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Tuesday 29 May 2007

Mardi 29 mai 2007

Speaker Honourable Michael A. Brown

Clerk Deborah Deller Président L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Greffière Deborah Deller

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# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Tuesday 29 May 2007

Mardi 29 mai 2007

The House met at 1845.

#### ORDERS OF THE DAY

PROVINCIAL ADVOCATE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH ACT, 2007 LOI DE 2007 SUR L'INTERVENANT PROVINCIAL EN FAVEUR DES ENFANTS ET DES JEUNES

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 17, 2007, on the motion for third reading of Bill 165, An Act to establish and provide for the office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth / Projet de loi 165, Loi visant à créer la charge d'intervenant provincial en faveur des enfants et des jeunes et à y pourvoir.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod (Nepean-Carleton): It's my pleasure to join the debate today on Bill 165, the independent child advocate, as the Progressive Conservative Party's critic for children and youth services. At the outset I'd like to say that my speech will not take the entire one-hour leadoff. Because I believe so strongly in this piece of legislation, I am going to make the relevant points. I am therefore pleased to announce to the chamber that my party, the Progressive Conservative Party, under the leadership of John Tory, will be supporting this legislation.

I would like to begin by thanking my colleague from Kitchener–Waterloo, our deputy leader, for contributing to the debate for 20 minutes. I'd also like to thank the countless advocates who spoke to myself, the minister and the critic from the third party on this piece of legislation. I'd like to single out a few at this time. I would like to single out Les Horne, Ontario's first child advocate. I'd like to focus right now the attention on Judy Finlay, who is in the government gallery, who is Ontario's chief advocate and who, when this bill passes tomorrow, will be the independent chief advocate for all children in the province of Ontario. Judy, we're very proud of you, and I want to thank you.

I would like to thank Defence for Children International, under the leadership of Matthew Geigen-Miller and Agnes Samler, and in addition Cathy Vine and all of the good people at Voices for Children. Their voices, coupled with the dozens we heard at committee, strength-

ened this bill and helped move it forward. I think what we see before us is a vast improvement from the first reading of the bill.

I'd also like to thank at this time the Minister of Children and Youth Services as well as my colleague from the third party the member from Hamilton East. All three of us worked together. We checked our party sweaters at the door, we took politics outside of the debate and we worked instead for the children of this province.

At first reading, I promised that we would consult, we would study and we would move forward on this bill. At second reading, I reiterated our commitment and I told the Legislature that we were here to work in good faith. Today, we are here to tell the Ontario people that the Progressive Conservative Party supports this piece of legislation. We got two amendments to this bill that we are particularly proud of, the first being the positive right of entry for the independent child advocate, which was not seen at the first reading debate. But after working very hard at clause-by-clause hearings and sending this bill to third reading and then back again to committee, we're very pleased that that has been included.

I'm also very proud to have been the one to introduce a motion to allow the independent child advocate to appoint deputies. I think that's very important, because as you know, I come from an eastern Ontario riding, in the city of Ottawa, and we had heard from children across Ontario—from northern Ontario, from eastern Ontario, from my city and other isolated communities throughout this province—who said they needed a connection but it needed to be a local connection. Today, because of our work in committee and our work with all three political parties, that is there.

I am not going to take much more time, because I believe in the bill as it sits, but I want to say three things for the record, three things I think could have been improved in this piece of legislation. One is that I felt very strongly that a children's bill of rights needed to be incorporated in the bill. It is my intention to continue work on the children's bill of rights in the province of Ontario, because I believe children, like my little girl, Victoria, and all the children in our daycares and throughout the rest of our province in children's aid societies and other organizations, need our support.

I also have concerns with the fact that we didn't put in a provision that would ask members of the independent child advocate staff to refrain from being members of the public service union. I spoke about that at committee. Unfortunately, that did not pass, but I would like it on the record today that I cautioned against that.

Finally, one of the amendments I did support, and introduced myself at committee on several occasions, was to provide at least the ability for the independent child advocate to appoint an advisory committee or at least empower her to have a role similar to the IMPAC committee, the interministerial committee that was created by Premier Davis in 1977 to reach out through government departments to better serve our children and our youth across ministerial departments, to break down the silos of government that sometimes crop up even though it's not in the best interests of the children.

I just noticed two of my good friends here, Agnes Samler and Les Horne, whom I mentioned earlier as I began this speech. I want to recognize their wonderful contribution, not only to this piece of legislation but to the children of this province. I think they've done a tremendous job. This Legislature and the people owe you great gratitude and thanks.

Again, these were the three issues that I felt needed to be addressed in the bill, yet weren't, but I did let you know that I support this bill, my party supports this bill, and we are very pleased to be on record with that today.

I apologize, Mr. Speaker. I was just given something here, very quickly. I just want to reiterate our support, but I also wanted to say that we have taken our cue from Les Horne, our first child advocate, who has just joined us. He was also appointed by former PC Premier Bill Davis, who is one of my heroes. He told the justice committee, "I realized that if we don't get this legislation through, it may never get through. That's the great fear behind all of us who care about what's happening here. It really has to be done. We've been pressing on this for such a long time. Therefore, anything which would delay that would break my heart.... But I agree with you. The most exciting moments in my life are times when kids have taken over." Obviously, I take this very seriously because he said it with such heart.

So as we establish this piece of legislation and the children's chief advocate for Ontario, as I mentioned, we

will have a transitional advocate in the form of Judy Finlay, and we're all very proud of that. Judy Finlay, as you may know, takes thousands of calls each year, and from her work and through the work of stakeholders in the sector and the loyalty from the children and youth we've seen—and I guess they're with her here tonight—if it's any indication, I must say that as a province we are very fortunate to have Judy Finlay, a woman as passionate as she is, running this operation. I know she feels so passionately about children's rights that maybe in the future I'll be able to call on her as I move forward on my appeal for a children's bill of rights.

At this point in time I feel so strongly, with Les Horne, that we need no further delay. I'd like to just again reiterate our support. I look forward to voting for this tomorrow and thank the people who have made this bill possible. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you very much. Questions and comments? Further debate?

Mrs. Chambers has moved third reading of Bill 165.

Is it the pleasure of the House that motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

I have received a deferral note from the chief government whip, and this vote will take place tomorrow during the time of deferred votes.

Orders of the day.

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I move adjournment of the House.

**The Acting Speaker:** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

The House adjourned at 1855.

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