

MEDIA EVENT: MINISTER BROTEN ON PC SPONSORED CAMPAIGN FOR LIFE PRESS CONFERENCE

October 10, 2012

Location:

Outside Press Gallery, Third Floor, Legislature

Speakers:

Minister Laurel Broten

Statement:

Usually when I am speaking to you, or often when I am speaking to you here, I am speaking to you as Minister of Education. But today I am taking the opportunity serving in my role as Minister Responsible for Women's Issues to speak about a press conference that happened here today. And just take a moment to frankly express my disappointment at the press conference that was hosted here by three PC MPPs in an effort I believe to reopen the debate in Ontario about a women's right to choose. It's a debate in Ontario that has been ended for quite some time in Ontario. And one that I have been pleased to be part of a government that has said very clearly we do support a women's rights issues in Ontario. And today's press conference was frankly disheartening. Tomorrow is the International Day of the Girl, it is Women's History Month here in Ontario and it's critically important for those who want to lead this province and those who do lead this province to be very clear about where they stand on those issues. Our Premier has always been clear that he supports a woman's right to choose. I have always been clear that I support a woman's right to choose. I think that it is going to be critically important that we understand where Tim Hudak stands on this issue. Last May or June I believe he indicated that he did not intend to advance efforts to re-open the debate about women's right to choose in the province, in Ontario. Unfortunately there were very strong efforts made by three of its caucus colleagues to reopen the current debate.

Q. It only takes one MPP to sponsor a news conference. When you see three Conservatives sponsoring a news conference on abortion, is that a clear message in itself that they want this debate reopened.

You are quite right. It is unusual. I couldn't think of a press conference that would have been hosted by three MPPs unless they were sharing a perspective and were wanting to advance an issue together. I think if we look at the track record in Ottawa where we have seen Prime Minister Harper distance himself from the issue but at the same time allow (inaudible) MPPs to drive an agenda forward that we can see what perhaps is the plan here. And I think it is critically important for Ontario women to understand that our government, our Premier, Premier McGuinty, that we support a women's right to choose. That debate is over, it has ended and it should stay that way.

Q. In French: What do you think of seeing the names of three PC MPPs on the news conference notice?

(Speaking in French) For me it shows three MPPs who want to, who take a decision by consent to open a debate on the right of women to choose and it's a (inaudible) that we saw perhaps in Ottawa where the MPs begin a debate while (inaudible) here it's the same thing in Ontario (inaudible) clearly that he did not want to re-open a debate on the right of women to choose. And today we see three of these Members who are taking steps to re-open a debate. I want to clear to the women of Ontario, citizens of Ontario, that our Premier supports the right-to-choose, we will not re-open this debate and the women of Ontario need (inaudible) be clear if he wants to open this or not.

Q. (Speaking in French): They have or not

(Speaking in French) The Members have their... I

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| <p>the right (inaudible) inside the Liberal caucus you have MPPs that are anti-abortion. Do those Conservative MPPs not have the right to their proper opinion on this subject?</p> | <p>suppose well that (inaudible) do press conferences that we have the right to say what we wish. It's absolute. But what I want to say is that in our province, the debate of the right of women to choose if they want an abortion or not, it's their choice. It's not the choice of a Member who sits here and it's (inaudible) the choice of a leader who said he would not re-open the debate, to re-open it and to have a caucus that wants to re-open it.</p> |
| <p>Q. Minister, you choose to ignore your role as education minister today, but the Catholic school system in this province is teaching the kind of intolerant thought that we saw coming out of that press conference. They let kids out of school to go to anti-abortion rallies. Is that appropriate?</p> | <p>Well, let me speak first to the fact that I have already done an education announcement earlier today. So I think I've certainly taken responsibility for both the roles that I have. As we have said on a number of times, in Ontario we support Catholic education, support the teaching of love and tolerance in our Catholic schools and at the same time support a woman's right to choose. Our Premier has been very, very clear about that for many years, as have I. I am one that supports Catholic education and has been adamantly in support of women's right to choose for many years and I do not see a conflict in those.</p> |
| <p>Q. Well, should schools be encouraging kids to go to anti-abortion rallies?</p> | <p>Our, you know, the Catholic teachings are one aspect that we teach in our schools, but we do not allow and we're very clear with the passage of Bill 13 that Catholic teachings cannot be taught in our schools that violates human rights and which brings a lack of acceptance to participation in schools. Bill 13 is all about finding a way to ensure that all of our students can be safe and accepted in our schools. We had extensive conversations during the Bill 13 debate about whether or not you could call something a gay-straight alliance in a Catholic school. We made the determination that you must do that so that students feel safe. We must ensure that women, young girls in our schools, especially highlighted during the week of the first ever Day of the Girl tomorrow, that young girls can make the choices that they make. This is not about being pro-abortion, it is about being pro-choice. And allowing young women to make the decisions that they need to make for themselves in concert with their doctor and not having any MPPs sit in a press conference, or any politicians sit and debate in the legislative committee about what is right for a young girl or a young woman, that they don't know the circumstances of their life.</p> |
| <p>Q. Minister, Bill 13 had nothing to do with, or didn't say anything about pro-life, or pro-choice abortion, anything about that. I don't quite understand why you're bringing it up. (inaudible) question was, should Catholic schools be encouraging kids to attend anti-abortion rallies?</p> | <p>Bill 13 has in it a clear indication of ensuring that our schools are safe, accepting places for all our students. That includes of LGBTQ students. That includes young girls in our school. Bill 13 is about tackling misogyny, taking away a woman's right to choose could arguably be one of the most misogynistic actions that one could take.</p> |
| <p>Q. But it does speak to the problem of spending \$7 billion a year on a school system that is affiliated with a church that discriminates against women, gays, lesbians, you name it. I mean, fair enough,</p> | <p>Okay, so, as I have said, this is not the first time that I speak out with respect to a woman's right to choose. As the Minister for Women's Issues, as a long time women's advocate, as an advocate in communities for many years I have spoken about this issue a lot. It's an important</p> |

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| <p>it's good for you to be here to pounce on an obvious Tory gaffe by sponsoring, having three of them sponsor this, but you have to answer for, the government's own hypocrisy on these kinds of issues. I mean, just because it's in the constitution doesn't mean it's there forever and ever, amen.</p> | <p>issue. Women battled for that right. It is a choice between a woman and her doctor and the debate is closed. In Ontario, I think it should stay that way. My premier thinks it should stay that way and I want Ontario women to understand the perspective that we're taking. There are many, many families that send their children to Catholic school and choose that education for their children that also support a woman's right to choose and as I said, I don't think that there is a contrast or a conflict between choosing a Catholic education for your children and supporting a woman's right to choose.</p> |
| <p>Q. Minister, our health care system, is, I wrote about a young woman in Toronto who has a life-threatening disease and whose life would be threatened if she was pregnant who was refused tubal ligation at a hospital in Toronto because that hospital was Catholic. It's a publicly funded hospital. I mean, our health care system is not necessarily pro-choice as well, so, I don't see where you're coming from on this. I mean if you, shouldn't you be asking hospitals, Catholic hospitals, to also be performing sterilization procedures.</p> | <p>I don't have all the details about what you have raised but the circumstance that you have raised, as the Minister Responsible for Women's Issues, do cause me concern and I hope that that young girl was supported in a way to find what she needed to make the decisions that she wanted to for herself.</p> |
| <p>Q. Leslie: Minister, could I ask you a question in your role as education minister? The unions tomorrow, OSSTF, ETFO, OPSEU and CUPE are going to be outside the courthouse tomorrow morning presumably announcing they're going inside the courthouse to launch the challenge. I know you're expecting this sort of legal challenge, but is it still a concern that it's coming to this point, that you've got these major unions fighting you hard on this?</p> | <p>Well, you now, as I've had the chance to say on many occasions, we will defend bill 115, the Putting Students First Act. We think it is constitutional, that we have ensured that, we've acted in a way that is in accordance with the right to collective bargaining, the case in Ontario, the situation in Ontario is very different than that in British Columbia and if the unions launch a challenge tomorrow, we will defend our legislation.</p> |
| <p><i>N.B.: Comments captured are not verbatim quotes</i></p> | |