

Legislative
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Bill 18

An Act to proclaim Consent Awareness Week

Co-sponsors:

MPP K. Wong-Tam

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Private Members' Bill

1st Reading September 6, 2022

2nd Reading

3rd Reading

Royal Assent



An Act to proclaim Consent Awareness Week

Preamble

Recent events in Ontario have led to a heightened awareness of the urgent need to address sexual violence and consent. These events include allegations against members of a hockey team for committing group sexual assault, high-profile sexual assault cases in the media and student walkouts in response to sexual assaults on post-secondary campuses.

Understanding consent requires awareness, action and accountability. Only 28 per cent of Canadians fully understand the meaning of consent. Furthermore, social location, including race, ability, gender, sexuality and class, shapes how individuals, groups and communities provide consent and receive consent.

The effects of not understanding consent are far reaching and include sexual harassment and sexual assault. Each year, there are approximately 636,000 cases of self-reported sexual assault in Canada. Of this number, 41 per cent were self-reported by students at post-secondary institutions.

The need for consent education affects all genders. In Canada, 15 per cent of girls and women and 9 per cent of boys and men between the ages of 14 and 21 identified as having had a sexual act forced upon them by a peer.

Ontario will be the first jurisdiction in Canada to recognize and adopt Consent Awareness Week. The week invites Ontarians to have thoughtful, affirming, intersectional and age-appropriate conversations about consent. The week is an opportunity 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 how to respond to rejection, articulate boundaries, respect bodily autonomy and actively listen to others.

Consent Awareness Week will be held during the third week of September in 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 function as an annual reminder that Ontarians have the right to be respected and safe where they live, work, study and play.

Therefore, Her 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, 2022*.

EXPLANATORY NOTE

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