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Mercredi
27 mai 2026

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 27 May 2026

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 27 mai 2026

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PRIVATE MEMBERS'
PUBLIC BUSINESS

LYDIA'S LAW (ACCOUNTABILITY
AND TRANSPARENCY
IN THE HANDLING
OF SEXUAL ASSAULT CASES), 2026
LOI LYDIA DE 2026
(RESPONSABILITÉ ET TRANSPARENCE
DANS LE TRAITEMENT
DES CAS D'AGRESSION SEXUELLE)

Ms. Fife moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 112, An Act to enact Lydia's Law (Accountability and Transparency in the Handling of Sexual Assault Cases), 2026 / Projet de loi 112, Loi édictant la Loi Lydia de 2026 (responsabilité et transparence dans le traitement des cas d'agression sexuelle).

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Pursuant to standing order 100, the member has 12 minutes for the presentation.

I recognize the member for Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Before I begin, I do want to thank my staff for their assistance: Karissa, Nigel, Shel and John. None of us get anything done in this place without good people behind us and getting to this point has been a lot of hard work. I can tell you that the work is heavy and the emotional labour is real because it is personal.

I'm very thankful to the hundred survivors or advocates who are here today. From the bottom of my heart, thank you very much.

I wanted to start this debate off with a very simple idea: Compassion is not weakness, and partisan politics can be trumped today during this debate. Ontario needs Lydia's Law to pass. Survivors of sexual assault are not going to take it anymore. Every woman I know knows someone who has been sexually harassed or assaulted or violated—every single one.

When Lydia and her mom came to my office five years ago, they asked for help. They told me that they didn't want any other family to go through what they had experienced in the court system. It was a hellish experience for Lydia and her family. The court case took almost two years. She felt like she was on trial. It was traumatizing.

When I first introduced Lydia's Law in 2024, the government denied me the opportunity to debate and sent it to

committee to die. Survivors, at that time, felt silenced again.

Lydia is with us today. Lydia is every girl or woman in Ontario right now—it's a lot to carry, but she's not alone. The fact of the matter is, this law could be called Ausma's law, Kate's law, Karissa's law, Carly's law—every woman sees themselves in this legislation.

I also want to thank my male co-sponsors, MPP Vanthof, MPP Kernaghan and MPP Mamakwa, who are standing as allies in the fight against sexual violence in Ontario.

When I raised the issue of the 1,639 sexual assault cases being stayed or thrown out from last year and when I talked about the 48 women in the Sloka case who were called unreliable in their testimony and the lack of counselling or mental health supports for survivors, the Attorney General said that I was victim-trolling—

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: Shame.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Exactly—which was not only insulting to me but also to the survivors who were in the public gallery that day.

And after all the evidence of the court backlogs, the gruelling court cases and the survivors and advocates here today, plus many watching from home, I would like to give the Attorney General the opportunity to apologize for his demeaning victim-trolling comments. His name-calling ignores the realities of so many survivors. I would also like to add that it plays into a very dangerous narrative. When survivors come to us and they share with us how traumatizing the system is, we have a responsibility to listen to them and bring their concerns here and seek solutions. This is not victim-trolling, and I would like to give the Attorney General the opportunity to apologize for those comments—not just to me but to everyone—and I would accept his apology. I want to make that very clear. I would also commit to working with him and the ministry to improve access to justice for all Ontarians with a focus on intimate partner violence and sexual assault cases because the numbers are alarming for Ontario.

Listen, you're going to hear about some minor improvements that have happened. The government has tinkered around the edges; it has certainly not been a priority for this government. But when we look at the fact that over 40% of sexual assault cases in Ontario took over one year to complete, from the time of their first court appearance to the rendering of a final victim verdict—even if they got a verdict, Madam Speaker—over 60% took longer than eight months and over 80% took longer than four months. The median time required for a completion of cases was close to a year, at 310 days. These

are ministry stats. These numbers matter. They are deterrents and barriers to reporting sexual assaults.

Why does it matter when women don't feel safe enough to report? Sexual violence increases. Offenders continue to offend, and even the idea of women being able to access justice becomes a lost hope.

But Lydia's Law could provide hope, and it's based on the 2019 recommendations from the Auditor General asking for greater transparency and accountability in the justice system. We've waited seven years for this to be enacted, Madam Speaker.

Removing the time limits for support is a new component of the bill, because in the Sloka case it took four and a half years for that verdict to come to the fore, and we had to fight for women in that court case to access counselling.

Why accountability is so important: It's important to hold the Attorney General to account because I want to know why these 1,639 cases were dispensed or stayed. Were survivors exhausted? Were they harmed by coming forward? Did they look at the system as hostile? Did they lose trust in the system?

If I were the Attorney General, I would want to know, because I would want to solve that problem, and that is why the Auditor General made the recommendations. Accountability maintains trust and legitimacy, and when citizens see that their leaders must answer for their actions, faith in the public institutions grows. A government that hides its decisions invites suspicion.

Accountability prevents the abuse of power. That is what we are seeking here today, Madam Speaker.

Also, financial accountability matters in this case as well. Public money demands special scrutiny. Exposing wasteful or improper spending demonstrates that watchdog mechanisms are alive and working, which is why we went to the Auditor General's report to determine what Lydia's law would look like.

We should not have courtrooms in the province of Ontario shutting down because there isn't enough money for courtroom security, crown attorneys or technical support. When the system fails at that level, we fail Ontario, and that is what is happening right now.

Trust in the system matters. There's some research here from Women's Legal Education and Action Fund, and they found that sexual assaults were the most under-reported criminal offence in Canada: 5% of sexual assault survivors reported their experiences to police, compared to 38% for physical assaults.

The reasons why women don't report—it's important to understand. Survivors didn't want the hassle or the stress of dealing with police. I do want to say, I think that police have come a long way in dealing with sexual assault cases—although, in the Sloka case, the judge called out the police in Waterloo for having too much empathy and compassion in dealing with survivors.

Survivors believe the offender wouldn't be convicted or adequately punished: 40% of women believe that. And they feared the court process. The court system is not seen

as something that is going to help you if you come forward and disclose.

It's important to understand that reporting rates and reasons for not reporting are not the same in all communities, for all survivors. Indigenous women, racialized women, disabled women are more likely to not report. They don't see themselves in the justice system, and they do not trust it.

About 95% of survivors of sexual assault choose not to report to police, often because they believe it is unlikely that their report would lead to a conviction. That means that in Ontario last year, if only 5% reported, 91,000 survivors did not report—91,000 people did not have faith in the court system in Ontario.

The Globe and Mail has done a very extensive piece on the alarming number of sexual assault reports across Canada that never had a chance of leading to criminal charges because they were dismissed by police as unfounded. And there is a cost of a broken justice system. There's an economic cost, Madam Speaker.

I'm trying on all levels to get the government to understand how important this issue is.

But when Elizabeth Renzetti recently did a really extensive piece on May 7 of this year, she asked the question, "So why do rates of sexual violence remain so high, and prevention so inadequate? Maybe it's because the harms are invisible and unquantifiable to those who don't want to see them. Or because we live in a society that understands damage only in terms of dollars." That's why two new reports attempted to quantify the financial cost of gender-based violence.

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In BC, the YWCA determined that it costs \$1.12 billion every year in that province, and then another study came out. The Ending Sexual Violence Association of Canada determined the economic cost of victims of sexual violence in Canada. They described it as "enlightening and depressing in equal measure." This report puts the total economic impact of sexual violence in this country at \$14.8 billion a year.

So if the justice system fails, then we fail the truth, Madam Speaker. I can tell you that the survivors from the Sloka case have gone through some very dark times. One mom told me, "I don't know if we will get our daughter back again."

Women in Ontario have carried the weight and the emotional labour of the reality of sexual violence, and it is all around us. It won't dissipate until the law recognizes the depravity of what it is and that it is everywhere, ongoing and gaining momentum.

Lydia's Law needs to pass in this House today. I ask the government. I ask all members to vote independently. Ask for a free vote on this—a free vote to free women from sexual violence and to deliver justice to survivors who have enough courage to come forward and disclose. You have daughters. You have family members who have been sexually assaulted. You know that this system is failing women and anyone who has the courage to come forward. I am begging you to do the right thing today.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Further debate?

M^{me} Lucille Collard: I rise today to speak in strong support of Bill 112, Lydia's Law (Accountability and Transparency in the Handling of Sexual Assault Cases).

I want to begin by acknowledging the survivors whose courage brought us to this moment and also the member for Waterloo for doing all that work and being so insistent that this is an important bill. Every survivor who came forward, every person who endured the trauma of reporting their assault, every person who waited months, sometimes years, for justice that never came—the bill exists because those survivors deserve better from this province.

Bill 112 is not radical legislation. It does not reinvent the justice system. It asks for something far more basic: accountability, transparency, data, action.

It asks the government to finally do what the Auditor General recommended seven years ago—seven years. In 2019, the Auditor General identified serious failures in how Ontario handles criminal cases involving sexual assault and intimate partner violence. The recommendations were straightforward: track delays, understand why cases are being stayed or withdrawn, collect proper data and allocate resources accordingly. The government agreed to those recommendations, and then they did nothing.

Madam Speaker, that failure has consequences. Real people are paying the price for this government's refusal to manage our court system properly. Last year alone, 1,639 sexual assault cases in Ontario were withdrawn or stayed before trial. Think about that. That represents 34% of all sexual assault cases received in this province. That's an awful lot.

Think about what that means. Those are not numbers on a spreadsheet; those are survivors who came forward despite enormous fear, survivors who relived traumatic experiences in police interviews, survivors who prepared themselves for court, survivors who put their lives on hold waiting for justice. Then their cases disappeared—no trial, no resolution, no accountability and, too often, no explanation.

Madam Speaker, in 2015, there were 57,000 charges placed that fall in the category of crimes against a person, such as homicide or sexual assault. In 2025, 80,000 charges were placed for that same category. At the same time, the withdrawal rate has risen from 33% to 48%. For all criminal cases, the majority are now stayed, withdrawn or dismissed.

Court delays are not simply administrative inefficiencies. They are barriers to justice. They undermine public confidence in our institutions. They weaken prosecutions and they retraumatize survivors.

And in some cases, they allow accused individuals to walk free without their case ever being heard—cases like the one of the woman whose assailant walked free when her sexual assault case was stayed because there were no courtrooms available for two of the three days scheduled for the trial. She testified, but the trial was not completed within the 18 months required by the Supreme Court.

This government likes to talk about “tough on crime.” The Premier likes to hold press conferences about public safety. But you cannot claim to support victims while starving the justice system of the resources and oversight it needs to function. You cannot increase policing while failing to increase court capacity accordingly. You cannot allow courtrooms to sit unavailable, allow staffing shortages to persist, and then pretend to be surprised when the backlog grows worse year after year. And you certainly cannot ignore warning signs for nearly a decade and then claim this crisis came out of nowhere.

Madam Speaker, the effects of court delays reverberate throughout the entire justice system. Families remain trapped in uncertainty. Survivors are forced to relive some of the worst moments of their lives over and over again while waiting for proceedings that may never happen. Crown attorneys face impossible caseloads. Judges struggle with mounting backlogs, and confidence in the administration of justice erodes further every single day.

We know this problem is getting worse. In 2025, sexual assault cases had the second-highest average number of days to resolution in Ontario at 352 days. The only category with longer delays was other sexual offences at 374 days. That should alarm every member in this House, because when justice is delayed to this extent, justice is denied.

Now, when concerns have been raised about delays causing cases to collapse under Jordan timelines, the Attorney General's office has argued the judicial stays for delays are “exceptionally rare,” reportedly around 0.1%.

But there are two serious problems with that argument, Madam Speaker. First, those figures likely do not account for cases proactively withdrawn by the crown to avoid an anticipated Jordan application. And second—and this is critically important—rarity does not make the problem insignificant.

If even one survivor sees their case collapse because this government failed to provide adequate resources to the courts, that matters. Even if one complainant spends years preparing for trial only to watch the case disappear because of systemic delays, that matters. And when we are talking about sexual violence—crimes that are already vastly under-reported because survivors fear they will not be believed or supported—these failures become even more damaging.

Madam Speaker, many survivors already face overwhelming barriers to reporting sexual assault in the first place:

- fear of retaliation;
- fear of public scrutiny;
- fear of reliving trauma in open court;
- fear of not being believed.

And when someone makes the extraordinarily difficult decision to come forward, the justice system owes them a process that is timely, respectful and functional. Too often, Ontario is failing that test. That is why this bill matters.

While drafting my private member's bill, the Protection from Coerced Debts Incurred in relation to Human Trafficking Act, in 2023, I got a first-hand look at how our

judicial system puts up barriers for survivors at every turn as they see seek justice. Lydia's Law works to take down a few more of those roadblocks.

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Bill 112 would require the Attorney General to publicly report on progress, implementing key recommendations from the Auditor General. It would require meaningful tracking of delays, stays and withdrawals. It would require the government to identify where delays are occurring and why. In other words, it would force this government to finally understand the problem it has spent years ignoring, because understanding a problem in the first place is the first step towards solving it, and right now, this government refuses to even take that first step.

The bill would also require every police service to inform sexual assault complainants aged 16 and older about Ontario's independent legal advice program.

For many survivors, navigating the justice system is overwhelming. They are expected to understand complex legal processes while coping with trauma, uncertainty and fear. Independent legal advice can help survivors understand their rights, understand the court process and make informed decisions about how they want to proceed. And it becomes even more essential when this government continues to leave Ontario's legal aid system under-resourced and overstretched.

Over the past several years, legal aid clinics, community legal services and front-line advocates have repeatedly warned that they do not have the resources needed to meet the demand. Survivors who are already struggling to access justice are too often left without adequate legal support, particularly those from low-income, marginalized, newcomer or rural communities. That matters too, because survivors navigating the justice system should know what supports are available to them. They should not be left to navigate a deeply intimidating process alone. So when we talk about ensuring that complainants are informed about the independent legal advice program, we are talking about filling a gap that this government itself has widened through chronic underfunding.

The legislation also calls for a review of how effectively the Victim Quick Response Program supports survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault and human trafficking. Again, this is about accountability. This is about asking whether our systems are actually serving the people they were created to support.

This issue cuts across party lines. This should not be political. No government should be comfortable with a system where thousands of sexual assault cases never make it to trial. No government should be comfortable operating without complete data on why cases are being withdrawn, and no government should be satisfied with offering survivors apologies instead of action.

This government has had eight years to address these concerns—eight years. That is nearly a decade of survivors being left in limbo while recommendations sat on a shelf collecting dust. Meanwhile, the backlog worsened, the delays worsened and survivors continued paying the price.

Madam Speaker, we have seen before how public accountability can drive meaningful reform. In 2017, the Globe and Mail investigation into police services improperly classifying sexual assault complaints as unfounded forced institutions across Canada to confront systemic failures in how survivors were treated. Transparency mattered then, and transparency matters now.

Survivors need to trust that the government will have their backs, that there will be support for them, that they won't have to be retraumatized over and over again, that their case will be heard and that they will get justice.

I care deeply about those issues. I've done some work on human trafficking, and some of the stories I've heard really prompted me to act. I have three daughters. Everybody knows that if you have girls, you need to support that bill.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Further debate?

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I want to start off by thanking the member for Waterloo. I was devastated for her, last year, when the bill got put straight to committee to shelve and didn't get a chance to speak about it, so I am so proud of her determination and commitment to Lydia and all the survivors she is representing today.

I also want to thank all of you for coming: SASC, the YWCA KW, the team of the MPP for Waterloo, Child Witness Centre, CJI and so many others in our community that go and hear the hard stories and carry these realities in your hearts every day. You keep going, even though I'm sure many times you're feeling burnt out, because you're trying to make every dollar stretch for your organizations to ensure that more survivors get the support they need.

And thank you to all the survivors. This is not easy, but every time somebody speaks up, every time anyone can speak up, you're speaking up for so many others who don't or can't. That takes so much courage, and I want you to know. I hope you hear today that you're not alone and that your voice really matters. It's an important part of this work.

It will still take more time because there are so many things that need to change about our system to prevent people from being harmed, but also to make sure that we build a government that has services and supports and a justice system that actually brings accountability and justice and healing and that is survivor-centred.

I have too much to say about this. I think all you're asking for is transparency and honesty. Giving updates—it's like a report card on the government on how they're doing on these recommendations that came so long ago about something so essential.

We spend so much time in this place talking about billions of dollars that are getting spent on vanity projects in Toronto instead of talking about what we should be talking about, which is making sure that Ontarians are okay, that they're safe and that, if harm happens to them, there is justice; there is no impunity. What we're talking about is impunity here, where perpetrators of sexual violence don't have that day in court.

I have a 16-year-old daughter. I can't imagine her not even knowing that she can access legal help. This is a basic fundamental right that everybody should know about.

I've worked as a school social worker alongside young women who were in problematic and harmful relationships or had been assaulted. They need every help they can get. They're young adolescents. They're just starting their lives, and this is going to have a profound impact if we do it badly.

We know, when it comes to trauma, that if you intervene at an early stage right away and provide adequate support, it prevents a lifetime of harm. When I think of the Sloka trial, it was nine years after complaints were made that the trial was ended, seven years after charges happened and five years after the trial began. This is unacceptable. People's lives are being held hostage because of the problems in our criminal justice system.

Our courts—we need to fix them. I think 50% of charges are stayed, whether it's murder or anything else. And I read in the paper every day that a judge is pissed off because he's seeing another homeless person who has committed a crime and dealing with addiction and mental health. This is what we're filling our courts with instead of filling our courts with justice.

With the Sloka trial, I've heard from so many survivors. I think all of us in our office have heard from survivors about the problems in our court system. Forty-eight women were said to be unreliable—48 women are unreliable. Even a doctor was unreliable. Instead, the person who is no longer called a doctor is more reliable.

There is so much bias in our courts, and I think there are some major systemic issues that need to be addressed. I recently spoke with a court worker who shared some pretty stark realities that they face, and it causes these problems. They're the most underpaid. They have the most psychological harm of probably most front-line workers, aside from the folks who are here today. They hear traumatic stories all the time. They barely get adequate benefits to deal with their mental health, and they're chronically understaffed. And so, it leads to more delays.

And we know that it's only getting worse. The more realities I hear from hospital staff, from front-line workers about the ways in which pornography is becoming more violent—more women have brain injuries. Is that being factored into why they were deemed to be hysterical or not remembering things? There are so many issues that we need to unpack with this report that the government needs to follow through on.

Right now, there is no trust. That's why only 6% of people come forward. That's a terrible number, and I've sat with women who choose not to because of what it means for them to come forward.

So I do call on the Attorney General to do the right thing and pass Lydia's Law.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Further debate?

MPP Monica Ciriello: Speaker, I rise today to speak to Lydia's Law. I want to begin where I believe all

discussions like this must begin: not with legislation, not with policy, but with people—with the survivors, with the families, with those whose lives have been shaped and, in some cases, shattered by violence, exploitation and abuse. Because at its core, this is not a legal conversation; it's a human one.

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Speaker, over the past few months, I have had the privilege—although I say that with a great level of care—of attending symposiums, round tables and community discussions focused on gender-based violence and intimate partner violence. And like I have said in this House, I did not go to speak, but I went to listen. I listened to survivors who shared deeply personal, painful experiences, often reliving trauma so that we as policy-makers in this House could better understand what needs to change. I listened to front-line professionals, like police services, victim services, advocates—those who work with victims every single day. And I listened to families and community members who are asking for something very simple: a system that works, that protects them when they need it most. The message I heard clearly and consistently is this: The system must become more victim-centred. And I want to say clearly to those individuals, we hear you. We hear your experiences. We hear your concerns. And we carry that with us into this work.

Before addressing the bill directly, I want to make something absolutely clear: We stand with victims. We believe them. We support them. And we are committed to ensuring that the justice system responds in a way that is compassionate, responsive and effective, because too often, survivors are not only navigating trauma; they are navigating systems that can feel complex, overwhelming and, at times, inaccessible. We have heard that clearly—that legal processes can be intimidating, confusing and difficult to navigate at the very moment when individuals need stability the most. And that is something that we must all continue working to change.

Speaker, the intent behind Lydia's Law is one that I believe every member in this House shares. We all want stronger protections, better supports, and systems that respond effectively to violence. There's no disagreement on these goals, but where we must be responsible and where we must be deliberate is in how we achieve them, because these issues are complex. Human trafficking, sexual violence and intimate partner violence do not exist in isolation. They intersect. They evolve. And they require responses that are equally comprehensive.

Our government has taken significant steps toward building that comprehensive approach.

Through the renewal of Ontario's Anti-Human Trafficking Strategy, we are investing more than \$345 million over five years to combat trafficking and support victims and survivors. This is not a single policy solution. It is a coordinated framework aimed at prevention, enforcement, victim identification, and survivor support. We have strengthened law enforcement capacity, supported joint investigations, and implemented legislation that improves our ability to identify and protect victims.

In the area of sexual violence and harassment, we are similarly advancing systemic improvements. We have introduced standards to guide how investigations must be conducted, ensuring greater consistency and accountability across this province. We are enhancing training so that officers respond with a trauma-informed and compassionate approach. And we continue to invest in victim supports, because we know that justice does not end in the courtroom. Across Ontario, survivors can access counseling, crisis support and financial assistance; 42 sexual assault centres provide free and confidential care; and services like the Victim Support Line ensure that help is available 24/7, in over 150 languages.

When it comes to intimate partner violence, we have built specialized systems to respond to the unique risks that are involved. Ontario has a Domestic Violence Court Program in all 54 jurisdictions, Early Victim Contact to provide immediate support, and high-risk committees that help prevent tragedies before they occur. Our government is also taking steps to make restraining orders more accessible, so that individuals who fear for their safety can access protection through a system that is practical and responsive to their needs, because protection should not depend on someone's ability to navigate a complicated process.

This brings us back to Lydia's Law. When we listen to survivors and when we look at the evidence, we see that what is needed is not just one change, but system-wide coordination. We have heard that victims struggle with navigating overlapping legal processes, systems can feel fragmented, and supports may not be aligned. So when we consider this bill, our responsibility—all of our responsibility—is to ask, will this proposal on its own create the kind of coordinated, victim-centred system that survivors are asking for? And respectfully, our view is that while the intent is important, the approach itself must be broader. This is not about rejecting the goal. It is about ensuring that our response matches the complexity of the problem before us.

Survivors are not asking for a single legislative fix. What they are asking for is systems that speak to each other; protections that are accessible in practice, not just on paper; and supports that remain with them throughout their journey. When I reflect on their voices, I hear one thing that stands out: Survivors want to be heard, not just in moments of crisis, but in the design of the system itself. And that is exactly what our government is committed to doing. We will continue to engage directly with survivors, consult with front-line professionals, and evaluate whether our systems are truly meeting the needs of the people they are designed to protect.

I also want to acknowledge the advocacy behind this bill. When families and survivors come forward with proposals, often in the aftermath of profound loss, it is rooted in a desire to prevent others from experiencing the same pain. That voice matters, and it must continue to inform our work—all of our work.

So when we say that we can't support Lydia's Law in its current form, it is not because we don't share its

purpose; it is because we believe that the path forward must remain grounded in comprehensive reform, coordinated action and ongoing consultation. As we mark Sexual Assault Prevention Month and Sexual Violence Prevention Month, we are reminded that this work does not just begin and end in this chamber; it is work that happens in our communities, in our institutions, and in the lives of survivors every single day, and it is work we must continue to embark on together.

So let me end where I began, with people—with the individuals who are navigating fear, uncertainty and trauma; with those who are asking us not just to act, but to act thoughtfully, and to act in a way that truly makes a difference going forward. We owe them more than quick solutions. We owe them a system that works.

We hear you. We are listening. And we will continue to stand with victims every step of the way.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Further debate?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I rise today as a proud co-sponsor of Lydia's Law and in support of survivors across Ontario, who deserve a justice system that works for them, not against them.

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In my riding of London North Centre, I hear from women, advocates, families and community organizations who are frustrated and deeply hurt by a system that is too slow and that often fails survivors of gender-based violence.

For survivors to come forward, it takes enormous courage. It takes guts. It takes unlocking painful memories and taking a leap of faith that someone—the system, the courts, their community—will finally have their back.

This Legislature cannot keep burying heads in the sand when trust is broken. In 2025 alone, 1,639 criminal cases were stayed or withdrawn because of delays in Ontario's courts. How many is it going to take for this government to make this change?

Lydia's Law confronts this reality. It's about transparency, accountability and actions as well as words, and it ensures that we do not normalize delay and failure within the justice system. When justice is delayed, survivors carry the cost.

But gender-based violence requires more than legislation alone. It requires a cultural change, education. And it needs men to step up.

Violence against women cannot continue to be treated as someone else's problem. It is not a women's issue. It is society's problem.

Men need to speak up when they see harmful attitudes. Men need to challenge behaviours that disrespect women. They need to reform systems that perpetuate that disrespect. And men need to stand with survivors and not stay silent on the sidelines.

I want to recognize the team from Changing Ways, who are here in the gallery, from my riding of London North Centre. Their work on healthy relationships, accountability and violence prevention is helping break cycles of violence and helping build safer communities.

Today, we from this Legislature send a message to survivors. We send a message to every woman, to every girl watching, that this Legislature hears them, it stands with them, and it will not ignore system failures.

We must send a message to every boy and every man that respect, consent and accountability are not optional; they are expected.

Ask yourselves the question: Will your vote today make your mother proud? How many women is it going to take for this government to step up, to do the work, to listen to survivors, to believe them?

Real leadership means stepping up when it's uncomfortable and not staying silent when change is needed.

I urge this government: Listen to your conscience. Listen to your mother. Vote for Lydia's Law.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Further debate?

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Meegwetch, Speaker.

I rise today in support of Lydia's Law, put forward by the member for Waterloo, and I'm proud to be a co-sponsor. Lydia's Law is about accountability. It's about transparency. But most importantly, it's about putting survivors first. Too often, the justice system retraumatizes survivors instead of helping them heal. Backlogs in courts mean years of waiting, years of pain. Lydia's Law responds to the problem, to make sure victims have timely and informed access to justice. That's why I'm supporting it.

The legacy of colonialism in this country makes Indigenous women and girls especially vulnerable. Indigenous women are three times more likely to be sexually assaulted than non-Indigenous women.

This issue is not about politics; it's about the history and the culture of racism and sexism that Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people face.

The Moose Hide Campaign is an Indigenous-led movement that addresses the crisis by calling on men, by calling on boys and all Canadians to end violence against women and children. The Moose Hide Campaign advocates for and protects women and girls—in that way, Lydia's Law is doing the same.

Speaker, Bill 112 is a step forward, and I urge all members of this House to support Lydia's Law. Meegwetch.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Further debate?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I rise, as MPP for London West, in strong support of this bill. I want to commend my colleague the member for Waterloo for her determined advocacy to ensure that sexual assault survivors get the justice and support they deserve from the justice system.

Last summer, my community, London, was at the centre of a trial that made international headlines, as sexual assault charges against five Hockey Canada players were heard in a London courtroom. Representatives from London's violence-against-women shelter Anova were at the court every day, along with many other allies from the community. This is how they described the experience:

"We witnessed rampant victim-blaming, and the repeated use and reliance on rape myths. We watched as EM bravely withstood nine days on the stand, reliving her trauma over and over again as her experience was picked

apart.... We watched as defence counsel painted EM as a liar, party girl, and 'porn star' based on behaviours that we know are very common responses to trauma."

In its verdict, the court decided that EM was "not credible or reliable," words that are shockingly familiar to far too many survivors—most recently, all of the 48 courageous survivors whose testimony was deemed unreliable in the Sloka case in Waterloo.

Speaker, it is clear that Ontario's court system is failing sexual assault survivors, whether their case is heard in court or withdrawn or stayed, like the 1,639 sexual assault cases that did not make it to trial in 2025.

Ontario needs Lydia's Law. We need to understand why so many survivors do not get their day in court. We need to debunk rape myths in our courts and ensure trauma-informed court processes. We need a system that ensures accountability and transparency; not one that retraumatizes or shames survivors and forces them to fight to be believed.

Vote yes to Lydia's Law.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Further debate?

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: I want to start by thanking Lydia, a brave survivor whose traumatic interaction with Ontario's justice system led her and her mother to become tireless advocates for justice reform and survivor supports.

Today, the chamber has survivors and advocates who are visiting here for the second reading of Lydia's Law, an important bill introduced by the most honourable member of Waterloo, a passionate and fierce advocate for justice.

Survivors in Ontario deserve so much more than the current court processes afford them. They deserve trauma-informed support during their legal processes; access to independent legal advice and a court system that is victim-centred, that actually works in a timely manner; and access to robust mental health resources to help them move forward in their lives.

In 2025 alone, 1,639 cases of sexual assault were withdrawn or stayed before trial. Let that sink in. Each of those cases is a daughter, a niece, a granddaughter, a sister, and families and friends who are supporting them. Their chance for justice was ripped away, not because the accused was declared innocent, but because this government's incompetence and mismanagement of the court system led to unfair and unconstitutional delays. The cases never got to trial.

The most frustrating part of this whole debate is that the solutions have been here for years. Two of the three schedules in Lydia's Law compel this government to implement the recommendations that were set out in the Auditor General's report in 2019, seven years ago.

It's time for this government to get past their own ignorance and work in the best interests of survivors who are trapped in this system.

It is important that all of us stay hopeful. But how can I be hopeful when this government won't even declare intimate partner violence an epidemic—or the fact that the Attorney General won't even show up for this debate that directly affects his ministry?

Pass this law now.

1850

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank everybody who came today to support the member from Waterloo and to make sure that Lydia's Law makes it into law in Ontario. We are all legislators. It is our responsibility to debate laws and to bring them forward.

We know the statistics speak for themselves: 1,339 victim-survivors of sexual offence whose cases were thrown out of the courts. We've known that has been a problem with our justice system for many years. We have an independent officer of the Legislative Assembly called the Auditor General who looked at what was happening in our court system when it came to victims of sexual violence and told us what needed to change.

The member from Waterloo took those recommendations from an independent officer of the Legislative Assembly and put it into law so that steps would be taken to fix the broken problem of the Ontario government. This is the problem of the Ontario government. We have an independent officer who tells us how to fix it. We have people telling us that this is a step in the right direction that would help the tens of thousands of women who are survivors of sexual violence.

We need to take those steps. Every one of you in this House has a responsibility to take a step in the right direction and pass Lydia's Law. Anything else is not acceptable.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Further debate? Further debate?

The member now has two minutes to reply.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's hard to decipher the government's resistance to addressing this issue. I mean, it shouldn't just be about who's bringing forward a bill or who owns an issue or who thinks they know best. We don't need more public consultation on domestic violence, on intimate-partner violence, on human trafficking. We already have the solutions. People who come here to this place do not need our thoughts and our prayers. They need action.

I'm a little bit shocked that the government will acknowledge that the system is broken, saying that the bill itself is not comprehensive enough to fix the system, but yet they won't even take this small step that the Auditor General recommended. The key piece of this is understanding the system, and that requires someone, the Attorney General, to do his job and to look at the data and to look at the systemic changes that are needed. The consultation piece: We did four months of consultation on IPV, and all we have is a thousand-page report gathering dust and not dealing with the key violence that we are seeing in Ontario and across Canada.

We're really at a terrible point right now in Ontario. I'm just urging you as members in the Ford government to go back to your House leader tomorrow; just say you would like a free vote. Let's get Lydia's Law to committee. Let's do the work together. This needs to happen, and it needs to happen today. The member from Hamilton Mountain says that justice does not end in the court system. I agree with you. But do you know where justice starts? In the courtroom. Pass this bill. Get this done today.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

Ms. Fife has moved second reading of Bill 112, An Act to enact Lydia's Law (Accountability and Transparency in the Handling of Sexual Assault Cases), 2026. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

A recorded vote being required, it will be deferred until the next instance of the deferred votes.

Second reading vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): All matters relating to private members' public business having been completed, this House stands adjourned until Thursday—tomorrow—May 28, at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1855.

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Clancy, Aislinn (GRN)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
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Fairclough, Lee (LIB)	Etobicoke—Lakeshore	
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Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Waterloo	
Firin, Mohamed (PC)	York South—Weston / York-Sud— Weston	
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Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Leader, Third Party / Chef du troisième parti
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Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gilmour, Alexa (NDP)	Parkdale—High Park	
Glover, Chris (NDP)	Spadina—Fort York	
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Grewal, Hardeep Singh (PC)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	
Gualtieri, Silvia (PC)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	
Hamid, Hon. / L'hon. Zee (PC)	Milton	Associate Solicitor General for Auto Theft and Bail Reform / Solliciteur général associé responsable de la Lutte contre le vol d'automobiles et de la Réforme relative aux mises en liberté sous caution
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Harris, Hon. / L'hon. Mike (PC)	Kitchener—Conestoga	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
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Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Trevor (PC)	Chatham-Kent—Leamington	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et de l'Agroentreprise
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Kanapathi, Logan (PC)	Markham—Thornhill	
Kernaghan, Terence (NDP)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	
Kerzner, Hon. / L'hon. Michael S. (PC)	York Centre / York-Centre	Solicitor General / Solliciteur général
Khanjin, Hon. / L'hon. Andrea (PC)	Barrie—Innisfil	Minister of Red Tape Reduction / Ministre de la Réduction des formalités administratives
Kusendova-Bashta, Hon. / L'hon. Natalia (PC)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga- Centre	Minister of Long-Term Care / Ministre des Soins de longue durée
Leardi, Anthony (PC)	Essex	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
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Lennox, Robin (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	
Lumsden, Hon. / L'hon. Neil (PC)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	Minister of Sport / Ministre du Sport
Mamakwa, Sol (NDP)	Kiwiwinoong	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
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Parsa, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (PC)	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires
Pasma, Chandra (NDP)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean	Deputy House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Piccini, Hon. / L'hon. David (PC)	Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud	Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development / Ministre du Travail, de l'Immigration, de la Formation et du Développement des compétences
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Rosenberg, Bill (PC)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
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Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Saunderson, Brian (PC)	Simcoe—Grey	
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Chris (IND)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Scott, Hon. / L'hon. Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	
Shamji, Adil (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
Skelly, Hon. / L'hon. Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	Speaker / Présidente de l'Assemblée législative
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Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
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Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
Tangri, Hon. / L'hon. Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	Associate Minister of Small Business / Ministre associée des Petites Entreprises
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Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Rural Affairs / Ministre des Affaires rurales

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
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Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	Deputy Speaker / Vice-Présidente Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
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Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Vaugeois, Lise (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord	
Vickers, Paul (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	
Watt, Tyler (LIB)	Nepean	
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
Williams, Hon. / L'hon. Charmaine A. (PC)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity / Ministre associée des Perspectives sociales et économiques pour les femmes
Wong-Tam, Kristyn (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Vacant	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough- Sud-Ouest	