



FROM PROVINCE HOUSE TO HOME

My office receives calls from constituents about a wide variety of issues, but unfortunately, many of those calls seem to have a common theme. People are experiencing problems in their attempt to access medical care. For much of the summer, Valley Regional Hospital was in Code Purple. That means all beds in the facility, including those overflow beds in emergency are filled. This fall the Emergency Room in Middleton was closed for three days during the time 14 Wing Greenwood was hosting the F-18 squadrons from Quebec, making it the busiest time the base has seen in years. Thank goodness there were no emergency situations. A bill that my party will bring before the Legislature this week should resolve this problem.

Many people do not have a family doctor and those who do often can't get in to see them because doctors are overloaded. I recently spoke to a woman whose mother had been in the emergency room for 48 hours and yet she was still 7th in line for a bed. Wait times for orthopedic procedures and even appointments are extreme. Stories like the man who was over 100th on the wait list just to see the surgeon. Or the woman already using a walker, who's been told she'll wait nearly two years for a new hip are not uncommon.

The worst part about all this is that what we are seeing and experiencing is the tip of a very big problem. Right now, the Annapolis Valley has eight communities where seniors make up 20% or more of the population. Think about, what that number is going to look like 10 years from now. The baby boomers are aging and a demographic time bomb is upon us. In 10 years the youngest of them will be nearing 60, the oldest will be well into their senior years. We're experiencing the first wave of that pressure now as the older boomers (zoomers) reach retirement. How, if we have a system that can't handle the current demand, can the system possibly cope with greatly increased demand? We need to approach this problem with common sense and commitment. We know we need additional doctors and a full range of medical personnel. We know we need more long term care beds, to free up acute care beds. I think new facilities should be small so that they can be converted to other uses after the boomers move through the life cycle. This is work the government has been tackling at a snail's pace. We need more nursing home capacity, we need to enhance home care and we need to find places for people to live who can't stay in their family home but who don't need a nursing home.

Fundy Villa in Berwick is a prime example of a system that can meet the needs of many of our seniors. This are small units that let people live quite independently but allows them access to home support and nursing care from Grand View Manor if needed. We need to look for other community models and build on them. All over the province there are seniors living in large older homes who want reasonable alternatives, or just a little help to allow them to safely stay where they are. I believe the Veteran's Independent Program is one model that should be investigated for a provincial application.

For many of these changes, we're not talking about huge capital investments, just building on practices that already work. Even though home care wait times have improved, it is another area that requires simple, common sense change. Why should the program be run out of Halifax, when the local Health Authority is far more knowledgeable about the needs of clients?

We all know that additional dollars are not available to correct health care problems. This is about common sense and commitment to change; something the current government is failing to do. It's about finding ways to meet the needs of our community, about keeping people healthy and letting them live comfortably. The pressure we currently see on the system is only a shadow of what's to come as the baby boomers age and I, for one, am worried what the government's lack of action will mean.

Leo Glavine,MLA

Kings West

780 Central Ave. PO Box 1501

Greenwood, NS, B0P 1N0

Tel: 765-4083

Fax: 765-4176

leoglavinemla@eastlink.ca