

Department of Health and Wellness  
1894 Barrington St  
PO Box 488  
Halifax NS B3J 2R8

November 18, 2022

Re: James R Skinner

Dear Honourable Minister Thompson,

Following up on our brief conversation in the House, a couple weeks ago, I am writing to ask for your review of the complex case of my constituent, James R Skinner which has been unresolved for years.

The issue Mr. Skinner is facing is that his diagnosis of Empty Nose Syndrome (ENS) is not widely recognized here in Nova Scotia and he is being denied funding through MSI to seek the treatments elsewhere that were recommended by the specialists he has seen.

A bit of background:

- In 2006, Mr. Skinner was diagnosed with Sleep Apnea and began using a CPAP machine. Shortly after he developed a terrible nasal congestion, and he had some neurological events.
- In 2007, Mr. Skinner moved back to Nova Scotia, and he saw a specialist in Halifax who x-rayed his neck and found a narrowing at the base of his tongue.
- In 2011, after years of suffering and little progress, Mr. Skinner was injured during a surgery in Dartmouth that left him with a condition called Empty Nose Syndrome

Throughout his ordeal, Mr. Skinner feels that the Nova Scotia health care system is broken when it comes to special cases such as ENS. The long referral times, inefficient processes, lack of expertise, long wait times for tests, unwillingness to learn about his condition and dismissals despite expert diagnoses have been brick walls that Mr. Skinner faced while simply seeking treatments to help with his condition.

Eventually, several years ago, Mr. Skinner was able to see one of the few experts in his condition – Dr. Andrew Thamboo in Vancouver. While he was there, a well-known Stanford University ENS researcher and two of his research assistants were visiting from California and were able to assess Mr. Skinner and recommended injections every three months to alleviate his symptoms. He has only been given three injections in four years as this procedure is not supported here in Nova Scotia at the frequency he requires.

Dr. David A. Kirkpatrick, an otolaryngologist at the Department of Surgery – Dalhousie University, has asked for coverage to be considered through MSI for Mr. Skinner to receive further evaluation and

treatment by an Otolaryngologist at Stanford University in California for his ENS. This treatment would use radiated cartilage turbinate implants to treat his condition as a more permanent solution since the temporary injections of collagen fillers are not covered, and available every three months as would be required. This implant surgery is not available in Canada.

On August 23, 2022, Dr. Kirkpatrick received a reply from Gisele Marler, Medical Consultant for MSI, stating that the procedure would not be covered by MSI as it is not recognized as a standard care of treatment.

Mr. Skinner has suffered for more than a decade. His quality of life has deteriorated, and he has been more than patient with a system which cannot seem to provide him with the care he needs.

Could you please investigate this case and consider the request for coverage for Mr. Skinner to travel to Stanford University to receive the treatment recommended to alleviate his ENS and provide him with a better quality of life. If you or your staff require any more information, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Thank you,



Keith Irving, MLA Kings South