MLA wants to boost organ donations

Calgary-West MLA Ron Liepert got his Human Tissue Gift (Notification Procedure) Amendment Act through second reading Monday — something of a feat for a private member's bill. The purpose of the bill is to increase the number of Albertans who consent to tissue and organ donation. It will require that health facilities formally notify the human organ procurement and exchange (HOPE) program when a person dies, when death is imminent, or when a dead body is received. Health professionals who specialize in organ donations will be sent to talk to the families of people who might end up being organ donors.

"These agencies have trained staff to handle the delicate and emotional discussions that take place with family members at the time of this distress," Liepert says.

"Statistically it has been proven that when someone has signed a donor card, family consent follows almost 100 per cent of the time," he said. "On the other hand, when a person does not make his or her wishes known, the consent rate by family is significantly lower.

"Therefore, we must simply do a better job of raising the awareness on this issue and not leave it to chance."



LIEPERT

Province tables new organ donation law

EDMONTON (CP) — A proposed new Alberta law will require doctors to determine whether a dead patient would be a suitable organ donor, and if they are, to call the organ donation agency.

The change is part of the Human Tissue and Organ Donation Act, a government bill introduced this week in the legislature.

The bill clarifies a doctor's responsibility regarding organ donation at the time of a patient's death. It replaces a more controversial proposal contained in a private member's bill proposed by Calgary member of the legislature Ron Liepert.

He had suggested a requirement that the Human Organ Procurement and Exchange Agency, which collects organs for transplant in Alberta, be alerted when a doctor determined that a patient's death was imminent.

Agency staff would then approach the patient or his family and ask if they would donate an organ.

The measure was strongly opposed by the Alberta Medical Association, and was defeated in legislature April 3.

At that time, Health Minister Iris Evans said that "requiring action from physicians when the death of a patient is imminent creates a difficult dilemma for physicians."

In the government bill, doctors must take action only after their patient has died.

They must mark in the patient's chart whether the patient is suitable for organ donation. If they are, the doctor must notify the HOPE agency.