

Global
Business and
Economic Roundtable
on **Addiction** and
Mental Health

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*Notes for Remarks by
Bill Wilkerson, Co-Founder and CEO,
Global Business and Economic Roundtable on Addiction and Mental Health
to the Manitoba Schizophrenia Society
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I am delighted to be here and join you in thanking Great-West Life and Manitoba Blue Cross for hosting this year's tournament.

I am always pleased to see Chris Summerville – best wishes, Chris, on your appointment as CEO of the national society – a loss for Manitoba, a gain for Canada. And I applaud the work of the Manitoba Society and your sister societies across this country.

It is crystal clear that a speech after a day of golf – during drinks – and before dinner – should be prudently brief. I will observe that warning.

Let me say simply this. The cause you support is not just a good cause, not just a just cause, it is winnable cause.

I believe, sincerely, that if not my generation, then the next will see more than a breakthrough in the understanding and effective treatment of the symptoms of schizophrenia without the nasty side effects.

In fact, the breakthroughs have already begun.

At the University of Melbourne, researchers have established a link between 153 genes that operate differently in patients diagnosed with schizophrenia than in people without the disease.

At Rockefeller University and MIT, researchers have discovered that a certain version of a specific gene in patients with schizophrenia is transmitted by parents.

At the University of Toronto and Rutgers, scientists have localized a major susceptibility gene for schizophrenia.

Abnormalities in fiber bundles within the brain are now known to disrupt the transmission of brain signals affecting behavior. Researchers at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine believe this finding could explain how the disease develops.

And here's the story of scientists, the father turning his knowledge to support a son living with schizophrenia and opening a new door for all of us.

On May 3rd, Dr. John Roder at Mount Sinai Hospital in Toronto demonstrated for the first time that malfunction of gene DISC 1 does indeed cause the symptoms of Schizophrenia.

The discovery was given a human face when it was revealed that Dr. Roder shifted his own work from cancer biology to mental illness when his son was diagnosed with schizophrenia.

A good cause, a just cause, a winnable cause.

A great Canadian scientist – Dr. Philip Seeman – himself the architect of one of the first major breakthrough's in the treatment of schizophrenia nearly 30 years ago – believes (and I quote) –

“The day will come when we will have a penicillin-like drug to control the symptoms of schizophrenia without the unpleasant side effects.”

So, we are making progress. But we need to let the world know about that progress with heralded hope and pride. This is not the time for caution just as it is never the time for false promises.

But it is the time for hope – plausible, realistic, progressive hope – that the day will dawn if this generation, then the next, that the suffering born of schizophrenia will relent, that this illness will be driven into remission and one day, out of our lives.

The National Association for Research in Depression and Schizophrenia – NARSAD – in the US – the world's largest private funding agency for mental health research – whose vision caused many of the discoveries I have just mentioned – says outright –

Its mission is to find cures for major mental illnesses – yes, cures – and last February, our 1st US/Canada Forum on Mental Health and Productivity in Washington – bringing top scientists from Canada and the US together with leaders in business – said this –

That prevention and cure are appropriate objectives to drive research and improvements in clinical care of schizophrenia and other major mental illnesses.

Let us deliver this message to the world that while our purposes are many - containing schizophrenia, yes – housing and jobs and social support for those who live with this disease, yes again – ultimately, our goal to defeat this enemy and drive it from our lives.

Solidarity, more than money, will defeat schizophrenia. And a golf club swung in support of those who live with this disease is a stroke in the right direction – but be clear – the 19th hole of this course is not where the game ends, it is where the work begins.

In your daily travels – in business – in the community – with your children – as the opportunity and occasion arises – be a voice for the voiceless and convince the world to get on a bandwagon with real wheels, and real momentum and real direction –

A bandwagon sounding this song --

Schizophrenia can be conquered because science says so. Schizophrenia will be conquered because we say so. And to this music, add this lyric – penned by the great George Bernard Shaw as a meditation of hope.

“Some see the world as it is, and ask why,” he wrote – “I see the world as it might be, and ask why not.”

Well, ask yourselves. Why not a world without schizophrenia? More than in our wallets, more than on the golf course, more than anywhere, the answer lies in our hearts.

Thank you.