



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

House of Commons Debates

VOLUME 148 | NUMBER 068 | 1st SESSION | 42nd PARLIAMENT

OFFICIAL REPORT (HANSARD)

Wednesday, June 8, 2016

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

National Strategy for Alzheimer's Disease and Other Dementias Act

The House resumed from May 4 consideration of the motion that Bill C-233, An Act respecting a national strategy for Alzheimer's disease and other dementias, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Ms. Dianne L. Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC):

Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House in support of Bill C-233.

The bill calls for the development and implementation of a national strategy for Alzheimer's disease and other dementias. We need to develop and implement concrete plans and actions to address the needs of those suffering from these diseases. As well, we need strategies to support those who care for family members and friends who are living with and struggling with these diseases.

It is a staggering number, with almost 750,000 Canadians living with Alzheimer's or other forms of dementia. Of that, 72% are women. Equally concerning is that 70% of the caregivers are also women. My mother was one of the 72% and I was one of the 70%.

I can personally say that my journey with my mother was an extremely difficult one, especially because she lived in Alberta and I lived in British Columbia. Initially, she refused to believe that she had Alzheimer's, but knew that something was wrong.

She like many others are often afraid to confront the disease. She found ways to mask the daily symptoms, wanting to give the impression to her loved ones that everything was okay. It became very problematic because my mother was a diabetic and she could not remember how much insulin she was giving herself or if she had taken any at all.

As the caregiver, trying to navigate the medical system in another province was simply a nightmare. I tried to get her transferred from Alberta to B.C., but I had no other choice, no other alternative, than to take her from her home and into the emergency department where I knew

the hospital system would keep her safe. That was in the month of September. By November, she was placed in a facility, and by April she had died.

During that time, I flew to Alberta every few weeks to see her for a few days. However, during those times, I came to realize that there was no standardized care, nor a full understanding of Alzheimer's or dementia at staff levels.

When she fell and broke her collarbone, they waited two days to get her to the hospital for X-rays. The nurses and caregivers would ask her if she was in pain, and she would say no because she did not remember falling. She did not remember breaking her collarbone, so they gave her nothing. A broken collarbone and no pain medication.

I can list hundreds of times when they asked questions about her well-being and they took the answers to be the truth. The only problem was that she had Alzheimer's and did not know who these people were nor why they were asking her those questions. When I came to visit, she always wanted me to stay with her because she knew me and I was her sense of security and comfort.

I tell this story because of the many others across this country where loved ones are suffering with this terrible disease. We need a strong national strategy because of the 750,000 Canadians who are currently suffering, but also for those yet to come.

Early detection, research, collaboration, and partnerships remain key to early diagnosis and treatment, and to ultimately finding a cure.

Research is currently underway in my community between the Simon Fraser University and an incredible partnership with the Sagol Neuroscience Center at Sheba Medical Center in Israel to identify the correlation between diabetes and Alzheimer's. As this begins to be proven out, one can only imagine the impact of Alzheimer's and dementia on those suffering from diabetes.

We need to be ahead of the curve. We need to put measures in place to assist those who are potentially at risk. There is excellent research being done currently right across the country, but a national strategy will bring all of those pieces together to ensure a solid plan is in place.

I have walked down this road with my mother. I have seen and experienced significant gaps within the system. I have lost my mother to a terrible disease that many do not fully understand.

This is the first step of many more to follow, and I am proud to give my support to Bill C-233 today.