

Tilson to support bill on trans-gender rights

By Jasen Obermeyer

An Orangeville high school's second annual Diversity Walk June 3 saw Dufferin-Caledon MP David Tilson speak to students about his recent change of heart on trans-gender issues.

Teachers and students of Westside Secondary School walked around the school's field, wearing colorful clothing in support of equality for everyone. This includes gender rights, disability rights, religious rights, LGBTQ including gender identity rights, gender rights, equal rights for all races, native rights.

The school's Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA), recently renamed to the Gender-Sexuality Alliance, organized the walk. Jennifer Hutchinson, the school's drama teacher and her colleague Gordon Clement lead the GSA.

A GSA club is a student-run club in a high school or middle school that brings together LGBTQ and straight students to support each other, provide a safe place to socialize and create a platform to fight for racial, gender, LGBTQ, and economic justice.

Tilson spoke about his changed position on trans-gender rights and said the diversity walk is a great idea to draw attention for the needs of equality.

Our society has evolved over time for not only those of us who are gay, but those of us who are transgender, he said. I don't think there's as much resistance as there was in the past.

In response to a new bill, the Liberal government is moving forward to protect transgender rights. Tilson said he has changed his mind. Whenever the bill comes for a vote, I will be supporting it.

Hutchinson said the walk supports the school's mandate. We try to make our school as inclusive as possible for everyone. It doesn't matter gender, sexuality, race, religion.

Hutchinson said the walk shows people in Orangeville who are accepting and inclusive. Especially in a high school, we need to promote equality.