



Jennifer Wyness, Ward 2 Councillor

## **Regulating the Distribution of Graphic Images in Calgary Communities**

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In our Ward 2 communities, I have met many families who shared similar stories of their children being exposed to highly graphic images on the covers of anti-abortion pamphlets left on their doorsteps. Many informed me that their children picked these up and the images traumatized them, while others talked about revisiting difficult times in their lives when they struggled through pregnancy loss.

It was clear that these pamphlets showing up on doorsteps caused pain and trauma for many families, without consideration from the distributors to the audience receiving them. The community at large is frustrated with the disrespect to their homes and families with the distribution of these graphic images.

A midwife, who chose to remain anonymous, recently wrote a letter to my office. A statement that deeply resonated with me was, "What people don't need on their doorsteps are visual reminders of the deeply painful decisions they've had to make – decisions which are personal and based on their life's experience that is, frankly, no one else's business."

I myself also received a pamphlet to my home, and luckily, I intercepted it before my young children did. My four-year-old is very attentive and receptive, but he isn't ready for R-rated images or discussions. These anti-abortion pamphlets show zoomed-in images of dismembered fetuses, depicting gore and desecration of a human body. These images are intended to evoke shock and emotion to prove a point, but to who? It is unacceptable that these pamphlets are left on doorsteps for anyone in the household to intercept.

To be clear, I am not opposed to the freedom of speech and expression, nor am I opposed to their constitutional right to get their messaging across. I take issue with the graphic images that these organizations are including front and centre on their pamphlets, and their choice to distribute them on private property without consideration to potential audiences.

On September 29th, I brought forward a Notice of Motion to the Executive Committee: Regulating the Distribution of Graphic Images in Calgary Communities. I'd like to thank my Committee colleagues who passed this unanimously to be forwarded to the November 1st Combined Meeting of Council. Should Council approve the Notice of Motion, the bylaw would likely come back through the

Community Development Committee (where members of the public have the opportunity to speak to the item).

**My Motion would ask Council to consider a bylaw:**

- a. Requiring that flyers containing one or more images showing, or claiming to show, a fetus or any part of a fetus, must conceal these images from view through means such as, but not limited to: securing through adhesives, and envelopes;
- b. Requiring that flyers containing one or more images showing, or claiming to show, a fetus or any part of a fetus, include a viewer discretion warning; and
- c. Including any other related measure that Administration deems advisable.

To summarize, I respect any individual or organization's constitutional rights and freedom of speech and expression. However, distributing images of child gore to the doorsteps of unsuspecting citizens of Calgary is unacceptable. If organizations choose to depict images of dismembered fetuses in their media, this bylaw proposal would require the pamphlets to be placed in an envelope and sealed, with a viewer discretion warning. To put it into perspective, if these same images were shared on social media or televised news, these images would be required to be accompanied with a discretionary warning and/or blurred to protect the viewers. Another example would be the warning images on cigarettes, which are kept behind the cashier in a locked cabinet and not visibly seen by shoppers. This proposed policy change would ensure these images are delivered in envelopes to private properties so that the residents would have the choice on whether they would like to be exposed to those images or not. This is not a pro-life vs. pro-choice debate. No one has the right to force another individual to look at images of a dismembered human body, and that is the intent behind my motion.

*\*Please find the notice of motion proposed to Combined Meeting of Council on Nov 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022, below.*



Jennifer Wyness



**Report Number:** EC2022-1102

**Meeting:** Executive Committee

**Meeting Date:** 2022 September 29

## NOTICE OF MOTION

### **RE: Regulating the Distribution of Graphic Images in Calgary Communities**

**Sponsoring Councillor(s):** Councillor Wyness, Councillor Penner, Councillor Spencer, Mayor Gondek, Councillor Walcott, Councillor Pootmans, Councillor Demong, Councillor Dhaliwal, Councillor Sharp

WHEREAS pursuant to the *Municipal Government Act*, Council may pass bylaws respecting the safety, health and welfare of people and the protection of people and property; and may also pass bylaws respecting people, activities and things in, on or near a public place or place that is open to the public.

AND WHEREAS flyers containing graphic, alleged images of aborted fetuses have been distributed in many Calgary communities.

AND WHEREAS when flyers with graphic imagery are left at residences, occupants are unable to meaningfully consent to viewing these graphic images prior to doing so.

AND WHEREAS members of Council have received correspondence from constituents reporting the harmful and traumatizing impacts of viewing flyers with alleged images of aborted fetuses, particularly to those with experience of pregnancy loss.

AND WHEREAS children viewing graphic imagery such as the above may pre-empt certain sensitive conversations had within families.

AND WHEREAS at its [November 28, 2016](#) Regular Meeting Council approved Bylaw 51M2016 amending Community Standards Bylaw 5M2004 to, among other things, prevent both commercial and non-commercial flyers from being deposited at “Premises where a sign or notice has been posted and which is clearly visible at the entrance of a dwelling unit indicating that such Flyers are not wanted” (Bylaw 5M2004, Section 44(3)).

AND WHEREAS the above changes introduced through Bylaw 51M2016 were recommended acknowledging “the rights of parents to control their children’s access to potentially disturbing or offensive materials” ([CPS2016-0852](#) Cover Report, p. 4).

AND WHEREAS the Community Standards Bylaw currently requires residents to, in effect, choose between receiving no flyers or receiving all flyers, including those containing alleged images of aborted fetuses.

AND WHEREAS other municipal governments in Canada such as the [City of London](#) and the [City of Toronto](#) have begun adopting, or exploring the adoption of, bylaws regulating the distribution of graphic imagery such as those depicting alleged aborted fetuses.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that Council direct Administration to:

1. No later than Q2 2023, bring forward for Council’s consideration a bylaw:

## NOTICE OF MOTION

- a. Requiring that flyers containing one or more images showing, or claiming to show, a fetus or any part of a fetus, must conceal these images from view through means such as, but not limited to: securing through adhesives and envelopes;
- b. Requiring that flyers containing one or more images showing, or claiming to show, a fetus or any part of a fetus, include a viewer discretion warning; and
- c. Including any other related measure that Administration deems advisable.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Executive Committee forward this Notice of Motion to the November 1, 2022 Combined Meeting of Council.