

40 Days for Life is a local community-based campaign, which takes place in hundreds of cities around the world, which takes a determined, peaceful approach to showing local communities the consequences of abortion in their own cities and neighborhoods. It puts into action a human and providential desire (some may say God) to end abortion and re-introduce the respect for human rights and the dignity of human life.

40 Days for Life, and other smaller prayer vigils throughout the year, represent the most peaceful and gentle way to exercise our rights under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms which includes ensuring of peoples' physical and mental integrity, life, and safety; protection from discrimination on grounds such as race, gender, colour, age, religion, and disability amongst others, as well as key individual rights, such as freedom of thought, speech, assembly, and movement.

It is a peaceful and educational presence. Those who are called to stand witness during this 12-hour-a-day presence send a powerful message to the community about the tragic reality of abortion. It also serves as a call to healing for those who are victims of abortion including those who work in the industry and deliver its services.

It draws attention to the inherent harm of abortion through the use of a simple three-point program:

*Prayer and fasting – which has no impact on anyone*

*Constant vigil – including a few hours per person throughout the campaign which disrupts neither traffic on the roads nor passersby on the sidewalk*

*Community outreach – which provides concrete support services only when asked for help, like when a young women or couple have seen no alternative to their plight*

Contrary to the mis-information which is spread by some in the media and by some groups, and the many other types of militant protests which are seemingly tolerated without dispute or disruption, 40 Days for Life participants are held to a strict code of conduct for peaceful vigil, prayer and behaviour. Their posture is serene and prayerful, the messages, such as “Choose Life” or “Will you be my voice” are both aspirational and understated, the duration is brief, usually a hour per week per person throughout the campaign, for those who sign up.

Typically bystanders approach us. The vast majority are supportive or kind, or appreciate our inherent right as Canadians to be here. A very few, attempt to intimidate by drive-by insult or comment only to be met with continued stoic prayer or with a smile. Each day during 40 Days for Life, individuals, churches, families and groups are asked to join together in prayer for a specific request so the entire community (*Christian and otherwise*) can unite around a common focus.

These specific prayer requests include help for:

- Women who are at risk of having an abortion
- Innocent children who are at risk of perishing
- Men and women who carry the pain of a past abortion experience
- Workers at Planned Parenthood facilities and abortion centers
- Local, regional, and national leaders
- Revival and renewal in our churches
- Repentance and healing throughout our nation

As I'm sure you can see, the need for "bubble" zones looks like a massive over-response to a problem which does not exist. If bubble-zones can restrict this most peaceful type of assembly, what will be the impact on more militant protests, such as private and public sector strikes and work stoppages, other special interest groups?

On the contrary 40 Days for Life serves as a model of expression for change and deserves the full protections under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.