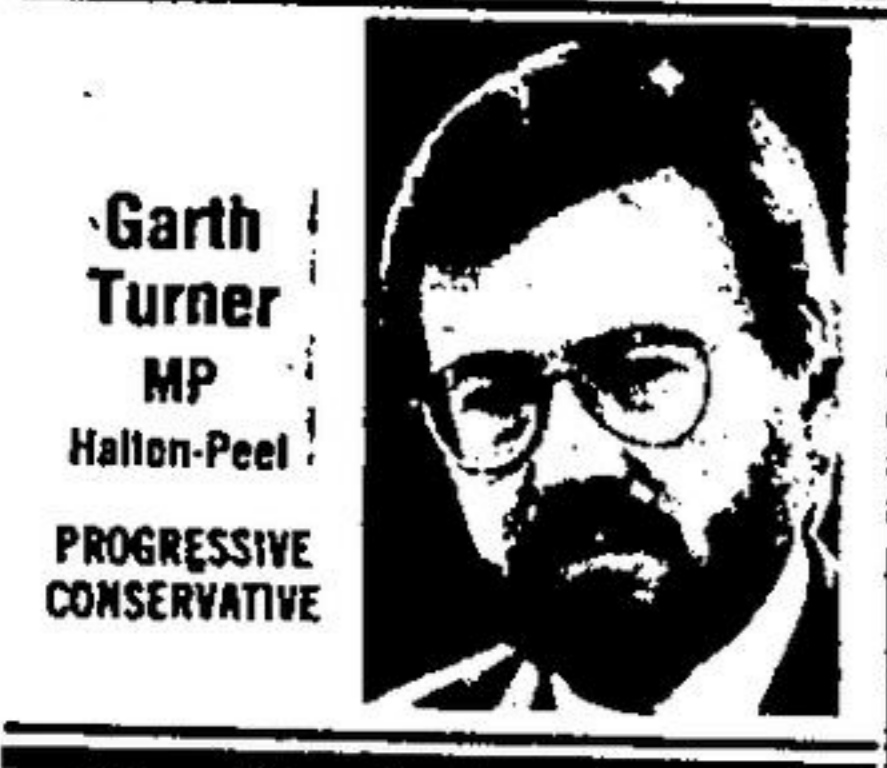


# MP is undecided on federal abortion bill



**Garth Turner**  
MP  
Halton-Peel  
PROGRESSIVE  
CONSERVATIVE

As a member of Parliament, I have to decide which way to vote. If I stand against the proposed bill, and it's defeated, then we have no restrictions at all on abortion. Frankly, that causes me some trouble. But if I stand in favor of the bill, then today's status quo is largely maintained, and another Chantal Daigle fiasco is possible. That's also troublesome.

So, I am asking for some guidance - which is why I met with those people in my cramped office a few days ago. They are strong pro-life advocates, many of them with affiliations to area churches. They want me to vote against the bill. After it's defeated, they say, they can step up their lobbying efforts and press for a more restrictive piece of legislation. They've weighed the political support in the House of Commons and figure a pro-life law would pass.

But now there is something else pretty powerful to consider. The Supreme Court late last week ruled that a fetus doesn't have any rights. Only once a human being is born, the court said, does the Charter of Rights and Freedoms affect that life.

Pro-choice people, who favor abortions on demand, are claiming a victory in that decision. They say it's now clear there's no conflict between the rights of a woman to have an abortion and the right of a fetus to life - because that fetus is not a person in the eyes of the law.

Meanwhile, leading pro-life MPs, like Kitchener's John Reimer and Liberal Don Boudria are saying the court has just underscored the crying need for legislation from Parliament which does bestow rights on the unborn. They say that now it's even more crucial to have a pro-life abortion law (those last four words have just made me stop for a minute).

Well, international experience isn't much help. Some countries, like Ireland and Italy, ban abor-

tions. Others, like France, are completely open. Still others, like the U.S., wrestle with the issue as awkwardly as Canadians. In Nova Scotia, Dr. Henry Morgentaler is being charged for opening an abortion clinic. In Ontario, meanwhile, provincial health insurance covers the cost of having an abortion - while refusing to pay for contraception devices.

Figure that one out. There are now four private abortion clinics in Toronto, and at the same time there are no babies available for adoption in Halton.

We are a strange society sometimes; caring and thoughtful and yet paralyzed on such a key issue as whether women should have this unfettered right. Is

pregnancy a health issue for the woman? Or is it a health issue for the fetus? Or for both of them?

Was the Supreme Court just interpreting existing laws when it said the fetus is not a human being? Or was it sending a signal to Parliament that any new law

stating the opposite is going to get a legal challenge?

Deciding how I should cast my ballot - and why - is not easy. And it is why now, in the few weeks before that vote comes, I would welcome the input of as many people as possible - on both sides of the issue, and in the middle.

I will listen carefully, and close-ly. And then I will vote.

They kept coming in out of the growing rain storm - until my little riding office was crowded. I'd started talking about abortion when there were four people there. By the time we'd finished an hour later, there were more than two dozen - with others approaching the door.

this is a highly complex issue, with legal, ethical, moral, social and, for many, religious considerations. Abortion strikes fear into the hearts of many politicians, because they just don't want to deal with it. Most politicians think that only a compromise law - one that tries to blend the rights of both women and unborn children - will work. And yet they know that any compromise will only enrage the pro-choicers or the pro-lifers.

That's exactly what has happened. The bill the feds proposed a number of days ago would allow abortions to continue pretty much as today. The pro-life forces find that unacceptable. But the proposed law would put abortion back into the criminal code, make the medical profession responsible, and allow any third party (like a husband or boyfriend) to launch a legal challenge. If that person thought an abortion took place without a legitimate threat to the woman's health, then the issue would be before the courts. This makes the new law unacceptable to pro-choice advocates of women's rights.

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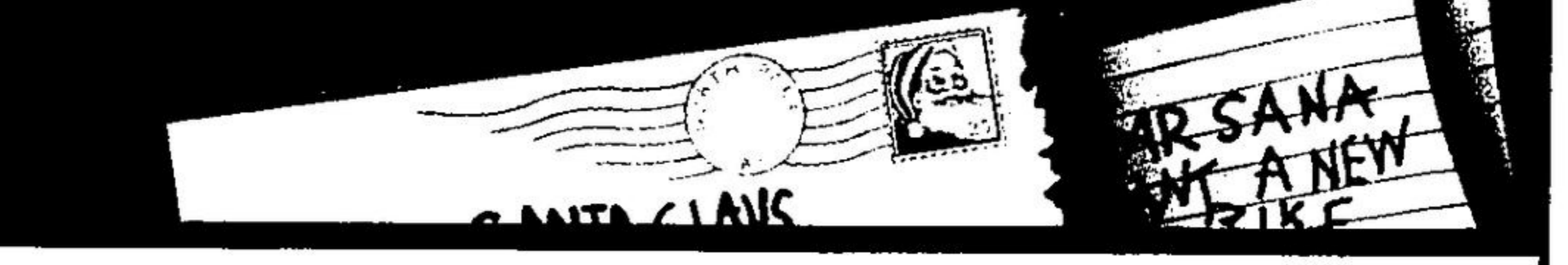
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