

Improving services for the deaf inspired by Georgetown man

Wellington-Halton Hills MPP Ted Arnott is calling on the Government to improve services for Ontarians who are deaf or hard of hearing.

In a statement in the Ontario Legislature on Nov. 23, Arnott raised a number of issues facing the deaf brought to his attention by Georgetown resident Chris Kenopic.

Mr. Speaker, during the summer, I had a remarkable meeting in our riding office with Mr. Chris Kenopic of Georgetown, Arnott told MPPs.

Mr. Kenopic, who is deaf, challenges us in the Ontario Legislature to listen: to listen to the needs of the deaf, to hear them, and to heed them.

Arnott highlighted several challenges that deaf Ontarians face, based on Kenopic's recommendations.

In health care, there is very little progress in improving mental health services for the deaf. Why has the government largely ignored this concern? Arnott asked.

He pointed out deaf people face similar challenges in education.

There are regulations that interpreters must be available for deaf students, but

school boards do not write or enforce the policies. What's the point of having regulations if they are not enforced? he asked.

In adult literacy, there needs to be better empirical analysis of the needs of the deaf so we can determine what's working and what we need to do to make improvements, Arnott continued. How can we make a positive difference if we don't have reliable data?

Arnott asked the government to listen to the concerns being raised by deaf Ontarians and to take steps to deal with these challenges.

I urge the government to reach out to Mr. Kenopic and review these concerns. Better yet, the relevant ministers should launch a broad consultation on these and other related issues that Ontario's deaf residents might identify, Arnott said.

Let us listen to the deaf, and let us work together across party lines to support improved services for them, ensuring that they have the same opportunity to reach their full potential as the rest of us do as, together, we reach out to embrace the promise of the future.

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