

# Vandalism to B.C. crisis pregnancy centre probed as hate crime

Kelsey Short arrived to work one morning to find profane language and thick red paint splashed across the storefront of the Vancouver Crisis Pregnancy Centre (CPC) on Main Street.

“I was shocked,” said Short, the centre’s community education coordinator. “The red paint looked like blood.”

Short was first to discover the damage when she arrived at the non-profit July 30. She phoned the police, who are now investigating the incident as a hate crime.

“The police inform us this was not random. We were specifically targeted,” said Brian Norton, executive director of the Christian Advocacy Society of Greater Vancouver, in an email to supporters.

The society runs two Crisis Pregnancy Centres in Vancouver and Burnaby. In the last 28 years, these sites have helped 18,500 women facing unplanned pregnancies, post-abortion grief, and other challenging situations. Each centre offers free pregnancy tests, peer counselling, grief support, and referrals to community resources. Short said most appointments are for “material support”: moms in crisis receive free clothing, diapers, and other supplies.

But Norton said the Vancouver location has been harassed several times. It has faced false allegations online and from callers and passersby. This spring, some individuals entered the centre to tell staff they were not welcome and asked them to leave.

“As some of these bullying groups very candidly tell us, our charity will always be despised and actively opposed by them because we’re faith-based and that our ‘sanctity of life’ ethic should not include pre-born children,” said Norton.

“Over the years, our 100 per cent non-political charity has been subject to harassment,” but never “of such a physically violent nature” as the latest vandalism.

The centre does not have security cameras in place, in order to guard the confidentiality of its clients. However, nearby storefronts with cameras might provide some insight as to who vandalized the charity with blood-red paint, Short said.



**Crisis Pregnancy Centre's storefront was defaced with red paint. Photo courtesy of Vancouver Crisis Pregnancy Centre**

She added that the centre's neighbours have been largely supportive. A nearby graffiti removal company offered to clean up the paint – thousands of dollars' worth of damage – for free. Others dropped by to offer their condolences.

"A stranger walked in on Monday morning and hugged me. She said, 'I'm sorry this happened to you,'" said Short. Others arrived to try to chip the red paint off the window.

"No one wants to see this happen, even if they don't really know who we are or why we're here. They still bristle at the thought of a crime like this."



Paint left at entrance by vandals Photo courtesy of Vancouver Crisis Pregnancy Centre

Despite the apparent act of hatred, Short said she doesn't feel unsafe. "I have felt even more connected to the neighbourhood and a stronger desire to build community here."

She believes any violence must be due to a misconception about crisis pregnancy centres, propagated by people like pro-abortion activist Joyce Arthur, who published a 2009 report titled "Exposing Crisis Pregnancy Centres in B.C." and HBO's John Oliver, who claimed a CPC's "primary purpose is to talk women out of terminating a pregnancy" on his TV show this April.

"There is a lot of negative publicity," said Short. "They believe we aggressively coerce women into keeping their children even if they don't want them, that we guilt women and have an agenda to manipulate. This isn't true at all. Our agenda is to provide support for men and women who are facing an unplanned pregnancy."

Short said staff offer medically-accurate information and resources, and invite clients to weigh their options.

"We don't tell people what to do. We listen to them and make sure they have all the information they need to make a decision. It is very easy to make a rush decision when you're scared."

Norton published a response to Arthur's 2009 report in 2014, entitled "A Respectful Rebuttal to a Disrespectful Report."

(BC Catholic)