

Anti-abortion demonstration in the Quad

October 20, 2016 10:07 pm · [22 comments](#)

<https://thecord.ca/anti-choice-demonstration-in-the-quad/>



Photo by Bethany Bowles

On the morning of October 20, students, staff and faculty at Wilfrid Laurier University were surprised to see blue and pink flags in the Quad. The Laurier LifeLink, a non-sectarian pro-life club at the university, arranged the display.

Stephanie Breukelman, president of Laurier LifeLink, said the club came to campus earlier in the morning to put up the flags. She explained that each flag represents ten abortions that are done in Canada each day, for a total of approximately 100,000 abortions done every year.

“[The display is] mostly just to raise awareness and educate people because abortion’s such a hush-hush issue,” said Breukelman. “People haven’t thought about abortion and they don’t know what all goes on in these situations and this is just to raise awareness about [what is] being done in Canada; almost 300 little babies are dying each day in Canada.”

According to Breukelman, some of the reactions of those who have seen the display on campus have been positive. Other reactions, however, have been more negative.

“These people have been walking through and pulling out flags and it is a bit scary, but we’re here to educate people and stand up for those babies who are being killed everyday and cannot talk for themselves.”

While this is a controversial issue, Breukelman explained that the university gave them permission to display the flags on campus.

“We did get permission to do this and it’s just ... little flags. People have come up to me and said that this is really triggering for people who have experienced traumatic situations and you have no idea what they’ve been through and this is inappropriate,” she continued.

“We’re not here as pro-lifers to say that people who are raped are fine and it’s a fine situation, it’s absolutely not and it’s a terrible situation that can hurt people, but when is killing a human life the solution to that?”

The LifeLink’s display on campus also brought out students who protested against the presentation. Daniel Quintia, a third-year music student, said he was appalled when he heard about the display.

“I came down here and started pulling [the flags] out and spat on their banner,” said Quintia. “I can’t imagine what it’s like for women, or even more so women who have had a personal experience with abortion, so I’m just frankly kind of pissed.”

Special Constable Services were also called to talk to those who were protesting the display.

“The officers are here [telling me] you have to respect their rights and I’m like, but I don’t, I don’t have to respect their opinion. I don’t because frankly, this is harmful,” said Quintia.

“It’s getting political and this is infringing on my views and rights too [for] so many of my female friends and it’s just so upsetting, so I’m coming down, not as a saviour or anything, but as an ally and as a human who’s simply acknowledging women’s rights.”

Dylan Miller, a fourth-year music student, was also angry at what she saw in the Quad.

“It’s shaming. It’s just invasive and it’s a shame tactic and I don’t think that it’s appropriate,” she said. “It’s aggressive and I think that there’s a larger issue to be discussed rather than just saying that abortions are wrong and we need to preserve life.”

Although there were no graphic images on display, there were signs before entering the Quad, one of them stated that a pro-life demonstration was happening ahead.

“I think this is pretty clear, with the pink and blue flags, like what it is and what they’re representing. I think it’s pretty pathetic,” said Miller. “How is this allowed? Isn’t this 2016?”

Later in the afternoon, Laurier’s Centre for Women and Trans People responded to the demonstration on Facebook. Their post read, “An anti-choice demonstration has been happening in the Quad today, though it has been met by protests from various individuals on campus. If anyone needs a place to hang out with social justice values, the DEO is open. Our Centre usually closes at 4, but a coordinator will be keeping the space open until 5:20 or so. The Rainbow Centre will be remaining open until 6. We are unfortunately in Mac House, just across from the Quad, so you may have to walk past the protest to get in. Please stay safe, practice self and community care and feel free to spread the word.”

On October 21, the Wilfrid Laurier University Students’ Union and the Graduate Students’ Association, along with the university, released their response to Thursday’s demonstration. Their post read, “An event held by a student club in the Quad on Laurier’s Waterloo campus Thursday afternoon has raised a number of important issues. These include the question of how we, as a university community, accommodate civil discourse of divergent opinions while meeting our obligation to provide individuals with a safe campus environment. The University, the Wilfrid Laurier University Students’ Union, the Graduate Students Association, and the

Diversity and Equity Office, take these issues very seriously. Together, we are currently examining all aspects of Thursday's event with the intention of better understanding the issues involved and what future actions might be needed to ensure an appropriate balance between freedom of expression and the provision of a safe campus environment."

The Students' Union also mentioned that support can be accessed through Laurier's Wellness Centres and the Diversity and Equity Office.

"We also want to remind students that your opinions matter and can be voiced at anytime, on anything that affects your Laurier experience," read the post.

Tags: [Centre for Women and Trans People](#), [Diversity and Equity Office](#), [Kitchener](#), [Laurier](#), [Laurier LifeLink](#), [Waterloo](#), [Wilfrid Laurier University](#), [WLU](#)



Author: [Kaitlyn Severin](#)After three very long years at The Cord, Kaitlyn is now working as Senior News Editor (but denies taking the "Senior" portion too seriously). As a fourth year Communication Studies student, Kaitlyn is excited to bring more compelling stories to the Laurier community. If you ever want to find her, she'll be the redhead on campus laughing at her own jokes.

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22 COMMENTS



1. Rob

[on October 20, 2016 at 11:06 pm](#)

The title is disturbing and shows lack of knowledge. It's not anti-choice, so please call it pro life. I wouldn't call the article anti-life if I were talking about a pro Choice demonstration.



2. Conrad Kosher

[on October 20, 2016 at 11:19 pm](#)

Can I just say: This article has so much bias I'm drowning in it. Secondly, to the two music students who were quoted in this article: yes, pro lifers can do this. They are within their legal rights. You on the other hand are

showing utter disrespect to a peaceful protest and making a fool out of yourself, thus doing your cause more harm than good. Sometimes the ignorance of the media influenced youth annoys me.

3. Bethany Leferink

[on October 20, 2016 at 11:28 pm](#)

Each flag represented 10 abortions a year in Canada, and there were 10,000 flags set up (meaning 100,000 babies are aborted each year).



4. John

[on October 20, 2016 at 11:43 pm](#)

I am from Laurier and I witnessed the flag display and the drama that unfolded there. I am pro-choice but I was very disappointed by the actions of my fellow pro-choicers. The anti-choice protesters had every right to put on the display they did and by simply wrecking it, the pro-choicers were only proclaiming they don't believe in the right of the freedom of speech. By all means, stand there and argue the pro-choice argument but there is no need to resort to wrecking an otherwise peaceful protest. As well the cord needs to work on being less biased. A big part of the events in the day was the wrecking of the display. While I, assumedly like the cord, am very disappointed in these events that does not mean they shouldn't be recorded.



5. Ben Dover

[on October 20, 2016 at 11:43 pm](#)

Great article. I love how you reminded us it's 2016! That really drove the point home for me!



6. Connor

[on October 21, 2016 at 12:36 am](#)

As Martin Luther King once said:

“I have a dream, that one day, my children will be able to go anywhere they want and not experience anything they disagree with. And, should they feel triggered by any display of any sort, they shall be able to momentarily undo a couple million years of evolution and behave like a shit-flinging monkey”



7. Destiny

[on October 21, 2016 at 12:58 am](#)

Alright my fellow Social Justice Warriors! Show those cis, white, male, misogynistic, transphobic, heteronormative loving, neurotypical, fatphobic, shitlords how we do! As a trans-man, I will never get to have an abortion, and this display just reminded me of how strong a grip the patriarchy has on our society.
#triggered



8. Francis Alexander Rock

[on October 21, 2016 at 1:04 am](#)

just because there is no physical violence occurring, does not mean the protest was “peaceful”. there was a metaphorical graveyard for “children” in our university main garden today and that was so terrifying and traumatic for dozens of students that we had to put up signs to warn individuals who could then change their route or mentally prepare themselves. there was yelling on both ends of the situation, and just because it was not physical does not mean those discussions were peaceful. they were filled with hate and spite and a refusal to listen to the other side’s opinions on the matter. this was not an opportunity for discussion, this was a guilt trip and a piece of rhetoric in order to make people whom are able to be pregnant feel shameful and unsafe with their choice over their body. to make people who have had abortions and support the legality of abortion as murderers is “non-violent” apparently. newsflash: it isn’t.

it’s incredibly damaging. and it’s not something which should be discussed in the fucking garden of our university because that is not a platform for an educated discussion but instead a battle cry, and one that drowns out anyone else’s voice in the matter.

freedom of speech does not extend to hate rhetoric or the taking away of peoples’ rights. to quote the literal constitution people keep bringing up to defend their actions in this, “Limits on speech were incorporated in the criminal code in relation to treason, sedition, blasphemous and defamatory libel, disruption of religious worship, hate propaganda, spreading false news, public mischief, obscenity, indecency and other forms.”. Legally speaking, the advocacy to take away the reproductive rights and bodily autonomy of pregnant people is actually hate propaganda, spreading false news quite often through vivid and graphic fake images, can be argued to be an obscenity. This was a cissexist, and extremely transphobic protest and therefore falls under hate propaganda.

the display had to be taken down. it was getting to a point where no one was dealing with the situation so a group of students took control of the shit show and put it to an end. no one stopped us. they threatened us but they didn’t stop us. the actions taken by the special constables is actually extremely upsetting considering they were legitimately threatening students.



9. Spencer

[on October 21, 2016 at 1:41 am](#)

The only think worse than supporting abortion, is supporting abortion and being this ill-informed.



10. Ashley

[on October 21, 2016 at 2:03 am](#)

As someone who is pro-choice I fully respect any woman's right to make her own decisions about her body, and if you believe that abortion is wrong then you should not get one. However this whole display just seems like a way to shame women who have made that choice, and that is just not right. If you want to protest abortion that is fine I just hope you aren't stopping students and faculty to do so. I did women's studies at this school and frankly I think more students need to take these courses, because if you fully wish to stop abortions I hope you have something to offer to these what was it 100 000 babies (a year) that will be in the foster system; where abuse can occur and some children never get adopted.

Again we are facing issues where people feel the need to put their beliefs onto others. Pro-choice is just that. Do what you believe is right it is your CHOICE. Pro-life takes away that choice; which really lets be honest, people have been doing to women for a long time. Explain to me how someone else's abortion impacts your life? It doesn't, there is no way it could. If the argument is that there are many couples who can't conceive a child it falls very short since there are many children in foster homes now and that's with abortions; lets add another 100 000 a year. You don't have to agree but please don't take away choices from women; its already difficult for them to make this decision. If you want to put your flags up and talk to people who wish to discuss pro-life then great; but don't force it on people.



11. Rob

[on October 21, 2016 at 6:26 am](#)

While I think the Cord did a better job of being impartial than some of the commenters, the pro-choice students quoted in this article sound downright Trumpian. As in, "I'll fully support the right to free speech...if I agree with what's being said". Which, for students at a university which purports to be highly respected, displays a shocking lack of intellectual ability and rigor.

As much as I might be disagree with the demonstration, I'm astounded that someone might find small flags offensive. By all accounts, this was a rather innocuous protest, with none of the graphic imagery we'd normally expect. In fact, one citizen disrespecting another's right to peacefully and publicly demonstrate turns out to be the most offensive thing that happened.

It is nothing less than an assault on the democratic values that Canadian life is based on. Apparently, in 2016, one cannot hold a differing view without being spat upon. To paraphrase one of the quotes from the article, that's utterly pathetic.

12.  Laura

[on October 21, 2016 at 10:31 am](#)

Can't believe how biased this article is and I completely agree with Conrad. Every group has the right to freedom of expression and to not have their displays spat on and ripped out, regardless of what you think of them. This is shameful behaviour and it's embarrassing that the Cord chooses to take such a one sided stance when they should be championing free speech and open debate at Laurier. University is supposed to be about challenging your beliefs and engaging in open discussion with your peers, no matter how controversial the topic, not hiding behind trigger warnings and safe spaces.

13.  David

[on October 21, 2016 at 12:40 pm](#)

It's just a group expressing their opinion in a way that is completely legitimate and legal. Feel free to disagree with them – that is what the battle of ideas is about but don't fall into the trap that they should have to censor their opinions.

14.  Siobhan

[on October 21, 2016 at 3:54 pm](#)

The students from lifelink are absolutely free to express their distaste for a medical procedure, and the protesting students have the same right to express their distaste for lifelink. Freedom of speech gives you protection from the government shutting you up, not from other people.

15.  Peter

[on October 21, 2016 at 4:56 pm](#)

The march of the tyrannical SJW movement continues. Don't engage with an opposing view, just convince people it should be outlawed.

SJWs are the new religious right. But I guess it is the current year so I shouldn't be surprised.

16.  Laura

[on October 21, 2016 at 7:29 pm](#)

Siobhan Laurier is a publicly funded institution that therefore has to play by the same rules as government entities. Also, you don't have the right to vandalize other people's property and stop them from being in a public place just for expressing their opinion.

17.  Andrew Allison

[on October 21, 2016 at 8:14 pm](#)

Francis Alexander Rock, I don't think you have a firm understanding on what peaceful means. Further, if seeing small flags in the ground is enough to "traumatize" you then I think maybe you should reconsider if a university is an appropriate environment for you.

Someone having a different opinion than you is not hate speech.

18.  Bruce M

[on October 22, 2016 at 2:25 pm](#)

Francis Alexander Rock, please don't use swear words in your post. It triggers me, and I find it extremely hateful. Also, you are being violent towards anyone who doesn't support swearing.

19.  rawdawger

[on October 23, 2016 at 6:29 pm](#)

you guys are all fucked lol bunch of sensitive pussy's

ps-fuck you bruce ;)

20.  John M

[on October 24, 2016 at 3:55 am](#)

As someone living in Britain, I would like it known that your university is actually being talked about abroad for this very thing.

When you ban every view counter to your own as 'Hate speech' and speak about your rights being violated every time someone disagrees with you on things you are passionate about, what you are really doing is engaging in Orwellian doublespeak.

It is especially worrying for Canada that in an academic environment – A place where you should ostensibly be being taught to both think logically and question everything – that people questioning the zeitgeist are being subjected to this sort of anger.

“Anti-Choice” indeed. In conclusion, this story is bad, the people involved in silencing all opposition are bad and you should feel bad.



21. **VDB**

[on October 25, 2016 at 10:07 pm](#)

Anti-abortionists are anti-choice? In one sense, yes. Choice for abortion gets limited. In another sense, no. Each abortion wipes out a whole life-time of choices, so anti-abortionists increase the total of choices.



22. **VDB**

[on October 25, 2016 at 10:32 pm](#)

Many thanks to Laurier LifeLink.