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"treating the cause of your problem, not just the symptoms"

Prevention, Not Just More Money

Normally, I try to remain non-political in all of my articles. However, after viewing the numerous television commercials and the eight-page newsletter that was delivered to my home describing "The Facts About Your Health Care System", I cannot resist the temptation to comment. If you have not noticed this political marketing, you should make an effort to see it. After all, you likely paid for it.

In Canada, we witnessed the largest population boom ever between 1947 and 1967. Yes, this was the "baby boom" generation and they are now reaching the age where their financial burden on the healthcare system is increasing dramatically. Our tax funded health care system will not be able to support this ever-increasing financial burden. It has to change the way it previously operated. How you might ask? Well, the theory the present government seems to believe will work is to simply spend more money on a leaner, but basically the same, old system. The following numbers are taken directly from their newspaper. For this fiscal year, the provincial government will spend \$20,414.00 per MINUTE or \$29 million per DAY on healthcare? This works out to \$2716.00 for every man, woman, and child in B.C.

However, I was unable to find any bold print describing how much money they are spending on the prevention of disease in the first place. To me, we should be spending more money and time "preventing" heart disease, osteoporosis, obesity, diabetes, back pain, and many other diseases that plague our society rather than just throwing endless amounts of tax dollars at the treatment of these diseases once they are already there. I could not see any references to any new programs designed to teach or promote the general public about the health benefits of regular exercise, a healthy diet, maintaining your bone density, preventative lowering of your blood pressure and cholesterol, regular monitoring of people with diabetes, and many other objectives that will keep people healthy and not a burden to the health care system. I understand that accidents will still happen and many diseases will inevitably occur. But, why not try to prevent the ones we can? This is where the biggest cost savings could potentially be made. It is my guess that the results of a "prevention" type agenda for healthcare would take too long to see results for a government that has to call an election every four years.

Another touchy subject the newspaper made no mention of is the recent government mandated closure of many private health care facilities around the province. Don't get me wrong, I would never argue against a pure socialist health care system, where everyone had equal and prompt access to whatever tests, procedures, drugs, or surgeries that were required. Unfortunately, we do not live in a utopic society. We cannot afford a truly socialist system of health care. If you need to have a MRI done of your knee and a quick surgery so that you can return to work earlier and you have the cash burning a hole in your pocket, go for it. I say this on the condition that the public or government funded system is maintained at the present level). When someone else fulfils their needs in a private clinic, it costs the government (and you, the taxpayer) nothing, it opens up another spot in the public system for someone who needs the same surgery, and both parties win. Then there is the argument that this will create a two-tier health care system. Whether you and I approve of it or not, it is already here and we cannot stop it from growing. As an example, since physiotherapy was practically eliminated from the Medical Services Plan, there are many patients who simply cannot afford the private fees while the wealthier ones can. Even WCB is contributing to the two-tier system. If you are an injured worker and cannot get the MRI or surgery you need right away, you will be shipped off to Alberta to have it done privately. Even if private health care services in B.C. are ousted by government legislation, it is all too easy for anyone to just step over the border and have it done in the U.S.

OK, I will now step off of my soapbox and next week we will return to your regularly scheduled programming.