

NO 'PARTY BUSES' BUT A 'CELEBRATION': BROWN EXPLAINS DELAY IN MPP-ELECT SAM OOSTERHOFF'S SWEARING-IN



No 'party buses' but a 'celebration': Brown explains delay in MPP-elect Sam Oosterhoff's swearing-in

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As one of two new MPPs was sworn in and took her seat in the legislature on Monday, the other's absence has prompted questions about the delay, which, it turns out, has been pushed back in order to plan a "celebration."

That would be Progressive Conservative MPP-elect **Sam Oosterhoff** of Niagara West—Glanbrook, who is, according to his Twitter account, going to be sworn in at Queen's Park on Wednesday, two days after Liberal MPP **Nathalie Des Rosiers**, who was elected to the Ottawa-Vanier seat on Nov. 17, the same day as Oosterhoff. Swearings-in are up to the MPP's own discretion.

PC Leader **Patrick Brown** said Oosterhoff needed time to plan a celebration of such a momentous occasion — at 19 years old, Oosterhoff will become the youngest MPP ever elected to Queen's Park.

"I know he's planning to have a bit of a celebration here, it's a unique bit of history when you have a 19-year-old elected, and I think he wants to organize a gathering of friends and family and supporters here," Brown told reporters at Queen's Park. "In ridings that are close to Queen's Park, like Niagara — if it's a distant riding, sometimes it's difficult to get supporters here to see that swearing-in — I think in Sam's case, it's close enough that his supporters want to be here."

"I don't know if there's party buses, but I'm sure there will be a lot of friends and family and supporters that want to be here to see a piece of history," Brown said in response to a reporter's question.

The timing is significant not least because Bill 28, the equal parentage legislation, is slated for third reading Tuesday morning. Following a last round of debate in the house, MPPs could vote to close the discussion and vote on the bill as early as that morning after question period, according to the government house leader's office. The bill amends the law to ensure the legal status of parents, including same-sex parents, regardless of whether they are biologically related to their child or not, and whether their children were conceived with or without reproductive assistance. Same-sex couples would therefore not be forced to go through the adoption process.

Social conservatives strongly oppose the legislation, arguing that the identifiers "mother" and "father" should not be removed from the law, which would swap those monikers out for the gender-neutral "parent." One such so-con is **Queenie Yu**, the anti-sex-ed candidate who ran in Niagara West—Glanbrook but urged voters to cast their ballots for Oosterhoff. Shortly after he was elected, Yu sent out a release calling on the MPP-elect to separate from the Tory pack. "Now that Sam has won, I hope he won't let Patrick Brown silence him," Yu said in the release. "Sam, if you are reading this — please vote against Bill 28! The parents of Ontario are counting on you to stand up for them!"

On election night in Niagara, Oosterhoff dodged questions about his stance on Bill 28, and Brown quickly stepped in to tell reporters he ["hasn't even had the chance to read the bill."](#)

Oosterhoff has previously said he's proud to be a part of the Ontario PCs because they allow members to "vote their conscience." Brown agreed, but when it comes to Bill 28, he said he has directed his caucus to vote in support of the bill.

"I have encouraged more free votes at Queen's Park. Having said that, there are issues that I mark my position on very clearly, and I hope that those in our caucus will follow my lead and follow my direction, and Bill 28 is an example of that," Brown said.

Meanwhile, **Nathalie Des Rosiers**, the newest Liberal MPP for Ottawa-Vanier, who was sworn in Monday morning alongside her family and friends before question period, said she was excited to get to work on holding her government to account on some of the issues she campaigned on, such as social justice, solitary confinement policy in prisons and eliminating violence against women.

"I'm really happy to be here myself, I don't really know what the delay is for him. You have to ask him or his party," she said when asked if she was surprised not to see Oosterhoff, who was elected on the same night, at the legislature.

"I'm one that's spent my life in social justice, so I'm committed certainly to eradicating violence against women. This was a good day for me to start, because we're wearing purple," she said and laughed. MPPs had received unanimous consent to don purple scarves in the legislature that morning in order to raise awareness about the impact of violence against women.

NDP deputy leader **Jagmeet Singh** echoed Des Rosiers and told reporters the purported delay in Oosterhoff's arrival was a question for the soon-to-be-MPP himself.

"I don't second-guess his reasons. Whatever his reasons are, I think he's in the best position to answer that," he said when a reporter asked if he thought the delay had anything to do with the vote on Bill 28.

Oosterhoff did not return *QP Briefing's* requests for comment.

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