

Legislative
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Bill 43

An Act to proclaim Consent Awareness Week

Co-sponsors:

Ms P. Sattler

MPP A. Gilmour

Ms C. Pasma

MPP K. Wong-Tam

Private Members' Bill

1st Reading June 3, 2025

2nd Reading

3rd Reading

Royal Assent



An Act to proclaim Consent Awareness Week

Preamble

Sexual assault is one of the most underreported and pervasive forms of violence in Canada. Across Ontario, students, parents, educators, unions, business leaders and advocates call for an end to these harms of sexual assault in all sectors and fields of work and study in the province, including but not limited to technology and sport. A part of ending sexual assault is to foster a culture of safety and respect that ensures that everyone, especially young people, understands what consent means and how to practice it.

Building consent culture requires awareness, open dialogue and shared responsibility. Yet only 45 per cent of Canadians fully understand what consent entails. The way people give, seek and interpret consent is shaped by a range of factors, including gender, race, ability, sexuality and socioeconomic status.

The consequences of not understanding and practicing consent are significant and far-reaching. According to Statistics Canada in 2019, there were approximately 940,000 incidents of sexual assault, of which only 6 per cent were reported to police. The majority of sexual assault survivors do not come forward due to fear of stigma, disbelief or retaliation.

Sexual assault is a highly gendered crime. A 2022 report from Statistics Canada found that women and girls accounted for 90 per cent of victims in police-reported sexual assaults, with a median victim age of 21. Youth aged 12 to 17 represented 30 per cent of all victims. Of those accused, 96 per cent were men and boys. In most cases, the victim knew the accused. These statistics underscore the urgent need for greater public understanding and practice of consent.

Consent Awareness Week invites Ontarians to have thoughtful, affirming, intersectional and age-appropriate conversations about consent. Forty-five colleges and universities across Ontario currently host and promote Consent Awareness Week activities on their campuses. The Bill expands the opportunity for every post-secondary institute to reflect on, champion and celebrate consent as a cornerstone for all types of relationships, not just intimate ones. The week is also an opportunity to explore valuable life skills related to consent, including responding to rejection, articulating boundaries, respecting bodily autonomy and actively listening to others.

Consent Awareness Week will be held during the third week of September each year. This week was chosen to recognize and raise awareness of the increase in sexual violence across post-secondary campuses during the first six weeks of a new academic year. The week will be an annual reminder that Ontarians have the right to be respected and safe where they live, work, study and play.

Therefore, His Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Ontario, enacts as follows:

Consent Awareness Week

1 The week beginning on the third Monday in September in each year is proclaimed as Consent Awareness Week.

Commencement

2 This Act comes into force on the day it receives Royal Assent.

Short title

3 The short title of this Act is the *Consent Awareness Week Act, 2025*.

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The Bill proclaims the week beginning on the third Monday in September in each year as Consent Awareness Week.