

Roe v. Wade

Reid, Scott - M.P. <scott.reid@parl.gc.ca>

To: Kelley Denham

Mon 2022-07-04 11:02 AM

Dear Kelley,

Thank you for your email sent June 24, 2022, in which you state,

"Please kindly let me know if you will affirm your support for access to abortion and reproductive services."

It is better to judge a politician by his or her past actions, than by his or her past rhetoric. So if in the future the House of Commons finds itself dealing with some version of a vote on "reopening the abortion debate" (to use a term that I sometimes see in the media), you should expect that most MPs who have been around long enough to have voted on this issue in the past will vote on it in the same way once again.

The last time that there was a vote on abortion was in 2012, when a motion, which was designated as "Motion M-312," was placed before the House of Commons. Motion M-312 was ultimately defeated, on September 26, 2012, with 203 MPs voting against, and 91 voting in favour. I was one of the 203 who voted "No."

The wording of Motion M-312 was designed to begin the process of restarting the debate on whether some abortions should be made illegal. It called for the establishment of a Parliamentary committee

to review the declaration in Subsection 233(1) of the Criminal Code of Canada, which states that a child becomes a human being only at the moment of complete birth.

A finding, by the Parliamentary committee, that a child becomes a human being at an earlier date than at birth (such as, for example, at the end of the second trimester of a pregnancy) would have been, in essence, a finding that the termination of any pregnancy after that point in the pregnancy ought to be a criminal act. The actual criminalization of abortions after this date would only have taken place if Parliament had subsequently voted in favour of a bill to act on the committee's recommendation.

So in essence, a 'Yes' vote on the motion would have been a moral endorsement of criminalizing at least some abortions, and might have been a first step towards criminalization.

Since I was first elected back in November 2000, I have consistently taken the view that some questions are too important to be left in the hands of the politicians. Canadians will vote, on a matter like recriminalizing abortion, directly based on their deeply-held personal beliefs and values. We politicians vote based only partly on that. We also fret about public opinion, about surviving the next nomination and the next election, and on whether or not the party whip will reassign that MP to something less desirable.

For example, when I voted against my party on the issue of marijuana legalization in 2017, I was tossed out of shadow cabinet. Many MPs are intimidated by such considerations into voting in favour of measures that they personally support, or against measures that they personally do support. I am very proud of the fact that I have managed to not cave in to this kind of pressure. But

many do, and it is just a statement of fact that therefore, the average Canadian citizen is better able to vote cleanly, honestly, and in accord with her or his own fundamental values, than is the average member of Parliament

For this reason, over the past two decades I have held eleven surveys, which I call "constituency referenda," on issues that I regard as being matters of conscience. You can see an entire list of these constituency referenda at this [...](#) link. These include such matters as federal legislation that suspended civil liberties in the name of combatting terrorism (the Anti Terrorism Act, in 2001) and expanding the circumstances under which physician-assisted dying would be lawful (the Medical Assistance in Dying Act, in 2020).

I regarded Motion M-312 as falling into this category, and so I sent out a detailed questionnaire to every voter in the riding, committing to cast my own vote in the House of Commons as instructed by the people of this riding. You can see a copy of the ballot that was mailed out to all voters by clicking on this [...](#) link; I hope you will agree with me that I phrased the question, and designed the questionnaire, to be as neutral and as objective as possible.

We received back many responses. Roughly 65% of the voters who returned their ballots to my office had indicated they were opposed to reopening the abortion debate, while about 35% were in favour of reopening the debate. This was a clear and unambiguous instruction; based on it, I voted against Motion 312 in September 2012.

It appears to me that the views of voters in this riding have not substantially changed in the past decade, so if another vote were to arise on the same subject, I would almost certainly find myself voting the same way.

I hope that this response is helpful; if you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Scott Reid, MP

-----Original Message-----

From: Kelley Denham Sent: June 24, 2022 4:36 PM

To: Reid, Scott - M.P. <scott.reid@parl.gc.ca>

Subject: Roe v. Wade

Name: Kelley Denham
Email: Subject: Roe v. Wade
Phone:

Dear Mr. Reid,

I am writing as a female constituent of yours living in the town of Smiths Falls. Access to safe, legal abortion is access to vital health care. With the horror of the overturning of Roe v. Wade today, women in your riding want to know what your stance is on abortion. Please kindly let me know if you will affirm your support for access to abortion and reproductive services.

Yours Very Truly,
Kelley Denham
Smiths Falls