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Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada  
72<sup>nd</sup> Annual General Meeting  
Saturday June 20, 2020  
Via videoconference and telephone  
Minutes (DRAFT)

**1. Welcome & Opening Remarks**

Ms. Valerie Hussey, Chair of the Board of Directors, welcomed participants to the 72<sup>nd</sup> Annual General Meeting. She thanked members for their continued dedication and interest in advancing the work of the MS Society of Canada. She noted that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the meeting is being held virtually.

**2. Call to Order**

Ms. Hussey called the meeting to order at 1:03 pm. She advised that a quorum of members was present and declared the meeting duly constituted for the transaction of business for which it was called. The AGM is for the fiscal year from January 1, 2019 to December 31, 2019 and the meeting is for the members of the MS Society of Canada.

Ms. Hussey advised that 56 proxies were submitted to the meeting.

**3. Agenda and Meeting Procedures**

Ms. Hussey advised that there were no changes to the meeting agenda. She reviewed the procedures to be followed during the AGM. Minutes of the meeting proceeding are being taken. The draft AGM minutes will be posted on the MS Society website no less than six months prior to the 2021 AGM. No photographs, audio, or video recordings of the meeting are permitted. The membership status of attendees was verified at registration.

**4. Notice of Annual General Meeting**

Ms. Hussey advised that the 2020 AGM Notice of Meeting and accompanying proxy was mailed or emailed to members the week of May 18. The Notice of Meeting was therefore distributed in advance of the 21 days required for the publication such notice in accordance with the MS Society by-laws.

The reading of the Notice of Meeting was waived by agreement of the members.

## **5. Approval – Draft Minutes of 71<sup>st</sup> AGM, June 15, 2019**

Ms. Hussey advised that the draft minutes of the 71<sup>st</sup> AGM held June 15, 2019 were posted on the MS Society website in the About Us/Governance section in January 2020, and a paper copy of the draft minutes were included in the AGM briefing package provided to participants at registration.

**Motion:** It was moved by Mr. John Clifford and seconded by Ms. Marilyn Emery that the draft minutes of the 71<sup>st</sup> AGM held on June 15, 2019 be approved as presented. The motion was carried.

## **6. Acceptance of Finance Report and Acceptance of Audited Combined Financial Statements**

Ms. Hussey called upon Ms. Gayelene Bonenfant, Treasurer to present the audited financial statements for the year ended December 31, 2019. Ms. Bonenfant advised that the audited combined financial statements have been presented, discussed, and approved by the MS Society Board of Directors at its meeting of May 13, 2020. The financial statements were posted on the MS Society website immediately following their approval by the board. A paper copy of the statements was included in the AGM briefing package. Ms. Bonenfant advised that the auditors have signed their unqualified opinion of the 2020 financial statements.

**Motion:** It was moved by Ms. Gayelene Bonenfant and seconded by Mr. Joe Healey that the audited combined financial statements for the period ending December 31, 2019 be received. The motion was carried.

## **7. Appointment of the Auditors**

Ms. Gayelene Bonenfant presented a recommendation from the Finance, Audit, and Risk Management Committee to appoint PriceWaterhouseCoopers Canada as auditors for 2020/21. In response to a question from a member about this recommendation, Mr. John Folka noted that proposals from other firms are received, and that PriceWaterhouseCoopers's performance is reviewed regularly along with their proposal. PWC makes a proposal which is reviewed every year. PriceWaterhouseCoopers's fees are reasonable for the scope of the audit.

**Motion:** It was moved by Ms. Gayelene Bonenfant and seconded by Ms. Susan Senecal that PriceWaterhouseCoopers Canada be appointed as the auditors of the MS Society for 2020-21 and that the Treasurer be authorized to fix their remuneration. The motion was carried.

## **8. Report of the Chair**

Ms. Hussey noted that this was her last year as chair of the board of directors, and her term had seen a number of successes within the organization, and also challenges, none greater than the current pandemic crisis. She expressed her appreciation to the volunteers and staff of the

MS Society for their hard work and commitment and said that their work will prevail in the face of adversity.

## **9. Report to the Membership**

While the COVID-19 crisis started during the first quarter of 2020, Dr. Valentine highlighted the challenges and impact it has had on the Society. In spite of the pandemic, the Society's determination to continue the work of its mission must remain steadfast. Fundraising has been affected, as most revenue streams are event based; the Society has pivoted into a virtual fundraising scenario. Despite best efforts, the Society is bracing for a potential revenue shortfall of \$25 million. The pandemic has also necessitated the temporary closure of physical offices across the country because of physical distancing restrictions put in place. The Society needed to make staffing changes to safeguard sustainability in delivering programs and funding research in the long term; nearly one third of the workforce was affected. Throughout these difficult decisions and changes, the Society's primary concern has been and continues to be people living with and affected by MS.

Dr. Valentine reported on the accomplishments of the Society in 2019 including:

- the progress made on the strategic plan that was presented at last year's meeting;
- fundraising approximately \$54 million;
- support of over 300 MS researchers;
- collaboration with over 400 volunteers nationwide;
- information and support shared with over 6000 callers through the MS Knowledge Network, an increase of 29% over the prior year;
- a 30% increase in new peer-to-peer relationships over the prior year;
- 300 people utilized the Volunteer Legal Assistance Program, with 90% achieving success in their application, resulting in up to \$1,600 a month in direct financial aid;
- 160 educational events reaching close to 4,000 people;
- 1,700 mentions in the media throughout the year, creating greater awareness of MS;
- over 80 meetings were held with Members of Parliament, Senators, and policy staff to advocate to improve #LifeWithMS at the 2019 Day on the Hill;
- "episodic disability" was included in the historic Accessible Canada Act, which received royal assent and became law on June 21, 2019;
- over 20,000 letters were sent to candidates asking them to #MakeMSMatter during the fall campaign, resulting in the inclusion of an increase to EI sickness benefits in the mandate letter of the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development & Disability Inclusion;

- the formation of two partnerships: a \$1.5 million investment funding opportunity alongside the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) focused on the use of cannabis to manage symptoms associated with MS and its effect on the disease; and a \$1 million donation was received from TD Bank Group to support research that uses artificial intelligence to develop clinical tools to enable more informed healthcare decisions in relation to disease-modifying therapies for people with MS;
- two additional funding partners were added to the Canadian Prospective Cohort Study (CanProCo) – Roche Canada and the Government of Alberta – which aims to better understand progression in MS and why some people progress in their disease while others do not; and
- The Society also hosted the 5th EndMS Conference, with more than 300 MS researchers, trainees, health professionals and members of the MS community gathering in Calgary to exchange knowledge about MS, network and collaborate.

The strategic plan sets out the goals of diagnosing and treating MS earlier for better outcomes and discovering a greater number of effective treatments. Progress in this work means the advancement in understanding of the mechanisms and risk factors involved in MS, which is accomplished through research.

Dr. Valentine concluded by assuring members that even in light of the challenges of the pandemic, the Society will continue to find ways to build on momentum and engage the MS community to move forward in the Society's mission in innovative and virtual ways.

#### **10. Report of the Governance Committee in Respect of Nominations**

Ms. Hussey called upon Mr. John Clifford, Chair of the Governance Committee, to present the committee report and the nominees for election to the MS Society board.

The governance committee is recommending two nominees for election to the board: Mr. Kent Kirkpatrick (Ontario) and Mr. Brian Kusisto (Saskatchewan).

In accordance with the MS Society bylaw, the nominees and accompanying biographies were published on the Society website no less than four days prior to the date of the AGM. Nominee biographies were included in the governance committee report provided to members at registration. No nominations were received from the general membership by June 5, 2020, the date that nominations from the membership were to be received by the governance committee in accordance with the Society bylaw.

The governance committee confirms that these nominations comply with the requirement that at least one director and not more than five directors be drawn from the geography of each of the Society's seven divisions.

### **11. Election of MS Society Board of Directors**

Ms. Hussey presented the nominees recommended by the governance committee for election to the MS Society board:

Mr. Kent Kirkpatrick (Ontario)

Mr. Brian Kusisto (Saskatchewan)

**Motion:** It was moved by Ms. Susan Senecal and seconded by Ms. Marilyn Emery that Mr. Kent Kirkpatrick and Mr. Brian Kusisto be elected as directors to the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada board of directors for a first three-year term ending in June 2023. The motion was carried unanimously.

### **12. Questions from Members**

Ms. Hussey invited questions from members. Members asked about the recent statement regarding racial equality and equal access to care, and there was a discussion about how the Society could make practical and impactful differences in this area.

There was a question about the ratio of spending of research versus programs that was set several years prior, and whether it was still in place. The new strategic plan is focused on outcomes rather than a set amount or ratio of funds to be spent. This should allow for greater integration of activities. There was a discussion of whether this approach will result in greater revenue; it is hoped that the greater integration will result in greater revenue

There was a question about the changes to the membership program. To remove barriers from engagement, in 2019 membership became free. A task force was assembled to set further engagement strategies; this work had been delayed due to the pandemic.

### **13. Termination of Meeting**

Ms. Hussey thanked members for their interest and participation in the AGM and to all the volunteers, directors, and staff working to fulfill the mission of the Society. She requested a motion to terminate the meeting.

**Motion:** It was moved by Ms. Gayelene Bonenfant that the 72<sup>nd</sup> AGM be terminated.

The meeting was terminated at 2:05pm Eastern.

Respectfully submitted

Ms. Valerie Hussey  
Chair, MS Society Board of Directors

Dr. Pamela Valentine  
President and Chief Executive Officer

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