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■ **PROTEST:** Campaign Life Coalition wants money spent elsewhere in healthcare

Targeting cost of abortion

DIANA MARTIN
The Daily News

'Not from my wallet' and 'Defund abortion' signs held by Campaign Life Coalition supporters lined a short section of Keil Drive Thursday.

"It's not a debate on the issue (of abortion)," said organizer Brandy Robertson. "It's not an issue of what's right or wrong, it's what we pay for."

There are between 30,000 - 51,000 reported abortions a year in Ontario, however private clinics are not required to submit

their numbers, said Robertson.

"A thousand dollars is the cost for an abortion. Pregnancy is not an illness or a disease, cancer screening I think should take a higher priority," she said. "Fifty million (dollars) a year goes a long way. PSA (prostate-specific antigen) tests aren't covered - that's cancer testing, you have to pay for that now."

Robertson said the Campaign Life Coalition mini-rallies were held at 57 out of the 107 ridings for an hour.

"We want our representatives to take notice and action. We

also want other taxpayers to take notice and contact our other representatives," she said. "Ontario is not in a real stellar financial position so we can't continue with our healthcare the way it is." Jackie Bultje, along with her family, took part in the rally to help raise awareness.

"There are so many things we have to pay for now and people don't know because it's medically not necessary right?" said Bultje. "It's really to improve awareness so people know. With so many cut backs on necessary things...I think that a lot of people are not

aware their tax dollars are funding abortions."

She would prefer the funds went towards preventative measures to help curb the unwanted pregnancies before they happened.

"I don't think any woman would really want to have an abortion," Bultje said. "I think that women who choose that are in very difficult situations. They've got their back up against a wall and they are desperate and I don't want to judge anyone for making that decision."

At the same time, Bultje said

because of her Christian beliefs she thinks abortion is wrong.

Her husband Jeff, who was also at the rally, said the issue at hand is not about access to abortions.

"We don't want to eliminate abortion in Canada," he said. "(But) why should my funding pay for an abortion? People are waiting 18 months for a hip replacement. There's only so many dollars and it should be used for life-saving efforts, not to take away life."

Referring to a pamphlet the group was handing out at the rally, Robertson said the money

used to fund abortions could provide 200 family doctors, 400 nurses, purchase 20 MRI machines or give 500 autistic children access to treatment a year in Ontario.

"I do think they (politicians) hear the word abortion and they clam up, claim it's a dead issue, which clearly it's not," she said. "We have to get past the fear of talking about something and deal with reality, because we can't sustain paying for these things."

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Rachel Bultje, 14, left, along with her mother Jackie and George Douma, were among the 29 people gathered to protest the funding of abortions as part of the Campaign Life Coalition at Chatham-Kent Essex MPP Rick Nicholls office Thursday before moving to Keil Drive. The group picketed 57 provincial riding offices across Ontario Thursday hoping to encourage provincial politicians to look at defunding abortions. See story on Page A2.