

Chamber President's Opening Remarks – National Policy on Older Persons

On behalf of the Chamber of Commerce, as Chamber President, I thank you for allowing me to say some opening remarks about this committee and its objectives.

You are gathered here today for a consultation session on the proposed National Policy on Older Persons, and the Chamber of Commerce encourages you to provide substantial and thoughtful feedback on what is a necessary and important Policy.

The notions of the nuclear family and the standard retirement age are outdated, with modernisation and the evolution of technology meaning that we are living longer.

Health services are ever improving and developing, and it was estimated that, for the year 2015, the life expectancy on Island was 81 years old. With people living longer, and with people receiving far better treatment for ailments than they did in years past, we must adapt our way of thinking.

The Chamber of Commerce supports a policy that better protects older persons in the workplace. Older persons will and are working longer and retiring at an older age, and we must ensure that they receive the same level of treatment and are treated just as fairly as any other person in the workplace.

This is not just a Cayman issue. Across the Globe elder persons are living longer, and Cayman must keep up to the same level of workplace safety and quality as our international counterparts.

But we must also ensure that older persons are not being mistreated in any degree, and not just the place of employment. We must make sure that they are receiving the care that they need, and that we are supporting them when they need help.

The concept of a Nuclear Family does not always reflect the modern day family, and it is important that we acknowledge this. Older persons may still be the heads of a family household, and it is crucial that we support them when necessary.

The Policy will aim to give older persons a safer and greater independence, giving them more opportunities to generate income, greater access to educational and day-to-day support, to live in suitable environments, and to dictate when and how they withdraw from the world of work.

The Policy will aim to better integrate older persons in society, having their voices heard and themselves seen, having more opportunities to serve the community and their neighbours, and to volunteer in positions that are most appropriate to them and their capabilities.

You will discuss how older persons should receive health care that helps them to either maintain or regain an optimum level of wellbeing, how they should benefit from the protection in accordance to our cultural values, and how we can ensure that older persons are effectively benefiting from their human rights and legal system.

You will also focus on how we ensure that older persons attain a level of self-fulfilment and maintain their dignity, discussing how they should be able to pursue their aspirations, and how they can be free from exploitation and be valued independently on their role in society and not just their age.

By developing a National Policy for Older Persons, the Cayman Islands can show that we care about the older members of our community, and we can make certain that they are not being mistreated and are receiving the same level of respect and safety both in the workplace and out of it.

The Chamber of Commerce wishes you the best of deliberations during this consultation session, and we encourage each and every one of you to have your say today. Together, you can help shape and develop this Policy.