed

The following are the key subject areas/issues discussed during the hearing:

- i. the consistent increase in the size of the elderly population in Trinidad and Tobago from 1980 to 2011;
- ii. in 2011 it was estimated that 177,676 persons (which is 13.4% of the total population of Trinidad and Tobago) was 60 years and over;
- iii. the 85 + age bracket is the fastest growing cohort and are predisposed to infirmities and predominantly immobile;
- iv. of the 187 Geriatric Homes, the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services (MoSDFS) supports (through funding) and oversees only ten (10). The other 177 Homes which are privately owned and managed fall under the purview of the Ministry of Health (MoH) pursuant to the Private Hospitals Act Chapter 29:03;
- v. the urgent need for the proclamation of the Homes for Older Persons Act 2007, which is intended to repeal the Private Hospitals Act Chapter 29:03;

- vi. the delay in the proclamation of the Act is attributed to inadequate staff at the Division of Aging and possibly funding;
- vii. amendments are to be made to the Homes for Older Persons Act, 2007 as it concerns:
 - delineating the roles and responsibilities of the Division of Health and Social Services of the THA as it concerns the oversight of Geriatric Homes in Tobago;
 - assigning greater responsibilities to the MoSDFS regarding the management, regulation and oversight of all geriatric facilities/old age homes;
- viii. it is proposed that the National Policy on Ageing will be reviewed in the current fiscal year;
- ix. the need for better streamlining of the efforts of both the MoSDFS and the Ministry of Health (MoH) in relation to monitoring the standard of care provided at Geriatric Homes;
- x. there were 156 complaints that required investigation and follow-up by the MoSDFS, 100 of which were related to compliance issues and the balance were cases of abuse;
- xi. the state (through the relevant Ministries) has failed to collate sufficient statistical data on the number of persons residing in Geriatric Homes in this country and on other vital aspects of geriatric care;
- xii. the need for MoSDFS to be more actively involved in the investigation of cases concerning elder abuse which occur at geriatric care facilities;
- xiii. the processes and challenges involved in locating suitable geriatric accommodation for elderly persons who are “long stay” patients at Hospital and/or socially displaced;
- xiv. the need for the immediate review of the Community Care Programme;
- xv. site visits must be executed at both private and Government-supported Homes;
- xvi. the shortage of staff and resources at the MoSDFS. In particular, the shortage of inspectors tasked with undertaking investigations and inspections at the Geriatric Homes;
- xvii. the need to fill the 12 vacancies at the Ministry in the positions of Inspector I and II;
- xviii. there appears to be significant under reporting of abuse perpetuated against the elderly;
- xix. the need for the expansion of training offered under the Geriatric Adolescent Partnership Programme (GAPP), and the need to introduce a mechanism for tracking the career paths pursued by graduates of the programme;
- xx. the need to engage Municipal Regional Corporations throughout Trinidad and Tobago to assist in the regulation of old age homes since the Municipal Corporations Act, 1990 contains provisions which allow these Corporations to establish old age homes. The Act also charge these Corporations with the responsibility of maintaining Homes under their control;

- xxi. the failure of the Ministry to address the matter of unregistered homes operating throughout Trinidad;
- xxii. the delay in the operationalization of a Facility Review Team which is provided for in the Homes for Older Persons Act 2007;
- xxiii. the need for the Ministry to review its policy that require senior citizens who receive the Senior Citizens' Grant to report annually the Ministry annually to confirm that they are alive. The MoSDFS indicated that the Ministry will be collaborating with the Ministry of Attorney General and Legal Affairs to commence reconciling Death Certificates to account for senior citizens who are dead/alive;
- xxiv. increase the use of Community Police to investigate reports of elderly abuse;
- xxv. implementation of a policy which will require persons applying for a license to operate a Geriatric Home/Care Facility to acquire Liability Insurance;
- xxvi. the need to revisit the "URP-Social" initiative; and
- xxvii. the need for the formulation of new models and programmes to accommodate the various needs of the elderly population.

Recommendations proffered during the Public Hearing

The following recommendations emanated from the discussions:

- i. that the Homes for Older Persons Act 2007 be amended and proclaimed by June 2017;
- ii. that the MoSDFS undertake greater responsibility as it concerns the regulation and oversight of all old age homes throughout Trinidad and Tobago;
- iii. that recipients of GATE be mandated to socially engage with elderly persons at Geriatric Homes through participation in the various related programmes of the MoSDFS;
- iv. that the Ministry revise the policy in place that requires elderly persons to report to the Ministry to indicate proof of life through collaboration with the Ministry of Legal Affairs;
- v. the creation of a database for elderly persons, who reside on their own and require assistance;
- vi. the use of CCTV equipment in geriatric facilities to monitor activities and deter staff from committing acts of abuse against clients residing in these homes;
- vii. the provision of lanyards which are specially outfitted with alert buttons to clients of these Homes as a means of alerting the relevant authorities in instances of abusive treatment;
- viii. provide proper training to managers and staff of geriatric homes in the reporting of elder abuse;
- ix. that it be mandated that all cases of elder abuse be reported to the police; and

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- x. that training in geriatric care, basic psychology and palliative care be made a prerequisite for all staff employed in private and government funded homes as well as for managers applying for licenses to operate geriatric facilities.

View the Hearing

The hearing can be viewed on our YouTube channel via the following link:

https://youtu.be/1xpQT_2Zmx8

Contact the Committee's Secretary

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Committees Unit

November 18th, 2016