

**MP Maurice Vellacott votes for Bill C-510, to outlaw coerced abortion**

OTTAWA - Bill C-510, proposed by Conservative MP Rod Bruinooge, would have made it illegal for anyone to coerce a woman into an abortion through threats of violence, withdrawal of financial resources or denial of a place to live.

Bruinooge acknowledges there are already general laws against coercion and making threats, but he believes a specific prohibition against coercing pregnant women into abortion needs to be spelled out as a message to potential offenders and to society at large.

"Bill C-510 was an important law for a society committed to the protection of women," said Conservative MP Maurice Vellacott. "No woman should feel that she has no recourse when being coerced to destroy her own baby."

Bruinooge says the bill, also known as Roxanne's Law, is a response to the murder of Winnipeg constituent Roxanne Fernando, who was beaten to death by three men because she refused to have an abortion. Her body was found in a frozen ditch outside the city a few days after she vanished.

Laws like Bill C-510 exist in Germany, Italy and France without inhibiting legal access to abortion.

This law could also have pre-empted a rise in the practise of "gendercide" in Canada," said Vellacott. "Recent research indicates that a cultural preference for male children can result in coercion towards abortion of female children, even in Canada."

Faye Sonier, legal counsel with the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, recently wrote, "Unfortunately, as a result of some cultural preferences, abortion coercion can also take place, with tragic results. In recent years, studies and media coverage have brought the world's attention to gendercide and sex-selection. In certain cultures where boys are the preferred heirs, women are being pressured to abort their female babies."

"Bill C-510 is an essential amendment to Canadian law in a society committed to the protection of women," concluded Vellacott. Regretfully, the bill was defeated today with a vote of 97 to 178.