

NEWS RELEASE

SYLVIA JONES, MPP *Dufferin-Caledon*

For Immediate Release
February 2, 2010

Update on Committee on Mental Health and Addictions

In December 2008, my colleague, MPP Christine Elliott (Whitby-Oshawa) received unanimous support in the Legislature for her resolution calling for a Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions to be created to develop a comprehensive Mental Health and Addictions Strategy in Ontario.

I was very pleased to see the establishment of this committee, since I have heard from many residents trying to find help for their family members suffering with mental health problems. I hear from individuals and families who are unable to access services in our community. Without community supports in place, there are few alternatives for those who desperately need help.

The all-party committee began working in March 2009, and we started holding interviews with a wide range of government representatives, organizations and individuals that could provide us with insight on the widespread impacts of mental illness and addictions.

One important aspect of our committee work was traveling to meet and speak with Ontarians about their experiences with mental health and addictions. We were fortunate enough to visit urban and rural communities, as well as First Nations communities across the province. In all of our meetings, I realized that many communities, towns, and cities had issues relating to the lack of co-ordination and availability for mental health and addictions services.

In many urban areas, such as Toronto and Ottawa, housing, homelessness, and immigrant populations with little access to services were major concerns. In many First Nations communities, lack of services, and high rates of suicide and addictions were pressing problems. In rural areas, like Dufferin-Caledon, poor access to mental health and addiction services and strong professional support networks dominated the agenda.

These are problems I hear about regularly in our community. It is the reason why I asked to participate in this committee, and why I invest so much of my time to ensure we truly understand the issues related to this complex subject.

The committee will be releasing an interim progress report in March, which will be followed by a final report later this year. I look forward to the committee proposing a strong, comprehensive strategy that will address a number of mental health and addiction issues, including the ones that impact Dufferin-Caledon residents on a daily basis. The Select Committee on Mental Health and Addiction has been an education for me, and I hope that this plan will mean meaningful change for Dufferin-Caledon residents and across Ontario.

---30---

Sylvia Jones MPP, Working for You