

Jones denies Liberal charges of delaying safety measures

By Bill Rea

The Liberal Caucus at Queen's Park has issued a statement blaming Sylvia Jones for standing in the way of community safety, but Dufferin-Caledon's MPP is not fazed.

In fact, she said she's in good company, as similar statements have been issued naming other Progressive Conservative colleagues of hers.

"Frankly, I'm very disappointed that this is the tack that they've taken," she remarked.

The statement from the Liberals concerns Bill 65, the Safer School Zones Act, which they said is in response to calls from municipalities, parents and students for action to stop speeding and target dangerous drivers.

"Last week, Dufferin-Caledon MPP Sylvia Jones and the Progressive Conservatives made a calculated political decision to prevent the passage of this critical student safety legislation — legislation that parents say cannot come soon enough," the Liberals charged, adding that Lisa Parker, president of the parents' association at Allenby Junior Public School in North Toronto, directly told Tory MPPs that schools are "doing all that we can to raise awareness (but) what we need is enforcement."

"Anything we can do to increase safety in our school zones should be a non-partisan issue," Toronto District School Board Trustee Jennifer Arp added. "We shouldn't have one party trying to obstruct and hold-up the passing of this legislation."

But Jones countered the Tories put forth proposed amendments to the bill in committee. One was based on a private members bill that had been supported by all parties, but which the Grits defeated at committee with their majority. It dealt with equipping school buses with cameras to help catch "blowbys," or motorists who pass buses when children are getting on or off.

"Sounds like student safety to me," she remarked.

Jones also observed that proposing amendments at committee is nothing new, and it's part of the normal process. She said she's had one of her private members bills used in the final make-up of a bill.

"That's the way it's supposed to work," she said.

Jones pointed out the bill is slated to go before the legislature this week, now that it's out of committee.

"Where's the delay?" she asked.

"The Liberals have the majority," she added, pointing out the bill is almost sure to pass, and without that "reasonable" amendment to help protect kids.

"I think you're probably going to see more of this as we get close to an election," she added. "It's a pretty hard argument to make when you're holding a majority of the seats."