

Diagnosing Lyme Disease

Private Member's Statement from Kevin Taft, MLA

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Kevin Taft, Leader of the Alberta Liberal Caucus

Lyme disease is a bacterial infection transmitted to humans by a bite from an infected tick. Ed Sperling, a young constituent of mine, has battled not only this disease, but the conflicting information about Lyme in Alberta's health care system.

Ed was tested for Lyme, but the diagnosis came back negative under Alberta criteria, and Ed slid into a protracted catatonic state. Ed's parents persisted in their search for diagnosis and sent their son's blood to California. Those tests came back positive.

But without a positive diagnosis from an Alberta Lab, any physician willing to treat the disease risks censure by the Alberta College. Alberta Health reports that Lyme bacteria are not found in Alberta and our provincial lab recommends that patients without a realistic likelihood of Lyme exposure should not be screened. And yet Capital Health reports that Lyme bacteria have been found in Edmonton area ticks.

Clearly, there are obvious deficits in the available background information, diagnostic criteria and testing recommendations for Lyme disease in Alberta.

Tomorrow, Janet and Felix, Ed's parents, both entomologists at the U. of A., will join other scientists to discuss Lyme disease at a University of Calgary workshop sponsored by the Canadian Lyme Disease Foundation, or CanLyme.

I urge this government to work with CanLyme on a formal public review and work with federal agencies to revise Lyme testing. Albertans who catch Lyme need proper diagnosis and treatment.

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