

Pro-choice London

106 Duchess Ave
London, Ontario
N6C 1N6

October 16, 2020

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

Dear Mayor Ed Holder and City Councillors of London,

I am the Director of Pro-choice London, a grassroots organization based in London, Ontario. We work to support abortion access and reproductive health in our community.

As you are probably aware, residents in many parts of London have been exposed to graphic images of aborted fetuses over the last few days. Anti-abortion protesters are holding large signs on public sidewalks and delivering graphic flyers to homes and apartments. These signs have been deeply upsetting to many London residents.

We have been receiving messages from individuals in our community who have been traumatized by these images. Some reports have come from women who have experienced a recent miscarriage, others have come from irate parents whose children have found these flyers in their mailbox or seen the large signs at busy intersections across town. Here's an example of the types of messages that we're receiving. This one came in this morning, "Hello, I wanted to see if there is anything you are able to do to help get these horrible signs off the streets about abortion. My daughter who is 4 seen them and asked me what it was, before u could respond she said, 'is that a baby, IS THAT A DEAD BABY?' My child should not be seeing this." It has been heartbreaking enough to be on the receiving end of these messages. I can't imagine the emotions that these women and children are struggling with.

Pro-choice London calls on the City of London to implement the following:

1. An amendment to an existing bylaw or a new bylaw that would ban the delivery of flyers to homes that have a "no flyer" sign. (Calgary, Winnipeg and Ottawa already have these bylaws)
2. An amendment to an existing bylaw that would state that the content of any signs, including temporary signs, must adhere to the Canadian Code of Advertising Standards. The city of Toronto is already working towards banning these images, which violate Section 14(c) and (d) of the Code. London could be a leader in this movement! We have seen the letters that Joyce Arthur (Executive Director of Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada), has sent to Council and we stand behind everything she has to say.
3. To investigate whether the distribution and display of these images violate Criminal Code (R.S.C., 1985, c. C-46), PART VIII, 319 (1) (a) (b) and (2) (a) (b). This Code refers to Hate Propaganda, Public incitement of hatred and Wilful promotion of hatred. The identifiable group being targeted with hatred being women. (<https://bit.ly/2H8bG39>)

Joining Pro-choice London in its request to address the signage by-laws are the names of 4,571 supporters who signed our online petition. Attached, please find a printed copy of that petition. Also attached, please find a printed copy of supporters' comments as to why they signed our petition.

We hope that you will see fit to address our concerns and implement these changes. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely yours,



Deanna Ronson

Director

Pro-choice London