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Turner asked for his stance on moral issues at meeting

Controversial bills debated at MP's round-table discussion with faith leaders

By Melanie Cummings
SPECIAL TO THE CHAMPION

Bring on a national debate about abortion and let censorship reign in the film and television industry, 20 faith leaders told MP Garth Turner during a roundtable discussion last week.

Representatives from Milton, north Oakville, north Burlington and Campbellville urged Turner to cast his support for Bill C-484, the Unborn Victims of Crime Act and Bill C-10, which would allow the heritage minister to deny tax credits to projects it considers offensive or not in the public interest.

But the tables were turned at the meeting the Liberal politician held to garner opinions from the faith community on the ethical dimensions of these issues.

Rev. James DeMarsh of Milton Bible Church bluntly stated that, "On a lot of issues you can predict what the people at this table are going to say, but how do you, Garth, pick? Is this a meaningful discussion or do the polls dictate? What will help you in changing your mind?"

What language do you speak?" he asked.

"I struggle, there is no right answer," Turner replied. "I don't vote the party line but rather I wanted to meet with you all to truly get an understanding of your point of view."

Turner's ambiguous reply didn't sit well with Gordon Rumford of Oakridge Bible Chapel. "It would be nice to hear a Parliamentarian say where he or she is at on something that's black and white. I don't envy your role."

Bill C-484, which was introduced by Ken Epp, a Conservative pro-life MP from Edmonton, passed second reading by a narrow margin and is in committee hearings now.

Turner said there's a good chance that the bill will get to third reading and debate by the time Parliament ends its spring session, likely by June 6.

The bill amplifies the penalties given when an unborn child



Garth Turner

is the victim of crime. If it does pass, then the unborn child becomes an entity in the criminal code and sets a precedent, said Turner.

"This is a no-win debate. Society has moved to the point that the majority don't want the issue opened again as it was with same-sex marriage," he added.

According to Pastor Carl Muller of Trinity Baptist Church in Burlington, "If a fetus is determined to be a human being, this debate is a no brainer. The bill has to pass and then we have to revisit the abortion issue. There's no doubt in the Bible; medical evidence needs to corroborate that."

Darcey Lazerte of St. Simon's Anglican Church said he "will always support the right of women to choose."

Laila Eriksson, from the Spiritual Assembly of Baha'is is more concerned that this bill won't address 80 per cent of domestic violence cases.

The main focus should be pregnant women in violent situations because their partners know they are putting both at risk through harm, she added.

Turner agreed that this was a failing of the bill. "It's not a perfect bill. It's more salient than that."

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