

For Immediate Release

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Faster Care for Speech and Hearing the Goal of MPP Bill

MPP Sam Oosterhoff calls for changes to speed up care

(Toronto) - A Private Member's Bill could help people in Ontario to **Say It, Hear It, Now**, by amending Ontario Legislation so that qualified audiologists and speech-language pathologists can provide faster patient care.

"It's about timely health care, when and where people need it, producing positive health outcomes more quickly," says Niagara West Glanbrook MPP Sam Oosterhoff who tabled the Private Member's Bill, *Removing Barriers in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology Act, 2018*.

"Right now, qualified audiologists and speech-language pathologists do assessments and then refer a patient back to a doctor. But that is often an unnecessary step, delaying the commencement of treatment," adds MPP Oosterhoff. "My bill will help eliminate this unnecessary step making the health care system more responsive to patients and more cost effective."

The Ontario Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists (OSLA) is supporting the Bill and hope that it will be receive unanimous consent to pass third reading and become law before the end of the legislative session and the launch of the provincial general election.

"We know the Government is working on making changes to scopes of practice so that timely, quality patient care is available to all Ontarians, and we appreciate that," says President of OSLA, Rex Banks. "We see this Bill as an opportunity to make this happen right now."

Aging, illness or accident can all cause sudden changes to hearing or speech. The need for care is increasing with the growing and aging population.

"It's so frustrating and disruptive for patients to face unnecessary delays in receiving diagnosis and treatment. When you have difficulties with your speech or hearing, it effects everything you do – at work and at home. It causes anxiety and disruption when people can't access the care they need quickly," says OSLA Vice President Patty Matsuo, who is a speech-language pathologist.

Private Member's Bills don't often become law as they take a back seat to Government driven legislation. However, OSLA believes there is widespread support for the amendments.

"It really is about making patients and their care the first priority and the Government says it is committed to that. I'm hoping we can all work together to get these changes to legislation passed right away," says MPP Oosterhoff.

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