



A tribute to Canadian pro-life hero Phil Arnsby

by Stephanie Gray

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My earliest memory of Phil Arnsby is of his determination to get the pro-life message out to as many young people as possible. In 2006, he arranged a speaking tour for me in the London area, and he packed it so that I spoke to thousands of people over just a few days. Lives were forever changed, as students told us they became pro-life. It all started with Phil. And it happened because of Phil.

My subsequent encounters with this pro-life hero, and his heroine wife Elaine, were marked by joy, great conversation and fellowship, as well as spiritual encouragement.



And so, news that Phil had passed away on April 17 was received with great sadness, not only by me and my colleagues, but across the Canadian pro-life movement. Phil was a stalwart in the movement, particularly for London Area Right to Life of which he was past president, and he most certainly "walked the talk." As my colleague Jonathon Van Maren has pointed out, "We at CCBR believe we can see the light at the end of the tunnel because we stand on the shoulders of pro-life giants like Phil Arnsby who have spent decades of their lives working for the rights of the pre-born."

Phil and Elaine have supported CCBR practically from its beginning. They opened their home to my colleagues and me on various trips through the London area. They were with us through significant and tense events—from a talk at King's College that required police protection, to our New Abortion Caravan whose pro-abortion protesters necessitated police intervention. They helped student pro-lifers at the University of Western Ontario and King's College. As one grieving graduate told me, "They [Phil and Elaine] were good friends when I was struggling to keep Western's pro-life club afloat."

Phil not only wanted to help students convert their peers, but he desperately wanted to see the conversion of abortion doctors. In 2011, I made a quiet entrance into London to debate that city's late-term abortionist Dr. Fraser Fellows (the debate was a closed event, open only to medical students). Phil and Elaine were part of the small group of pro-lifers who knew this was happening, and welcomed me to stay at their home. When I arrived they shared this surprising story: "We met protesting outside of Dr. Fellows' home!" Indeed, in the '90s, pro-lifers faithfully and peacefully protested outside Dr. Fellows' home as a plea for him to stop killing children. It was both Phil and Elaine's dedication to the pro-life cause which drew them to this significant event, and God in turn eventually drew them to each other.

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I will remember Phil as a thoughtful, prayerful, determined, convicted, gentle, self-sacrificing, and grandfatherly man. He undoubtedly "loved the least," and I imagine that on April 17, as he went to rest in the Lord, he heard the words, "Well done, good and faithful servant, because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will place thee over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord."

Rest in peace, Phil Arnsby.

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