

December 18, 2023

Councillors,

My name is Natalie Wakim. I am one of the founding members of the Viewer Discretion Legislation Coalition (VDLC). Our group was founded in October of 2020 after a prolific anti-choice group began their "outreach" in the city of London. This group has since left London, but they left behind extremely graphic placards and flyers for local anti-choice groups to use. I have spent hours on the streets of London, petitioning, demonstrating, and covering these gruesome images.

I have seen firsthand the effect that these displays have on the community. I have seen women pull over, overwhelmed with emotion and thrown into panic attacks at busy intersections. I have seen men so filled with anger that violence has nearly broken out at demonstration sites. I have seen individuals approach stopped vehicles at Commissioners and Wellington, shoving the images up to the window, denying drivers the choice to look away. I have seen individuals raise their graphic signs higher, to ensure they were visible to a bus full of children. The harm caused to the community by these graphic displays is undeniable. While these groups are free to demonstrate and stand by their beliefs, this is not the way to pursue their cause.

I anticipate that Councillors will be hearing a lot about the Freedom of Expression and the intention behind these placards. Here, it is important to consider intent versus impact. The intention of these groups doesn't matter when the impact of that intent is demonstrable harm to the community. It was established in passing the Graphic Flyer Bylaw that their ends do not justify these means. The *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedom* stipulates that Freedom of Expression is not absolute, but that it is subject to reasonable limits as prescribed by law. When harm is being caused, reasonable limitation needs to be imposed by our local governing body.

These roadside displays pose a traffic hazard, and only seek to shock and shame. I implore this council to listen to the numerous calls from the London community.

I consent to having this letter placed on the December 19, 2023 CPSC meeting agenda under Communications and Petitions - Section 6.3, and any other public agenda in relation to this matter.

Cordially,

Natalie Wakim