

Letter to the Editor

April 4, 2008

Bill C-484 will not protect women or fetuses

It's understandable families who have lost pregnant daughters and sisters to homicide want to see justice served. But Bill C-484 will do nothing to protect women from violence. It will, however, threaten women's right to terminate unwanted pregnancies.

One of the leading causes of death for pregnant women is murder, most often through intimate violence. It would be wonderful if we could deter these crimes by upping the punishment. Bill C-484 would mean those who harm or murder pregnant women could be charged with two assaults or homicides—one for the woman and one for the fetus. But the numbers coming from the United States don't support that theory. In States that have enacted similar legislation, homicides rates against pregnant women have not dropped. Violence against women, both pregnant and not pregnant, continues unabated.

Each year, 60 Canadian women are murdered through intimate violence and thousands more are beaten and assaulted. This legislation does nothing to protect women who live with violence everyday. If we care about protecting our sisters, daughters and partners, we need to get at the roots of violence against women.

If Bill C-484 becomes law, fetuses will be given personhood status. Though families grieving the loss of a pregnant family member understandably feel they have lost two people, this legislation will not address that loss. Instead, it will open the door for those who want to recriminalize abortion.

Make no mistake, the politicians behind Bill C-484 want to recriminalize abortion. It was brought to the House by Conservative MP Ken Epp. Last December, after C-484 made it through second reading, he exclaimed he had "been waiting for this moment for over 14 years." Does Mr. Epp have a history of standing up for women who have suffered intimate violence? No. Is he against abortion? Yes. I leave it to the reader to determine why he is so happy the bill made it through second reading.

For Canadians who believe women have the right to abortion, this bill should set off alarm bells. Pressure your MP to stop Bill C-484 in its tracks.

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