

NDP MPP Armstrong to introduce bill to proclaim Eating Disorders Awareness Week in wake of Auditor General's Report

Queen's Park – London-Fanshawe MPP, Teresa Armstrong, will introduce a bill to proclaim the first week of February, "Eating Disorders Awareness Week," after the Auditor General found that in 2015/16, children had to wait more than three months to receive help for severe eating disorders.

"Too many Ontarians are suffering in silence from these potentially fatal disorders and it's time we begin to shine a light on this devastating mental health challenge and educate the public about them," said Armstrong.

Armstrong cited last week's Ontario's Auditor General Report that noted, "...the lack of needed services in Ontario between 2011/12 and 2015/16 resulted in the Ministry spending almost \$10 million to send 127 youth to the United States to obtain mental health services - primarily for severe eating disorders - as the needed specialty services were not available in Ontario."

"Sadly, eating disorders are on the increase at a disturbing rate, affecting a growing number of men and women, and a growing number of children," said Armstrong. "This government is failing families and children. It's time to tackle this problem head on, and ensure that our health care system is there for Ontarians when they need it. My hope is that this bill will be a good first step towards healing. We are going to help those suffering through this day of awareness by letting them know they are not alone."

The NDP MPP was joined by Wendy Preskow, Founder and President of NIED-National Initiative for Eating Disorders, and Dr. Blake Woodside, a psychiatrist with Toronto General Hospital Eating Disorder Program.

“Eating disorders have the highest mortality rate of any mental illness,” said Preskow. “In recognition of the gaps in current health care services, delays in treatment, lack of funding, inadequate information and education in all levels of government, and for healthcare professionals, schools, and the public, NIED’s ultimate goal is to implement immediate action and change.”

“Families are not the cause of eating disorders despite popular thought. In fact, families are the most important part of recovery for those suffering,” said Dr. Woodside. “The \$10 million the Liberal government spent sending 127 youth to the United States for help could have helped more than 500 Ontarians suffering from eating disorders.”