

RALPH GOODALE'S REPORT

A commentary by the Member of Parliament for wascana

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CONSERVATIVES BETRAY SASKATCHEWAN ON MS ISSUES

While Brad Wall's provincial government tries to pursue helpful answers about the best possible treatment for Multiple Sclerosis (MS) and related conditions, the federal government keeps throwing gravel in the gears.

The latest episode took place last night in the House of Commons. MPs were called to vote on Private Member's Bill C-280, as presented by Liberal MP, Dr. Kirsty Duncan. A Nobel Prize winner, Dr. Duncan is a tireless crusader for MS patients.

Many people who suffer from MS, a neurological disease, also appear to have a vascular disorder known as "chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency" (CCSVI). This latter problem can sometimes be relieved by a procedure similar to angioplasty (but unavailable in Canada), which improves blood flows through veins in the neck.

In some people, the angioplasty treatment for CCSVI also alleviates the symptoms of MS. The relationship between the two is what needs to be thoroughly researched, to move from anecdotes to solid conclusions, more effective treatments and a better quality of life.

Bill C-280 would have complemented the research and testing being pursued by Saskatchewan. It would have forced the Harper government to convene an urgent federal-provincial conference of health ministers to:

- develop a national strategy for dealing with CCSVI;
- ensure proper healthcare is never denied to any Canadian on the sole ground they went out-of-country to get CCSVI treatment;
- identify the most valuable clinical trials to be undertaken in Canada;
- estimate the funding required from all governments;
- establish an advisory panel of experts having real experience with CCSVI; and
- ensure accurate tracking of all Canadian patients.

This is surely just common sense.

But inexplicably, at the behest of the federal Health Minister, the Conservatives voted it down. Bill C-280 was defeated by a scant margin of six, with 10 Conservative MP's from Saskatchewan among those who killed it.

Shameful!