

*Abortion*

For most women the decision to have an abortion is one of the most difficult they will ever make. It has implications for women and families, for people with deeply held religious views. It requires careful thought and analysis.

Counselling is extremely important and all women deserve to be informed about the effects of an abortion and other means available to carry on the pregnancy. However, once she and her God—her belief, her morals—decide to have the operation, it is her decision.

I cannot support the pro-life faction. I truly respect their views and admire them. However, the Government cannot propose legislation which would be struck down again by the Supreme Court of Canada. The Charter of Rights and Freedoms respects the rights of women. Women have the right to control their bodies.

In a dramatic and forward looking step the Supreme Court ruled last January that women have rights which must be satisfied and protected. The Supreme Court's decision on abortion is no more and no less than confirmation of a woman's right to choose without the interference of strangers. It is not a celebration of abortion, it is not an instruction to abort.

An unwanted pregnancy is a heartache that no Supreme Court decision can heal. The best way to prevent abortion is to make sure that there are no unwanted pregnancies and that women are never left in the position of having to make that last resort choice. We do not solve a problem by making it illegal.

Banning abortions might be a satisfying moral answer, but it would be unworkable. It would force women who seek abortions to travel to the United States, that is, those who could afford to, or worse, risk their health in back alley clinics. It would compound the tragedy and put women's safety at risk.

Family life education is truly a necessity in the school curriculum right across Canada. Young people are not being taught about life, love, sex, and the reproduction of the human body. Unfortunately, many children today know nothing, or that which they do know is incorrect.

I recognize that the school system is under provincial jurisdiction, but surely in 1988 a national program with both federal and provincial funding could be initiated. All the facts should be taught; what a female is, a male, intercourse, contraception, and responsibility—the responsibility of pregnancy, of parenting, and of love. Let us teach life.

The motion before us states:

Such legislation should prohibit the performance of an abortion, subject to the following exceptions:

When, during the earlier stages of pregnancy: a qualified medical practitioner is of the opinion that the continuation of the pregnancy of a woman would, or would be likely to, threaten her physical or mental well-being; when the woman in consultation with a qualified medical practitioner decides to terminate her pregnancy; and when the termination is performed by a qualified medical practitioner—

I would like to move an amendment to Motion No. 36, which will be seconded by the Hon. Member for Sarnia-Lambton (Mr. James), as follows, that the motion be amended by deleting the words "during the earlier stages of pregnancy" and replacing them with the following: "up to and including the eighteenth week of pregnancy", so that the amended motion will now read: "When, up to and including the eighteenth week of pregnancy: a qualified medical practitioner . . . and when the termination is performed by a qualified medical practitioner; and". I tabled this amendment prior to the debate this evening. The reason for my amendment is that "earlier stages" means 12 weeks. Amniocentesis cannot be performed until the fourteenth or fifteenth week of pregnancy in order to find out if there is a genetic disorder, deformity, or serious malformation of the fetus. It takes approximately 10 days to two weeks to receive the results of this test. For those who live in a remote area, it probably takes three weeks, for a total of 18 weeks. Also, some women do not have regular periods. Indeed, the very young who would not realize or recognize early pregnancy symptoms would need up to the 18 weeks.

● (0120)

Female bodies are different from one another. We are not all the same. We have different times of ovulation, intermittent cycles with some at 24 days, some at 28 days, and some at 30 days. We are not a machine that operates according to a manual; we are human.

In conclusion, I want to emphasize that I am pro-choice, with limitations. I do not support abortion on demand. It is up to a woman and her God and her doctor to make the decision, with counselling. I strongly believe that abortion should be permitted up to and including the eighteenth week of pregnancy, by a licenced physician in a licenced facility.

I spent this afternoon, this evening, and now the wee hours of the morning listening to the views of my colleagues. I recognize and value all the information I have received and heard. On Thursday there will be a free vote, a non-partisan democratic vote. I shall be here to vote my belief.

**Mr. Pat Binns (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Fisheries and Oceans):** Mr. Speaker, not only are hundreds or thousands of abortions unacceptable, even one abortion of an unborn child is unacceptable. If we can begin by saving one life at a time we will have made progress in our society.

Despite my belief, I am concerned about why a woman believes she must reach a decision to abort her unborn child. Perhaps it is that society today is not giving the kind of support necessary for a woman who is carrying a child in order to go on with that pregnancy. There are a number of pressures that are brought to bear. Whether it is from the boyfriend, family, colleagues at work, but it must be addressed. We need more understanding and support for the woman who is carrying that child so that she will reach a different conclusion.