

Community and Protective Services Committee

By email: cpssc@london.ca

City Hall – 3rd Floor

300 Dufferin Avenue

London, ON N6B 1Z2

Dear London City Councillors and London Community and Protective Services Committee,

I am writing to you on behalf of 4LifeLondon Association (formerly known as London Area Right to Life Association), London's foremost pro-life organization, which has been working to bring awareness to the dignity of life from conception to natural death for over fifty years. I am writing to express our concerns about the proposed amendment to the Streets By-law to restrict the public display of signs purporting to show "a fetus or any part of a fetus".

I am deeply concerned that many of London's city councillors have expressed their desire to overstep their legislative powers to silence peaceful protests on the contentious moral topic of abortion. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms states that we all have the right to freedom of thought, belief, opinion, and expression through all media of communication (Section 2(b)). As well, we have the right to freedom of peaceful assembly (Section 2(c)). It would be absurd to claim that holding a protest sign near a sidewalk is an act that is somehow not defended by the Charter.

If London's City Council were to be successful at redefining a protest sign as a "notice, sticker, placard or advertisement" and claiming that a peaceful sidewalk protest is "an obstruction of [the] street", a "public nuisance", and an "activity which interferes with public travel or use of a street" then peaceful protest everywhere in Canada will be at risk of government censorship. The use of unsettling images on protest signs to appeal to the public on controversial topics has been a part of many social justice movements: animal rights protests, anti-war protests, and protests against government corruption are just a few of these.

The proposed by-law amendment listed in the report under "Schedule A" has not been publicly available long enough for our group to get it analyzed by a constitutional lawyer. Our group is, however, willing to take whatever legal steps are necessary to ensure that peaceful pro-life activities can continue in our city, unrestrained by government censorship.

On a final note, as someone who has interacted with most of the individuals and groups who use "graphic imagery" to spread the pro-life message in London, the activists whom I've encountered have been respectful people motivated by their love and respect for pre-born children and their mothers, as well as a desire to have sincere conversations, provide accurate information, and give support to women who are facing challenging pregnancies.

Sincerely,

James Schadenberg

Executive Director

4LifeLondon Association