

Pilon, Janet

Subject: Hamilton Bylaw-John-Paul Danko

From: Semula Horlings

Sent: Tuesday, July 30, 2024 8:54 AM

To: Office of the Mayor <Officeofthe.Mayor@hamilton.ca>

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Subject: Hamilton Bylaw-John-Paul Danko

Dear Hamilton City Council,

I am writing to you out of concern because I have become aware of a proposal in the City of Hamilton to enact restrictions on sharing a pro-life message in public.

Thank you for the work you do on the Hamilton City Council. I appreciate that you have an important role in safeguarding our freedoms as Canadians. I am asking you to continue to do so even on a contentious issue like abortion. In November 2023, the City of Hamilton passed a motion calling for restrictions on any leaflets or signage with fetal imagery, targeting the pro-life message in particular. A legal challenge has been launched against just such a by-law in the City of St. Catharines because it violates the *Charter*.

I am sure that you are well aware of your responsibility under the *Charter* to not unjustifiably infringe freedom of expression. That *Charter* guarantee is designed to promote conversations, even when they're challenging. Canadian courts have made it abundantly clear that the *Charter* right to freedom of expression extends to all non-violent expressive activity that conveys meaning, even if it may be offensive or disturbing to some people, and even if the message is unpopular.

Your role as an elected representative is an important one to our community. I ask that you use the responsibility wisely, remembering that your actions are scrutinized under the *Charter*, which includes protection for freedom of expression. The City of Hamilton is not well-served by expensive litigation.

The freedom to discuss a topic like abortion is especially important for women in our community facing an unplanned pregnancy. As women, we deserve to be presented with the truth and not treated as if we are incapable of handling heavy subjects.

In a democracy, it's important to have difficult conversations. We have challenging but important conversations on issues like climate change, racism, war and peace. Abortion is another contentious issue that is nonetheless important to be able to discuss.

We have many challenging conversations as a society on a wide variety of issues, such as climate change, racism, and war. Just because the conversation can be hard, does not mean that it isn't important.

Why is the City of Hamilton targeting one particular group and one particular message for special restrictions? In a democracy, the government should not be stifling speech from one side of a debate on a contentious issue.

The pro-life movement is motivated by love of children and of women facing challenging pregnancies. The pro-life message helps members of the community to be fully informed about abortion, and educates the public about support available for people facing difficult pregnancies, or resources for healing from the trauma of abortion.

The Hamilton community deserves to be fully informed on the issue of abortion and about abortion alternatives. 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 about hope and healing from the trauma of abortion.

Many people are thankful to hear about the pro-life perspective and the local community support available in Hamilton, and it can be critical information for people who are trying to make a fully informed choice about a difficult pregnancy.

Many people are helped by hearing the pro-life message. While some people are offended by any expressed opposition to abortion, many people want to be fully informed and appreciate that photos of pre-born children are an important part of a challenging conversation.

Thank you for taking the time to read my thoughts on this topic. Please vote against any effort to place restrictions on pro-life speech.

It is important that government not single out one particular movement and one particular message for special restrictions. Can I count on you to vote against by-laws that place restrictions on freedom of expression?

I wanted you to know that you have residents who care deeply about our ability as a community to have challenging conversations. Thank you for reading my concerns. Will you vote against any by-laws that target the pro-life movement and place restrictions on speech?

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Sincerely,

Semula Horlings