



photo courtesy of the Government of Alberta

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“Today marks a very important step toward raising a greater awareness about a really important disorder called hemochromatosis.” With those words, Alberta’s Minister of Health and Wellness the Honourable Gene Zwozdesky presented Bob Rogers, Executive Director & Chief Executive Officer of the Canadian Hemochromatosis Society an Alberta Community Spirit Grant for \$9808.18.

For Alberta MLA George VanderBurg the presentation was personal. Vanderburg was diagnosed with hemochromatosis in April 2010.

“The difference between me and my father and my grandfather is I will be able to see my granddaughters graduate from high school,” says VanderBurg.

VanderBurg suspects his father and grandfather suffered from hemochromatosis and died prematurely. Both his older brother and younger sister have tested positive for the hereditary condition which can

cause your body to overload in iron eventually leading to serious illness and even death. VanderBurg feels fortunate his family now has the knowledge to manage it and he wants to spread the word.

“This is the issue I am trying to promote today; it is all about wellness,” says MLA George VanderBurg. “We all should be getting regular check-ups and we should be getting our ferritin checked. It is not normally done and it should be.”

George VanderBurg’s physician Dr. Bruce Ritchie supports more people having their iron levels tested.

“I think this is a model for how we should be doing healthcare,” says Dr. Bruce Ritchie, a hematologist at the University of Alberta. “We need to be proactive not reactive.”

“We as a government are very interested in encouraging healthier lifestyles and focusing on the wellness side of the agenda and so this particular grant of \$9800 will help the Canadian Hemochromatosis Society to better establish themselves here in Alberta,” says Minister Zwozdesky.

The Community Spirit Grant will fund a public awareness campaign this fall targeting Primary Care Networks in central Alberta.

“The Canadian Hemochromatosis Society is grateful for the Community Spirit Grant,” says Bob Rogers. “This grant will help us reach more Albertans with information about hemochromatosis and how early testing, diagnosis and treatment can save their lives.”

VanderBurg is thankful his doctor discovered his hemochromatosis and he has been able to get his iron levels under control with regular blood removal, initially through phlebotomies and now donating to Canadian Blood Services, and watching his diet and alcohol consumption. It has been a lifestyle adjustment, but an easy adjustment when the payoff is more time with his grandchildren. The newest little addition to his family is expected to arrive any day.