



Sylvia Jones, MPP
Dufferin-Caledon

244 Broadway
Orangeville, Ontario
L9W 1K5

Tel. (519) 941-7751
Fax (519) 941-3246

12596 Regional Road 50
Bolton, Ontario
L7E 1T6

Tel. (905) 951-9382
Fax (905) 951-1807

1-800-265-1603
E-mail: sylvia.jonesco@pc.ola.org

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Hon. Deborah Matthews
Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care
10th Floor, Hepburn Block
80 Grosvenor Street
Toronto, Ontario M7A 2C4


Dear Minister Matthews:

I recently met with representatives from the Sickle Cell Awareness Group of Ontario and the Thalassemia Foundation of Canada. Among these representatives was Dr. Richard Ward, who is a specialist dealing with Sickle Cell Disease.

During the meeting I learned of a troubling pattern that has emerged in our health care system where general practitioner (GP) physicians have a tendency to attribute various symptoms exhibited by those with Sickle Cell Disease to the disease, as opposed to other ailments or conditions the doctor may diagnose if the patient in question did not have Sickle Cell Disease. This is a troubling development, as it not only means that patients are sometimes unnecessarily referred to Sickle Cell Disease experts like Dr. Ward, thereby contributing to waitlists for his exclusive expertise, but also that these patients are not getting the proper medical care they should be receiving. The main point is that while Sickle Cell Disease is a very serious condition, those afflicted with it also have general medical conditions that could be dealt with by a GP; doctors need to be able to differentiate between Sickle Cell Disease and other sicknesses.

Dr. Ward and his colleagues explained that a broad, cohesive strategy that educates GP doctors on Sickle Cell Disease is needed to both help with the issue I have outlined above, as well as to better detect and properly diagnose Sickle Cell Disease in those who may be unaware they have the condition.

I am interested to know if this is an initiative your Ministry will be pursuing, and look forward to your clarification on this important issue.

Sincerely,



Sylvia Jones, MPP
Dufferin-Caledon

Cc: Christine Elliott, PC Critic, Health and Long-Term Care
Cc: Doreen Alexander, President, Sickle Cell Awareness Group of Ontario
Cc: Helen Ziavras, President, Thalassemia Foundation of Canada

