

'I couldn't see how they could subject such young children to that type of material.'

Anti-abortion protest irks parents

BY MARIA CALABRESE

The Muggel

Secondary school students in Sturgeon Falls and North Bay were greeted Friday by anti-abortion protesters carrying large placards with graphic colour images of bloodied, mutilated fetuses.

What troubles North Bay parent Linda Dick is young children attending nearby elementary schools and day-care centres also had these "grotesque" images in their line of sight.

"As much as I believe these people have every right to express their opinion, I thought morally it was not right

where they were expressing it," Dick said. "I couldn't see how they could subject such young children to that type of material."

Dick has two children, aged seven and nine, attending Centennial Public School near Hight and O'Brien streets where one of the protests took place during the lunch break at a time when younger children pass by on their way home.

75 to 100 complaints

"People are very upset about it," said Sgt. Harley Solomon, noting the North Bay Police Service received about 75 to 100 complaints Friday.

Officers were dispatched to monitor

each of the 15-minute protests, but he said there's nothing they can do unless the protesters are breaking laws, such as causing a disturbance, trespassing on private property or blocking traffic.

The group of about 30 protesters, mostly from southern Ontario, are part of Show the Truth Canada, a national organization which started more than five years ago, said member Rosemary Connell from the Lindsay area.

Connell said it's a privately funded group that doesn't keep track of its membership, claiming it has about 600 financial supporters.

"Our purpose is to show people the visual horror of abortions," she said

during a demonstration targeting West Ferris Secondary School located directly beside West Ferris Day Nursery on Marshall Park Drive.

"We don't focus on young children, but we're telling parents if a young child brings up the issue, give them an age-appropriate answer."

Protecting young children

Dick said she believes in free choice as long as there's a responsibility to protect children who are too young to understand the issue, adding it's unrealistic to explain these types of images to them.

"I can't see bringing up that kind of discussion at this age," she said. "How

does a small child even begin to try to understand something like that?"

She plans to rally support from neighbours and parent councils with the hope of approaching city council to create a bylaw banning these types of demonstrations from school neighbourhoods.

The protesters were in Sudbury most of the week, and included Nissim in their itinerary at the invitation of Jeanie Arcand, a member from Sturgeon Falls.

"They knew that if we could do these high schools, we will reach the most number of youths and whose hearts could be touched because they're the future voters," she said.