



**MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**  
**TO THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**  
**BY THE HONOURABLE JEANNE J. ATHERDEN, CA, CPA, JP, MP**  
**MINISTER OF HEALTH AND SENIORS**  
**ON THE PREMIER'S YOUTH FITNESS PROGRAMME**  
**9<sup>th</sup> February, 2017**

**Mr Speaker** and honourable members,

Last September the Premier and the Ministry of Health and Seniors, and the Ministry of Education launched the Premier's Youth Fitness Programme, under the Premier's Council on Fitness, Sports and Nutrition. The programme is provided through schools and is designed to help our children on the path to a lifetime of good health.

**Mr Speaker**, You may recall seeing in the media the Honourable Premier and Minister Scott doing push ups in Dellwood's auditorium under their school's banner of "Deeds not Words" ...It is my heart-felt belief and practice that everyday fitness and a

good diet are the building blocks for a long and active life and that good health underpins both quality-of-life and achievement.

**Mr Speaker,** I know I don't need to remind us that Bermudians are not getting adequate levels of nutrition or physical activity. Indeed, the state of our population's health is not satisfactory.

Overall, three in four adults are overweight or obese, and one in four has at least one chronic non-communicable disease. This reduces quality of life for our people, and increases the need for expensive medical treatments for diseases like cancer, circulatory disease or diabetes.

**Mr Speaker,** poor habits on nutrition and exercise begin in childhood, so if we are to reverse this trend, we have to address our young people.

**Mr Speaker,** The Premier's Council on Fitness, Sports and Nutrition is intent on raising our children's awareness of what their growing bodies need to succeed. After awareness the next step is for them to adopt good habits, and to own, value and nurture their health.

**Mr Speaker,** within this programme, school children have their core and upper body strength, flexibility, body composition and aerobic capacity regularly measured by their PE teacher under the oversight of Mr Arnold Manders, the Ministry of Education's Education Officer. Children and their parents are receiving guidance for improved activity and nutrition.

We want our kids in the "Healthy Fitness Zone" which is reflected in lifestyles that feature regular exercise and healthy eating as day-to-day activities.

**Mr Speaker,** I want to thank the members of the Premier's Council and all the schools that have been busy implementing the programme in the four months since its launch. Also many thanks to our Well Bermuda Partners who are each arising to do their part in this team effort.

P.E. teachers have completed the first round of FitnessGram Assessments and the Spirit System application training and Heart Rate training is happening this month to coincide with schools'

midterm break. By the end of March all P5 to S3 students will be wearing Heart Rate monitoring devices during their PE classes.

**Mr Speaker**, Ms. Chalay Joell, the Case Manager for the Premier's Youth Fitness Programme, will work in conjunction with the P.E. teachers to support students identified as at-risk for overweight, obesity, underweight, and whose FitnessGram results place them outside of the Healthy Fitness Zone for each of the fitness components: aerobic and anaerobic endurance, flexibility, strength and BMI (body composition). Each identified student will have an Individualized Wellness Plan to include a Team Approach with parents, the P.E. teacher, school counsellor, the student, Nutrition Services, and possibly his/her physician.

The Council is promoting the importance of choosing water, instead of sugary beverages, and currently there are 15 schools with Water-Only Policies.

**Mr Speaker**, The Bermuda Diabetes Association has donated EatWell Bermuda Plates for all P5 & P6 students – these plates show clearly that half our plate should be vegetables! The visual image of the EatWell Plate is a great learning tool not only for

children but for many adults also. I recommend that you post it in your kitchens at home and at work as a reminder of a balanced diet and healthy portion sizes.

On March 21, 2017 the Healthy School Lunch Challenge Awards will be held at the Argus Group Headquarters to recognize schools, students and families that are walking the talk when it comes to health school lunches.

**Mr Speaker,** The Premier's Council on Fitness, Sports and Nutrition website, **stepitup.bm** is currently under construction by the Bermuda Yellow Pages, and is expected to launch next month with help from BF&M.

The Premier and I are excited by the potential of this programme and the Premier himself and I have accompanied Marie Beach Johnson from the Department of Health to school assemblies to promote the programme and encourage the children.

**Mr Speaker,** Thank you again to all our partners in this effort to create a healthy and strong Bermuda. Let's keep the momentum going together.

This is a “can do” programme, **Mr Speaker**; and we believe that we can reverse the trend on obesity in Bermuda.

Thank you, **Mr Speaker**.