

# London Against Abortion

Community and Protective Services Committee  
City of London  
300 Dufferin Avenue London, Ontario

Dear Community and Protective Services Committee,

I am writing as a concerned citizen and as a representative of London Against Abortion (LAA), a local grassroots pro-life group. My understanding is that groups such as Pro-Choice London are advocating for several bylaw changes that would seriously inhibit the freedom of expression of Londoners. I am writing to communicate my concerns, and the concerns of many others, about the potential curtailing of freedom of expression in our city. I wish to share with you LAA's motivations for sharing the pro-life message publicly, and in particular, why we share abortion victim photography as part of that message.

I and my fellow volunteers at LAA have been publicly sharing the pro-life message in London for 4 years. We do this by peacefully and civilly sharing information about the science of when human life begins, about why we believe all human beings deserve human rights, and about abortion alternatives and support available in the community. We do this because we care about women and families facing difficult pregnancies, and because we care about pre-born children whose lives are at risk from abortion.

**"I had one years ago, and I regret it to this day...There was no one doing this when I had mine. Thank you for being here."**

Those were one woman's words to me when I was engaging in pro-life street outreach and had asked her what her views were on abortion. As a young woman, I find it deplorable that there are other women facing unplanned pregnancy decisions without full information about the reality and potential impact of abortion. While we recognize that the conversation is challenging for those who have experienced the trauma of abortion, it is important that the community can hear about abortion alternatives, and hope and healing from abortion. Many people are thankful to hear about the pro-life perspective. In fact, our petition (*see separate attachment*) calling for the protection of pro-life expression in London has **more than 7700 signatures** from 89 different countries, with 5,571 signatures from Canada, and 1,963 signatures from the province of Ontario. Our intentions are simply to share the pro-life message with our community, because of our concern about abortion and its impact on society. Our goal is not to condemn people for the choices they have made in the past. Rather, we want to offer people information to help them make life-affirming choices in the future.

We emulate countless other social justice movements, present and past, by sharing victim photography as part of our message. Victim photography puts a human face to an otherwise

abstract concept; it makes concrete the real impact of a social issue. Where would conversations about the refugee crisis be without the heartbreaking photos of Alan Kurdi, the little boy who washed up on a Turkish beach in 2015? Where would current conversations about racism and the role of policing be without the graphic videos shared of the killing of George Floyd or Ahmaud Arbery? And those are merely two examples of movements that have publicly shared disturbing images and videos. We can also look at anti-war advocacy, at protests against certain immigration laws, at anti-smoking campaigns, and more. These are all challenging conversations, and people of goodwill may disagree on the solutions to these issues. Yet no one criticizes the sharing of victim photography as an essential aspect of these challenging, but necessary, conversations. Discussions around the abortion issue are similarly challenging, and people of genuine goodwill may hold strong disagreements about the topic. We are not asking the City of London to agree with or endorse LAA's pro-life view; we are merely asking that the freedom of other groups to engage in challenging conversations will also be upheld in our case.

On that note, I wish to highlight the importance of upholding freedom of expression rights as explained in the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. The *Charter* right to freedom of expression is a broad right that protects any non-violent activity that attempts to convey meaning, whether or not the majority finds it offensive, disturbing, distasteful, or controversial. This includes sharing ultrasound photography and victim photography with the public. In *R. v. Watson*, the BC Court of Appeal said that communicating beliefs about the meaning and value of human life lies at the "very heart of freedom of expression" and that "those beliefs find expression in the debate on abortion." The City of London has an obligation to comply with the *Charter* and not unduly infringe on the right to freedom of expression, even on contentious issues such as abortion.

Thank you for taking the time to read my concerns. If a motion is proposed seeking to restrict freedom of expression in the City of London, I hope that you will not vote in favour of such measures.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Maria McCann". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent 'M' and 'C'.

Maria McCann  
Representative of London Against Abortion  
<https://londonagainstabortion.wordpress.com/>