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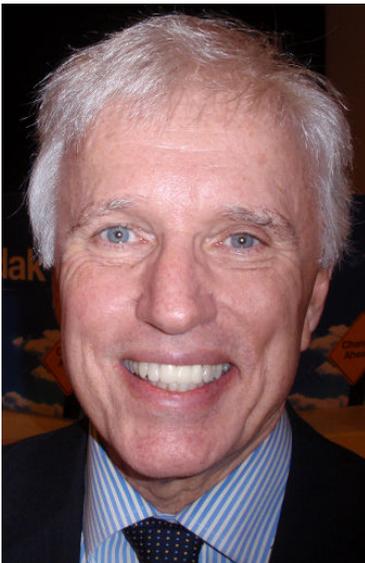
NEWS LOCAL

Tories sponsor Campaign Life Coalition news conference at Queen's Park ⁸



By [Kelly Pedro](#), The London Free Press

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Chatham-Kent Essex MPP Rick Nicholls

Rookie Chatham-area MPP Rick Nicholls was among three Progressive Conservatives who sponsored a Campaign Life Coalition news conference at Queen's Park on Wednesday, a move the Tory MPP insists isn't about re-opening the abortion debate but letting the coalition have a voice. *The Free Press* quizzed him on the issues.

Q: *There's been a lot of talk that you're in support of defunding abortion. Tell me about that.*

"I like what Campaign Life stands for — our values, our principles are similar . . . I don't want to open up the debate on abortion, because that's not what this is about. It's about people who feel that there's inappropriate use of taxpayers' money going toward something that it shouldn't be going towards. It's plain and simple."

Q: *Why did you feel it was important to sponsor that press conference?*

"It's freedom of speech . . . My own personal thoughts are not always the thoughts of my caucus, and yet I don't want to be seen as a rebel because I'm not a rebel. I believe I was voted in . . . for a purpose . . . and I stand by my own personal values and principles . . . Why did I go ahead and agree to do this? Because we're wallet-watchers of Ontario and their argument made sense to me."

Q: *Are you worried this might push more moderate PC voters away from the party?*

"I can't think of a reason why it would . . . This isn't about women . . . If a woman chooses to still have an abortion, OK. That is her right. But the taxpayers are saying, 'Yeah, that's your right, but it's not on my dime because I don't want my money being spent that way.' "

Q: *But doesn't defunding it, or suggesting to defund it, in effect open up that debate?*

"I have no hidden agenda here. Our caucus has no hidden agenda . . . There's just three of us that felt it would be OK to lend our support."

Q: *Do you agree with Campaign Life's push to defund abortion?*

"It's a question of, is the taxpayers' money being used appropriately? In that sense, if people still want to have abortions, and there may be those that can't afford it and I get that and they may need help . . . If they need funding, if they need help, assistance, then that's a different situation I suppose."

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