



**Minister of Health
The Honourable Zane De Silva, JP MP**

**Ministerial Statement to the House of Assembly
*Friday 8th June, 2012***

Blood Donation in Bermuda

Mr. Speaker

I stand today to share a very important message with the Members of this Honourable House. That message is simply that Bermuda needs more blood donors.

Mr. Speaker

With World Blood Donor Day taking place on June 14th, it seemed like an appropriate time to raise the matter.

Mr. Speaker

Blood is not imported and blood supplies are dependent upon people who choose to donate.

Currently, about 2% of Bermuda's population are donors. The World Health Organization (or 'WHO') indicates that typically, in developed countries, about 6% of the population donates blood.

WHO also reports that in many jurisdictions, 38% of donors are under the age of 25. In Bermuda, less than 4% of our donors are under 25.

Mr. Speaker

We are truly grateful for our existing donors - they are faithful and dedicated - but we need to expand our donor base to maintain sustainability and reduce the pressure on our current donors

We currently have about 1,100 donors but would really like to see that number increase to at least 2,000.

Mr. Speaker

Donated blood is primarily used for people who undergo surgery or who need blood for therapeutic reasons, such as cancer patients on chemotherapy or people with sickle cell anaemia. Contrary to popular belief, only a small percentage of supplies go to trauma victims, such as road traffic accidents or victims of violence.

Healthy blood is vital to us all, and the average adult has about 10 pints of blood circulating around the body. When you donate blood, just one pint is taken which will be easily replenished within 24 hours.

Mr. Speaker

About 40 to 50 units of blood are needed in Bermuda every week to manage therapeutic uses, planned surgery and trauma.

Without blood donations, no elective or emergency surgery could take place on the Island – which is obviously an issue for both the individual and the health system in general.

When donated, whole blood is separated into three components: platelets, which have a shelf life of 5 days; red cells, which can be stored for up to 42 days; and plasma, which is frozen and has a shelf life of one year. This is why the need for donors is constant.

Mr. Speaker

Put simply: blood donors save lives.

The health and wellness of our community depends on an adequate supply of blood, and I personally pledge to do my bit this year by giving blood next week in the hopes of raising awareness for the cause.

Mr. Speaker

The hospital uses more than 2,200 units of blood each year.

We are all stakeholders, and you never know when it might be you or a loved one who needs the life saving gift of blood.

With that, **Mr. Speaker**, I thank you for the time and encourage anyone who can donate blood to make an appointment at the Hospital to become a regular donor.