



REMARKS BY

**The Minister of Health, The Hon. Kim Wilson, JP, MP,
Multiple Sclerosis Society of Bermuda Medical Symposium
Saturday, 22 June 2019, 9.30am at Fairmont Hamilton Princess**

Good morning everyone,

On behalf of the Ministry of Health, I am very pleased to be with you this morning to offer our support to the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Bermuda.

Let me start by first congratulating the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Bermuda for organizing this your third medical conference.

This conference provides for us an opportunity to spend two-days focusing on a disease that affects so many in Bermuda. Although the number of people in Bermuda living with MS is underdetermined, we know from the membership and resources provided by MS Society of Bermuda, that the conference topics and education brings awareness and renewed focus on the disease.

Bermuda and the Ministry of Health is grateful to the MS Society for making it your mission to assist your members through education and assistance.

Over the years, many charitable organizations have come and gone but you have been serving the needs of your members and their caregivers for over 30 years. This is a testament to your dedication and commitment to advancing the care and treatment of people living with MS in Bermuda.

As you are well aware, worldwide, more than 2.3 million people have a diagnosis of MS. In the United States, our closest geographical neighbor, the National MS Society, has estimated that nearly 1 million people over the age of 18 live with a diagnosis of MS.

Sadly, about 200 new cases are diagnosed each week in the United States. In Bermuda we are not far removed from having new cases being diagnosed annually.

There's no denying that the symptoms of MS are challenging, wide ranging, and often occur in clusters, which can seriously affect quality of life.

Thankfully, medical advances can now offer new management and treatment of MS symptoms. There may not be a cure for MS (yet), but there are now more than ever new ways to treat the symptoms it brings.

For those living with MS the hope lies with developments attributed to research, emerging therapies and devices, and pharmacologic advancements.

Over the past few decades advances in the management and treatment of symptoms has been remarkable; however the work continues – and will continue – until treatments are developed to slow and stop the disabling symptoms related to MS.

The Ministry of Health supports the Multiple Sclerosis Society's efforts to ensure MS patients have access to an effective therapy.

As many of you know, the Ministry of Health and Government of Bermuda are currently reviewing healthcare financing, access and improving health outcomes through several options and reforms.

Access to quality and the right healthcare is a priority for our Government. The Ministry of Health is wholly focused on and committed to containing healthcare costs and improving access for all, affordable healthcare and better patient outcomes. These priorities are the foundation for our upcoming reforms.

The Bermuda Government is committed to reforming the way we pay for healthcare so that everyone can access the care they need. That work is progressing and soon we will be in a position to have more dialogue on what this may look like.

Like most charities, fundraising is vital to meeting your mission to support and work with persons with Multiple Sclerosis and their families. Let me take this opportunity to commend you for annual fundraising efforts which provide financial support to assist your members with the cost of prescription drugs for treatment.

In a recent Royal Gazette article your President, Ellen Hollis said, "Persistence is a common theme with people with MS."

Thank you MS Society for your persistence and your commitment as stated in your mission to assist *individuals living with MS to continue to be productive and independent, and to keep a roof over their heads and a safe environment in their home.*

I wish you much continued success and you have the Ministry of Health's commitment to continue advocating and supporting better healthcare for all.

Thank you.

ENDS