

#SP2021 – Miles Briggs MSP

Miles Briggs has been busy as an MSP in Lothian and told us that he feels the last five years have just flown by.

Certainly we have received many emails from his office every week on a wide variety of topics, and we know he has been pretty active in standing up for his constituents in the Lothians.

He is standing in Edinburgh Southern in the May election, and is also top of the regional list for Lothian, so he has a pretty good chance of coming back to do even more. He is hopeful of the party returning double the number of candidates than last time, though that flies in the face of most polls we have seen.

Briggs has been party spokesman on mental health and health in general, and has become involved in local health campaigns such as Frank's Law. He said: "One of the things I'm most proud of was that I brought forward a Member's bill to extend free personal care for those under the age of 65. That is probably my greatest achievement. I also campaigned for the cleft palate surgery unit to be retained in Edinburgh and now it is the Eye Pavilion. We are not quite clear what the future will be for that service.

"I welcome the elective centre in Livingston being used as a place for surgery such as cataracts for example. But at no point was that going to be a replacement for the a pavilion, which the SNP are now suggesting it will be. I just think it would be ridiculous for Edinburgh to be the only major city in

the UK not to have an eye hospital.”

Recently the First Minister confirmed that the SNP will renew the Eye Pavilion, but there are no details as yet on what that will look like. Miles explained that during the last parliament, and before The Scottish Government pulled the funding for the new facility, there were plans for it to be situated at Little France and plans were “quite advanced”. He said I was working with professionals looking at the car parking facility so we were almost down to how many car parking spaces were needed. By the nature of that sort of hospital, people drive their relatives to hospital for the procedures.”



Miles Briggs MSP

An economics graduate, Miles worked for the Canadian government for a while, returning to Scotland during the independence campaign. He said: “I caught the political bug pretty quickly. I’ve tried over the last five years to really be a campaigning MSP, make myself available, make my contact details available, and make sure people can come and ask me for their help and advice and support.”

In the parliament without a revising chamber he feels it would make a difference to have elected committee chairs. They are really the vehicle by which the parliament is held to account, and he believes the committees need more opportunity to look into the detail of legislation being drafted.

He said: “I think one of the real discussions we’re now having is whether or not the committee conveners should be elected, that the whole Parliament should decide just like in Westminster, who actually chair those, because at the minute, it’s very much based on the parties deciding that and internal party processes. So I think that would make a big difference. I think some of the people who are in the parliament who are longer in the tooth, who are more independent would probably

put themselves forward knowing that they would get likely elected to these positions.”

It is perhaps difficult to persuade people to put themselves forward as political candidates because of the faceless abuse such as some endure on social media, and he admits that he really does not like that side of politics.

With lifelong interests in art and music (he used to play the double bass) this might be one area where he feels he can have a role to play in the next parliament. He said: “You can’t not be interested in arts and culture living in Edinburgh.

“One of the interesting sides of this job has actually been to meet lots of interesting people involved in the capital especially in the arts and culture sector. I hope to take that forward as we look at protecting and recovering our culture sector here in the city which has taken a huge hit.”

One of the other issues which the pandemic has thrown up is that there is in his view insufficient support for the bereaved in Scotland and it is one of the areas where he thinks matters could be improved, possibly with some changes to legislation.

But getting back to basics, Briggs thinks the next parliament will be all about the economic recovery of the country and it will be key in Edinburgh, particularly with council elections next year.

Showing a certain innocence or perhaps it is just his lighter side, his phone rang during our interview – it was no ordinary ringtone but a quacking duck sound.

<https://www.milesbriggs.scot>