

November 30, 2023

Dear Members of Committee,

My name is Katie Dean, and I am the co-founder of the Viewer Discretion Legislation Coalition based out of London Ontario. We are a group of like-minded individuals trying to bring change to how graphic anti-abortion images can be displayed and distributed. We have become a movement that is expanding to different cities and provinces across the Country.

In October of 2020, we formed in response to the very graphic and disturbing images of supposed dead fetuses being delivered to private homes and shown on busy street corners. From there, we started working with all levels of political representatives, from municipal to provincial and federal. People were extremely upset by these images, and we heard countless stories of how it was affecting the children that saw them. These images are not appropriate to be put in private mailboxes or to be displayed on public street corners. They cause demonstrable harm to the thousands of people that are forced to see them, without consent.

For me, I have been told by a professional that I have PTSD from my own experience with an abortion. I ended my pregnancy at 19 weeks in 2004 for medical reasons. It was the single most traumatic experience of my life and the single most difficult thing I have ever done. This was a planned pregnancy, a wanted baby. At 18 weeks she was diagnosed with a serious medical condition that was impeding the way she was developing. Terms such as lemon shaped skull and banana shaped cerebellum were being thrown my way. Her prognosis was not viable with life. This was never a position I thought I would ever be in – I mean, you get pregnant, you have a baby – right? Not right, not even close to being right.

Let me be clear - I do NOT regret my decision BUT it does not mean it was not hard. It was my RIGHT and my CHOICE.

My team have stood on street corners of London, in front of these horrific graphic images as a means to cover them so children in school buses driving by don't have to see them, so the women who have gone through ANY type of pregnancy loss don't have to be thrust back into that trauma of the devastation of their loss. This is a huge issue, and this is abuse. Plain and simple.

By continuing to allow these images to be displayed in London as they have been, you are saying it is okay to shame people and it is okay to bully. Nobody should be reminded of the most difficult decision they have ever had to make, nobody should be reminded of the baby

they lost no matter what way they lost them, nobody should be told they don't have a right to make their own choice, and nobody should be hurting kids with these images.

London passed a Graphic Flyer bylaw in May of 2022. That Council ended up following the wording in our Private Members' Bill that was introduced into Queens Park. This is now coded Bill 80 and waits for second reading.

Since then, Woodstock, Ingersoll, St Catherine's and Calgary have followed suit and implemented the same bylaw. London took the lead with the graphic flyer bylaw and could take the lead with a more detailed sign bylaw.

I can advise that Toronto, Calgary, Hamilton, Oakville and more are watching to see what London does with this issue. I am in regular contact with city councilors in these cities and more.

I would strongly encourage you to have Staff look at your street sign bylaw. Let London be the first again, to help bring change to how these images can be shared. Viewer consent matters. If someone wants to investigate abortion, we live in a world where that information is available to them at the press of a button. It is not up to select groups of people to shove their opinions using traumatizing images to coerce residents to matters surrounding their own healthcare.

I want to thank you very much for taking the time to look at this very important issue. Please feel free to reach out to me at any time.

Best Regards,

Katie Dean



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