

A 'decades-old ideological straitjacket'

Things change. Sometimes for the better. Who among you hasn't been shown one of those dark, mysterious ultrasound images of a baby growing in the stomach of a daughter, granddaughter, spouse, friend, or whomever?

Who among you hasn't smiled at the image along with the expectant mother and/or father and marveled how much the whole baby business has changed from a couple of decades ago when the science to study the unborn didn't exist and when hospitals wouldn't even let the father or anybody else into the delivery room with mom? And now the tougher question: who among you hasn't seen an ultrasound image of a fetus, its arms, legs and head clearly visible, its tiny body thrashing around, and still believes that a fetus is, as the radical, pro-abortion feminists like to say, "a clump of flesh?"

Or, as Joyce Arthur of the Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada (ARCC) so lovingly put it in April 2006, "fetuses are not that important..."

And there, of course, is the rub.

Edmonton Tory MP Ken Epp begs to differ. He is the author of Bill C-484, a private member's bill which passed second reading in the Commons last week and which, when it becomes law, will make it a separate crime to kill a fetus while committing an offence against the mother.

Epp was outraged after Jared Baker shot 19-year-old Olivia Talbot and her unborn son in November, 2005 - she was six months pregnant at the time - and after Baker was subsequently convicted of just one count of murder.

That's one, as in Olivia Talbot. Which means that, as far as the law saw it, her unborn son was a big fat zero.

Consider the sense of that. At six months, her unborn son would have been between 11 and 14 inches long and weighed a pound and one-half or so; his strong heartbeat could have been heard through a stethoscope, his finger and toe nails were fully formed, he was sucking his thumb, responding to noise, moving all around, and had hair and eyebrows. In addition, his eyes would have been opened and the placenta and umbilical cord would have been fully developed.

Yet, as the law sees it, he didn't exist. He was, as Arthur also said, "none of our business."

Abortion activists consistently claim to speak for women, but the facts are they are completely out of touch with women, stuck as they are in their decades-old ideological straitjacket where any recognition of fetal rights are seen as an abject surrender to those horrible people who believe that killing the unborn - either through crime or through abortion itself - isn't something society should encourage.

Indeed, a recent Environics survey on the question of legislation such as Epp's bill found that 75 per cent of the Canadian women who were asked felt it was a good idea.

And public opinion polls have for decades consistently shown that a healthy majority of Canadians - men and women alike - believe that our current lawless approach to abortion (we're the only industrialized country in the world with absolutely no restrictions on abortion) should be changed. There is no universal agreement on exactly what changes should be made, but apart from the radical few, most people have serious qualms about the status quo.

In a column this week in the National Post on Epp's bill, Suzanne Fortin, herself pregnant, an official with the Family Coalition Party of Ontario, wrote that our current legal system which treats the woman and the fetus as one and the same is "a legal fiction..."

"If I were the subject of an attack in which my unborn child was hurt or killed, I would be devastated and would want the perpetrator brought to justice for both the injury to me and to my unborn child," she wrote.

"When women grieve for a miscarried child, they are not grieving for a mere body part. Whether they treat the fetus as a potential life or as a full-fledged member of the family, they are not grieving the loss of themselves, but of something other than themselves..."

That's as eloquent a summation of the reality of the fetus as a separate entity as this writer has ever seen.

And if that doesn't convince you that Epp's bill is worth supporting - and a good starting point for bringing some humanity to our fetal laws overall - then there is no hope for you.



National Affairs

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In the days of Viscounts and Vanguarders

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My father, at one point in his career, had been an executive with a multi-national corporation. The company doesn't exist any more, at least not as the entity I knew as a kid, but in its day, it had interests in several of the northern United States, as well as much of western Europe, Mexico and Brazil. And in his capacity, he had to travel to most of these places.

He would be abroad for about four weeks at a time, mainly in France, but there were a number of trips to England and Spain, and he made it to Germany, Italy and Portugal a couple of times. At the end of the four weeks, he would come

home, but there would still be weekly trips to the company's operation in Detroit. That would mean catching an early flight Thursday morning, and arriving home the Friday evening. That routine would go on for about three weeks, then he would be back to Europe for another four-week stint.

That life took a toll on my dad, and in the long-run, it probably proved a detriment to his health. Losing your luggage often enough will do that to anybody.

But it had certain advantages. He got to see a lot of the world, it helped fuel some passions that stayed with him for the rest of his life, such as for fine wines and oil paintings (one of his prized possessions was a

portrait of a clown he bought on the Montmartre in Paris, which hangs on my living room wall today). My mother also got over to Europe twice, and when my brother and I finally got our trip, our sage guide was able to show us spots no tourist brochure would even mention.

Another byproduct was I got to see a lot of aircraft, at least from the outside (I was 17 before I actually flew in one).

So my mother, brother and I used to spend a lot of Friday evenings hanging around the airport (this was long before Pierre Trudeau had it renamed after his predecessor). These were the days when Viscounts and Vanguarders made up most of the planes on the tarmac,

with the odd jet to handle the overseas traffic.

But that was also in the days when people didn't travel as much, with my dad being a notable exception; one of the few. The airport was a much more relaxed place than it is now.

Many years later, I took my first major vacation, travelling to Ireland to see the land of my ancestors. My folks drove me to the airport to see me off, and we had the good sense to get there with plenty of time to spare.

"Remember how we used to be out here every week?" Dad asked me at one point.

"Vividly," I assured him.

Then it was his turn to grimace. "I sure don't miss it!" he growled.

I never blamed him.

Peel students encourage a culture of energy conservation

Peel EnergySmart Youth Ambassadors will be hosting an EnergySmart Community Centre Atrium in Mississauga this Saturday

(March 15) from 1 to 4 p.m. to educate the community about energy conservation.

In their effort to promote reduction in energy use, the Youth Ambassadors will be distributing two compact fluorescent lamp (CFL) light bulbs per family in exchange for two incandescent ones that the family would like to replace.

The EnergySmart is an initiative by Community Environment Alliance (CEA) to raise community awareness about energy conservation while inspiring, informing and engaging residents and small businesses in Peel to conserve energy.

"If we are serious about the future of our kids, we need to embrace a conservation culture," commented Ranjana Mitra, executive director of CEA. "Saving energy not only saves money and protects our environment, but it also means less pollution and cleaner air for all of us to breathe."

"We are very excited to be a part of such an action oriented project. We received training to show how to measure energy use and calculate phantom loads" said Sarabjot Anand, vice-president of the EnergySmart Youth Ambassador Committee and a Grade 10 IBT student of the North Park Secondary School in Brampton.

CEA's EnergySmart pilot project has been made possible with financial assistance from the Ministry of Energy's Community Conservation Initiatives grant and with support from the Hydro One Brampton with their donation of the CFL light bulbs.

CEA is a community-based organization dedicated to building a safe, healthy and sustainable future for all. To learn more, visit www.communityenvironment.org



Lotto luck hits Bolton, twice

March 1 was a very lucky day for a couple of Bolton residents, as their numbers came up in the lottery. Ida and Domenic Mellece had the winning numbers in the Lotto 6/49 draw, gaining them the winning jackpot of \$7,973,615. "After I checked the ticket, I came home and asked Ida what type of car she would like," Mr. Mellece told Ontario lottery and Gaming Corporation (OLG) staff in Toronto. "I still can't

believe it," Mrs. Mellece added. They bought their ticket at Family Variety on Queen Street South in Bolton. Meanwhile, fellow Bolton resident Tim Wimsatt demonstrated the value of playing Encore, winning \$100,000. "I thought I had won a few free tickets when the clerk validated my ticket," he told OLG staff. Wimsatt bought his lucky ticket at Centre convenience on Centre Street in Thornhill. With his winnings, he plans to start thinking about retirement a little sooner than he expected.

