



MINISTERIAL STATEMENT
TO THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY
BY THE HONOURABLE KIM N. WILSON, JP, MP
MINISTER OF HEALTH
ON BERMUDA'S 50 MILLION STEPS CHALLENGE
15th September 2017

Mr Speaker and Honourable Members,

I stand before this Honourable House to highlight an important initiative by my Ministry: Bermuda's 50 Million Steps Challenge.

Mr Speaker, I think everyone in Bermuda is now fully aware of the damage being caused to our community by our high rates of obesity and chronic non-communicable conditions like diabetes. These preventable conditions cut our lives short, are notoriously expensive to treat, and destroy quality of life and productivity. Most Western, high-income countries are grappling with this problem and Bermuda is no different.

However, the Ministry of Health is committed to combatting this scourge on our population, and our Throne Speech promised that the Government will engage all sectors of society in a coordinated, strategic plan to halt the rise in obesity and diabetes in Bermuda.

First on the agenda to engage all sectors of society, **Mr Speaker**, is the 50 Million Steps initiative.

On Monday, 26 June, 2017, the Department of Health launched the Bermuda 50 Million Steps Challenge. It is an opportunity for residents to improve our island's health while having fun at the same time. Participants were encouraged to join their parish team and collectively walk 50 million steps. In addition, friendly competition between the nine parish teams was encouraged in order to see which team will be ranked with the highest step average.

Team rankings occur when the total number of steps accumulated by all team members per day are added and then divided by the number of team members, to obtain the team's daily average and thus the team's overall ranking. The winning parish will be announced at the annual Celebrating Wellness event on

Wednesday, 27 September, 2017 at Victoria Park, from 4pm to 8pm.

Mr Speaker, Celebrating Wellness is an annual outdoor event to promote physical activity and healthy eating. This year's theme focuses on securing a brighter future for our youth by establishing early positive health behaviours to prevent chronic non-communicable diseases. The parish that wins the 50 Million Step Challenge will receive Outdoor Fitness Equipment to be placed in a designated park in that parish!

To date, participants have surpassed the 50 million steps goal and are on course to reach 100 million. Congratulations to the participants who have contributed their steps to the original goal. There are a couple weeks left in the challenge so my Honourable colleagues and the public are still encouraged to join and participate.

Mr Speaker, Initiatives like this promote the importance of active living. Physical activity and healthy eating have long been proven to reduce the risk of chronic non-communicable diseases such as diabetes, heart disease and cancer. Consistent physical activity like

walking helps also improve quality of life, mental health and healthy aging.

In addition, Mr Speaker, walking is a truly affordable way of improving one's health. It doesn't require a gym membership or expensive equipment. Just a pair of shoes.

On a personal note, I would like to take this opportunity to remind all walkers and joggers to please wear reflective gear while on Bermuda's roads, especially when there is poor visibility at night. I have personally seen too many walkers in the dark who are not visible until a vehicle is too close. Walkers: you can see the cars, but the cars can't see you without reflective gear. Please wear it.

Mr Speaker, Bermuda is at a health crossroads. According to the STEPS Health Survey of Adults in Bermuda 2014, 75 percent of adults were overweight or obese (40.2% and 34.4%, respectively). Only 18% of adults consume five or more serving of fruit and/or vegetables per day. Thirty-three percent reported having high blood pressure and 12% reported having diabetes. A concerted effort must be made to decrease these modifiable risk factors –

such as overweight and obesity, physical inactivity, poor diet, high blood sugar and high blood pressure.

It is going to take an all-of-society approach to tackle the obesity epidemic, including the private and public sectors, supermarkets, restaurants, educators and policy makers. All of us are needed to address this very serious health problem.

Fellow Honourable Members, if you have not done so already, I invite you to join me in the Bermuda 50 Million Steps Challenge in the final weeks of the competition. You can log your steps via your fitness device, smartphone or manually. Just yesterday, I registered 13,068 steps on my step counter.

To join just log on to www.stridekick.com/tc/bermuda or Email healthpromotion@gov.bm for more information about the challenge.

Sign up and join your Parish team to see who walks the walk around here! I should point out that currently the St George's Steppers are leading the race in first place, with Pembroke and Paget hot on

their heels! But I think all teams would love additional steppers so please join.

Thank you **Mr Speaker**.