

Full text by Deputy Prime Minister Davis at opening...

*Remarks by The Hon. Phillip Davis, M.P.
Deputy Prime Minister & Minister of Works and Urban Development
at the Official Opening of Demetrius Home & Care Centre.*

Thursday, October 17, 2013 at 10:00 a.m.

Hon. Melanie Griffin, Minister of Social Services & Community
Development,
Other Cabinet Ministers,
Other Parliamentarians,
Chairman and Members of the National Council on Older Persons,
Senior Officers of the Ministry of Social Services and Community
Development and its various Departments,
Members of the clergy,
Administrator, Staff and Residents of the Demetrius Home & Care
Centre,
Ladies and gentlemen;
Good morning.

I consider it both an honour and a privilege to have been invited to participate in the official opening of the Demetrius Home & Care Centre and I thank Minister Griffin for asking me to do so. I am also very pleased to be in Fox Hill, a distinguished, older community of New Providence.

I congratulate Minister Griffin for the activities to date in observance of Older Persons Month and I fully support the efforts of her Ministry in ensuring that the needs of this segment of our population are not only known but adequately addressed. Indeed, these efforts have resulted in us being here this morning to officially open this Centre, which provides residential care for older persons.

Ladies and gentlemen, in a statement issued for the International Day for Older Persons, which was observed on October 1, the United Nations Secretary General indicated that by 2020, the number of older persons will be twice the number of children in developed countries and in developing countries, the number of older persons is expected to double. It is imperative therefore that our country comprehends the implications of this eventuality and prepares for it.

Years ago, it was the norm in The Bahamas for older persons to be accommodated in the homes of relatives and this was especially the case when they were unable to continue living on their own. Regretfully, in New Providence in particular, this has now become the exception rather than the rule and numerous theories have been advanced for the decline in the extended family structure, which has resulted in more older persons either living on their own or in need of residential care. We are also aware of the advances in health care and the improved standards of living, that have resulted in persons living longer, which we welcome and applaud but, when this is coupled with the decline in the extended family and care of older members, the need increases for special housing and a network of community based assisted living facilities like the Demetrius Home and Care Centre to accommodate older persons who can no longer live on their own and whose families are unable or unwilling to care for them.

Ladies and gentlemen, as both the government and the private sector seek to meet the need for residential care facilities for our older persons, we must ensure that these provide the level of care that our older persons deserve while protecting their rights and dignity. They should not be places where older persons are only provided with a bed and basic meals but they should be places with there is stimulation and interaction both within and outside the facility. There is often the myth that once persons attain a certain age they are incapable of remaining active and should be withdrawn from society. This is a myth we do not want to perpetuate. This centre is located in what I referred to earlier as a distinguished older community of New Providence, and I trust that Fox Hill has embraced

this Centre as there is much that each can offer to the other. There are several churches in the immediate area of this Centre hence there should be no issue with the spiritual needs of residents being met. Likewise, there are several schools in the immediate area hence this provides the opportunity for intergenerational activities for the benefit of both students and residents. No doubt, this type of interaction between the Centre and the community was envisioned by the late Mrs. Margaret Demetrius when she mandated in her will that her former residence should become a facility for older persons, in addition to the self-contained unit to the side that she constructed specifically as a centre for older persons.

Ladies and gentlemen, aesthetically, this is indeed a fine facility and I am sure that the Administrator and staff will ensure that it remains so but more importantly, I challenge the Administrator and staff to provide the best level of care possible to the persons who are housed here and treat them as you would want to be treated should you be blessed to reach their age.

Ladies and Gentlemen I wish to use this opportunity to raise the consciousness in our nation to the fact that many of the successes that we enjoy both at the individual and national level were made possible through the hard work and sacrifices of the senior citizens of this country. It is important therefore, that we do not cast them aside as they age, but rather demonstrate our appreciation for their efforts by maintaining them as a vital part of our family and community. Further, we must actively engage in dialogue with our older persons about the future they would like to have and not presume to believe that we know what is best for them or expect them to accept whatever we choose to make available to them. I am sure that in listening closely to this segment of our population, we will not only learn many things about our past but also set a compassionate course for our future. What we do now will determine how we are treated later.

As I look out at the many faces of the assembled dignitaries and guests, I

am forced to wonder how many of us may later in our lives need to live at a facility such as this.

As we open this home let us once again be reminded by the words of the Great Lynden Pindling who in October 1981 – 32 years ago this month – said: “Assist the poor, comfort the sick,..... guide the youth and bring peace to every heart’and that record cannot be overlooked by any reasonable person in any generation.”

I extend congratulations and best wishes to the Minister and the staff of her Ministry who have responsibility for this facility and it is now my pleasure to declare the Demetrius Home and Care Centre officially open.

Thank you.

And May God Bless you all.