

MEMBER'S RESOLUTION

Council Report

DATE: Tuesday, April 26, 2022

TITLE: COUNCIL SUPPORT FOR BILL C-233 “KEIRA’S LAW”

FROM:

Councillor Sandra Yeung Racco

Whereas, violence against women is a Canadian public health crisis that demands urgent action; and

Whereas, one in four women experience domestic violence in their lifetime, and one female is killed every other day, on average, somewhere in Canada; and

Whereas, the most dangerous time for a victim of abuse is when she separates from her partner and direct victimization of the child by the abuser dramatically increases the child's risk of harm post-divorce (Justice Canada website); and

Whereas, the COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated the domestic violence crisis, with women's shelters and crisis centres reporting a marked increase in requests for services, including increased significant concerns for children; and

Whereas, according to York Regional Police Statistical Reports, domestic violence incidents increased 22% during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic; and

Whereas, according to Article 19 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, children must be protected from “all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has care of the child;” and

Whereas, according to the Canadian Domestic Homicide Prevention Initiative, recent separation and domestic violence are the two biggest risk factors for domestic violence related child homicides; and

Whereas, each year in Canada, about 30 children are killed by a parent, with custody disputes adding an additional risk factor; and

Whereas, approximately one third of family court cases have substantiated evidence of valid concerns about domestic violence, and these cases must be recognized and treated differently by judges; and

Whereas, according to the National Judicial Institute, there is no mandatory education for judges on domestic violence; and

Whereas, Keira's Law is named after four-year-old Keira Kagan (a Vaughan resident), who was killed while in the custody of her father in 2020; and

Whereas, Keira's Law is coming forward through Private Member's Bill C-233 (An Act to Amend the Criminal Code and Judge's Act) in order to protect victims of violence and children by amending the Judges Act to establish seminars for judges on intimate partner violence and coercive control; and

Whereas, there is currently an open online petition in support of Keira's Law, Bill C-233, available through the House of Commons, which has garnered over 3200 signatures to date; and

Whereas, in 2021 City of Vaughan Council supported the illumination of City Hall in purple to commemorate the one-year anniversary of Keira Kagan's death, where purple represents the Elimination of Violence Against Women and Girls.

It is therefore recommended:

1. That City of Vaughan Council publicly support Keira's Law and calls upon the House of Commons to support Member of Parliament Anju Dhillon's Private Member's Bill C-233 (An Act to Amend the Criminal Code and Judge's Act); and
2. That a copy of this resolution be sent to:
 - i. Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada; and
 - ii. Honourable Karina Gould, MP, Minister of Families, Children and Social Development; and
 - iii. MP Anju Dhillon, Dorval, Lachine LaSalle; and
 - iv. MP Pam Damoff, Oakville North, Burlington; and
 - v. MP Francesco Sorbara, Vaughan-Woodbridge; and
 - vi. MP Anna Roberts, King-Vaughan; and

- vii. MP Melissa Lantsman, Thornhill; and
- viii. Honourable Stephen Lecce, MPP King Vaughan, Minister of Education; and
- ix. Honourable Michael Tibollo, MPP Vaughan Woodbridge, Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions; and
- x. MPP Gila Martow, Thornhill
- xi. Region of York Council; and
- xii. York Regional Police (YRP), Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP)

Attachments

- 1. None