

ANTI-BULLYING LEGISLATION

Parents urge quick passage to avoid more tragedy

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Jamie Hubley wanted to start a Rainbow Club at his high school to provide a safe haven for students who felt like outsiders.

Instead, the openly gay Ottawa teen has become a poster child for victims of bullying who resort to taking their own lives. Jamie killed himself in October after becoming a target because of his sexual orientation. He would have turned 16 last month.

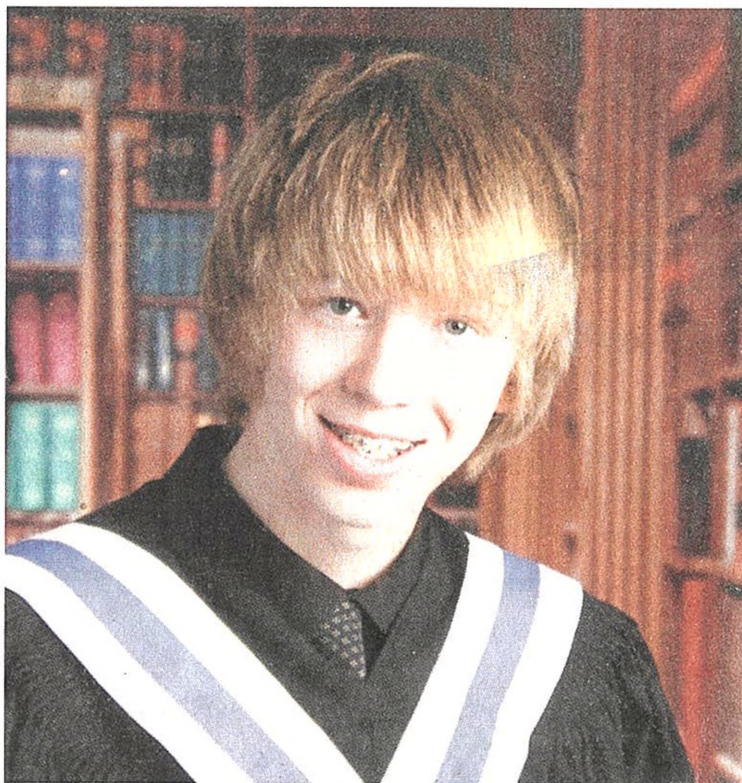
It was Jamie's story that prompted Premier Dalton McGuinty to unveil legislation last week containing tougher consequences for schoolyard bullies, including expulsion. Jamie's parents, Ottawa city councillor Allan Hubley and his wife, Wendy, were at the Ontario Legislature on Wednesday, where they met with Mr. McGuinty and opposition members to impress upon them the urgency of putting aside their partisan differences and quickly passing the legislation into law.

"We lost our boy. They can't bring him back," Mr. Hubley told *The Globe and Mail*. "But there's other kids who are at risk. The longer they take, there's going to be more Jamies."

The proposed legislation provides a rare opportunity for the new minority government in Ontario to work together with the Official Opposition. Progressive Conservative education critic Elizabeth Witmer introduced her own anti-bullying private member's bill the same day the Liberals unveiled their legislation.

As well, Mr. Hubley noted the cross-partisan efforts on the part of two Ottawa-area MPPs, Progressive Conservative Lisa MacLeod and Liberal Yasir Naqvi, who are working with local experts and front-line services to try to understand how the community as a whole can prevent more teen suicides. The two MPPs were instrumental, he said, in bringing Jamie's story to the Premier's attention.

But what concerns Mr. Hubley is the handful of Christian and Jewish groups who are denouncing the government's anti-bullying legislation, calling it a front for the Premier's "radical sex ed-



Jamie Hubley was bullied at school.

ucation" agenda. The Institute for Canadian Values held a news conference at the legislature on Tuesday, criticizing the legislation for giving gay students the right to set up a club.

The news conference was sponsored by Progressive Conservative MPP Frank Klees. The institute's president, evangelist Charles McVety, also fought proposed changes to the province's sex-ed curriculum.

"Obviously, there are different groups that would like to hijack the agenda," Mr. Hubley said. "We're here to say, don't let them."

He has the Premier's ear, who stressed to reporters on Wednesday that he has no interest in letting any MPP derail the legislation. He also pledged to incorporate aspects of Ms. Witmer's private member's bill into the legislation.

"It falls to our generation of leaders to come together and be really tight on this particular matter," Mr. McGuinty said. "My firm expectation at the end of the day is we are going to stand

together as parents and as leaders to send a strong signal to our children [that] we're on their side and we're not prepared to tolerate any discrimination of any kind."

Mr. Hubley said he and his wife decided to go public with their son's story because they did not want to see other teens endure the same experience as their son. Jamie, the middle of three children, was the only openly gay student at A.Y. Jackson Secondary School in Ottawa.

Mr. Hubley said the family knew of several occasions when his son was tormented because he preferred figure skating to hockey. When Jamie tried to start the Rainbow Club at his school, he said, the posters were torn down and he was called vicious names in the hallways and online. Jamie had kept a blog, in which he had spoken candidly about his struggles with depression and surviving as a gay teen.

His one big hope, Mr. Hubley said, is that "Jamie's life wasn't lost in vain, that some good will come out of this."



Wendy and Allan Hubley hope their son's life was not lost in vain.

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