

Acknowledge Keira's mother Jennifer Kagan and her Stepfather Phil Viater.

I have supported women through the family courts for more than two decades.

I have watched mothers as they have been shamed and blamed by judges while testifying about the violence they endured by their partners and the fear they have for their children's safety.

I have witnessed a judge telling a woman to never call the police again after she reported her partner for assaulting her but was too afraid to testify.

I have watched many judges ask why, if the abuse was so bad, did she stay.

I have never heard a judge ask an abuser why he abused his partner.

I have watched fathers use the courts to continue to harass and control women until they are bankrupt. Then, I have watched the courts give sole custody of the children to fathers because their mothers have lost their homes and have no means to care for their children.

Mr. Viater recommended in his testimony last week that Bill C-233 be amended to include mandatory training. This recommendation is consistent with Bill C-337, the Act to Amend Judges Act and the Criminal Code (sexual Assault).

I too recommend Bill C-233 be amended to include similar wording about mandatory training as is seen in the Judges Act.

On March 8, 1996, Randy Iles shot Arlene May through the chest and killed her. He then killed himself.

In 1998, the Ontario Coroner's office initiated an inquest into the deaths of Arlene May and Randy Iles.

The jury made 213 recommendations for consideration. The jury's opening important.

Domestic violence cases are different than other criminal cases. In most situations the accused and the victim would normally never meet again. With domestic violence, the accused often must have contact with the victim due to property, support, and child issues.

Judges need to understand the differences between DV cases and other criminal cases.

The domestic violence recommendations included in the May/Iles report include additional training for Judges and Justices of the Peace on:

- The dynamics of domestic violence against women

- The impact on child witnesses of violence
- The differential impacts of issues of culture, race, language, and disability
- The power and control exercised in intimate relationships
- And, the indicators of lethality

It's been 24 years since training for judges was recommended. I don't know how many women and children have been injured or killed during those 24 years but for context, in the first four months of 2022, 64 women and girls have been murdered in Canada. That's one woman or girl every other day.

We have heard that Judges already receive training. However, given the lack of understanding of domestic violence by some judges when presiding over cases in the family and criminal courts, I would argue that any voluntary training Judges are currently offered are either poorly attended or the material is woefully inadequate.

On the Government of Canada Website outlining Canada's system of justice, there is a response to a question asked about what training judges receive.

In general, most judges have spent years in courtrooms or in the practice of law and have extensive knowledge of court processes and the role of the judge.

Herein lies the problem. While spending years in a courtroom or in the practice of law may give judges knowledge of the court processes, it doesn't give them knowledge about the complex issue of domestic violence with potentially lethal outcomes for women and children.

It is abundantly clear that the training currently provided is not working. It's time to mandate training and work with experts to rewrite the materials.

Like all domestic violence homicides, little Keira's murder was preventable.

Please pass Keira's law with the recommended amendment. It's a first step in the right direction.