

Legislative  
Assembly  
of Ontario



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# Bill 104

## An Act to proclaim Tamil Genocide Education Week

**Mr. V. Thanigasalam**

**Private Member's Bill**

1st Reading      April 30, 2019

2nd Reading

3rd Reading

Royal Assent



## An Act to proclaim Tamil Genocide Education Week

### Preamble

The Tamil community in Ontario is one of the largest concentrations of Tamils outside southeast Asia. It stretches across the province but the highest concentration is in the Greater Toronto Area. Tamil-Ontarians play an important role in the social, economic and political fabric of the province.

Tamil-Ontarians have families still suffering in their homeland in the north and east of the island of Sri Lanka. They have lost their loved ones and have been physically or mentally traumatized by the genocide that the Sri Lankan state perpetrated against the Tamils during the civil war which lasted from 1983 to 2009, and especially so in May of 2009. Genocide is the deliberate and organized killing of a group or groups of people, with the intention of destroying their identity as an ethnic, cultural or religious group. Acts of genocide against the Tamils started in 1948 after Sri Lanka gained its independence and were perpetrated through Sinhala-Buddhist centric government policies, pogroms, land grabs and ethnic cleansing. The United Nations Organization estimates that in May 2009 alone about 40,000 to 75,000 Tamil civilians were killed. Other estimates place the death toll at 146,679 civilians. These figures only reflect the death toll in 2009 leading up to May 18, the day on which the civil war ended. The loss of Tamil civilian lives during the genocide, which continued for decades in Sri Lanka, is much higher.

In addition, the Sri Lankan state has systematically disenfranchised the Tamil population of their right to vote and to maintain their language, religion and culture. For example, the *Sinhala Only Act* of 1956 made Sinhalese the official language of Sri Lanka ignoring the 29 per cent of the population whose primary language was Tamil, thereby putting them at a serious disadvantage for participating in the public service of Sri Lanka.

It is important for many reasons to acknowledge publicly that the killings and all aspects of the genocide constitute a heinous act. Not only does this acknowledgement honour the lives that were lost, but it gives a sense of hope to those who have suffered since it represents the first step to healing and reconciliation. Most importantly, by recognizing the Tamil genocide, we affirm our collective desire to maintain awareness of this genocide and other genocides that have occurred in world history in order to prevent such crimes against humanity from happening again.

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

### Tamil Genocide Education Week

1 (1) The seven-day period in each year ending on May 18 is proclaimed as Tamil Genocide Education Week.

### Same

(2) During that period, all Ontarians are encouraged to educate themselves about, and to maintain their awareness of, the Tamil genocide and other genocides that have occurred in world history.

### 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 *Tamil Genocide Education Week Act, 2019*.

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### EXPLANATORY NOTE

The Bill proclaims the seven-day period in each year ending on May 18 as Tamil Genocide Education Week.