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VIA E-Mail and Chapter Mail

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Quebec to Reimburse Tysabri

The government of Quebec has agreed to add Tysabri to its list of MS therapies that can be reimbursed under the public drug program for people who do not respond to other treatments or whose MS is rapidly progressing. Quebec is the first province in Canada to reimburse Tysabri. Congratulations to the volunteers and staff of the Quebec Division who provided valuable input during the province's review process.

Combined with the work our Ontario MS Ambassador network has been doing to improve access to drug therapies, the Quebec decision will help strengthen our advocacy efforts aimed at the Government of Ontario.

Federal Election Campaign

There are only six more days until Canadians go to the polls, but there is still time for you to ask parties and candidates to champion secure incomes for people affected by MS. Visit the MS Society's federal election campaign page at http://www.mssociety.ca/en/involved/advocacy/advo_incomesecure.htm. You may also read party commitments on issues that matter to people affected by MS at http://www.mssociety.ca/en/involved/advocacy/advo_incomesecure_resp.htm.

MS Society Petitioning the House of Commons

The MS Society is petitioning the House of Commons. The petition focuses on the three asks made during the online income security campaign aimed at MPs this summer, which are also the focus of the federal election campaign:

- Make Employment Insurance sickness benefits more flexible to allow people to work part-time and receive partial benefits.
- Make the Disability Tax Credit a refundable benefit.
- Allow spouses to claim the Caregiver Tax Credit – right now this isn't allowed.

For more information, please contact kim.steele@mssociety.ca.

Good News Regarding Increased Home Care Hours

As reported in the June 2008 *Social Action E-Alert*, the Government of Ontario recently increased home care hours, committing \$38.5 million to:

- Increase the upper limits on hours of personal support/homemaking services by 50 percent, from 80 hours to a maximum of 120 hours in the first 30 days of service, and from 60 hours to a maximum of 90 hours in any subsequent 30-day period;
- Remove home care maximums on personal support and homemaking entirely for patients waiting for a long-term care bed or receiving palliative care services at home;

At the time of the announcement, it was unclear whether or not these changes would be targeted to seniors. The MS Society has since received clarification from government, and the news is positive. The changes will support people who, regardless of age:

- Receive home care at or near existing maximums, who require an increase to remain in the community and avoid hospital or long-term care home admission.
- Are in hospital awaiting admission to long-term care and can wait at home with increased services for a period of time under the "extraordinary circumstances" provisions.
- Are referred to a CCAC by an emergency department.
- Are community clients experiencing a crisis that would otherwise result in admission to hospital or long-term care.

The increase in hours is good news that was brought about by many years of advocacy work that the MS Society has done on the home care front, in collaboration with other health care charities

The MS Society is now working to determine how CCACs are implementing the changes with respect to re-assessment. Additional information will be provided to our community members soon.

MS Ambassadors Pound the Pavement

In August and September, MS Ambassadors met with over 20 MPPs to discuss access to home care and age-appropriate long-term care, access to drug therapies, and to gain support for the endMS Research and Training Network.

To date, meetings have been held with several high profile MPPs and officials, including the Premier's office, the ministers of Labour, Health Promotion, and Community and Social Services, the Parliamentary Assistant to the minister of Finance, as well as key Opposition members, such as the Conservative and NDP Health and Health Promotion critics, and the Conservative critics to Research and Innovation and Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Originally developed in Alberta Division, the MS Ambassador program was launched in Ontario in the spring of 2008. We now have over 20 MS Ambassadors across the province providing a "united voice for the cause and a cure". MS Ambassadors bring a common voice to common issues that impact the lives of people affected by MS.

For more information about the MS Ambassador program, please contact kim.steele@mssociety.ca.

2009 Government Relations Workshop – save the date!

The 2009 Government Relations and Social Action Training Workshop will be held on Saturday, April 4th in Toronto. This workshop is intended for:

- Chapter/Unit Social Action Directors;
- Chairs in those Chapters/Units where there is not a Social Action Director;
- Staff responsible for government relations/social action.

An additional training workshop will be offered to MS Ambassadors on Sunday, April 5th.

More details to follow. Please mark your calendars!

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