Twitter Thread by MaggieMay ■■■■■■

MaggieMay ■■■■■■
@CailinasEirinn

THREAD

What is it with @jkenney?

Is it about sex, or about the money?

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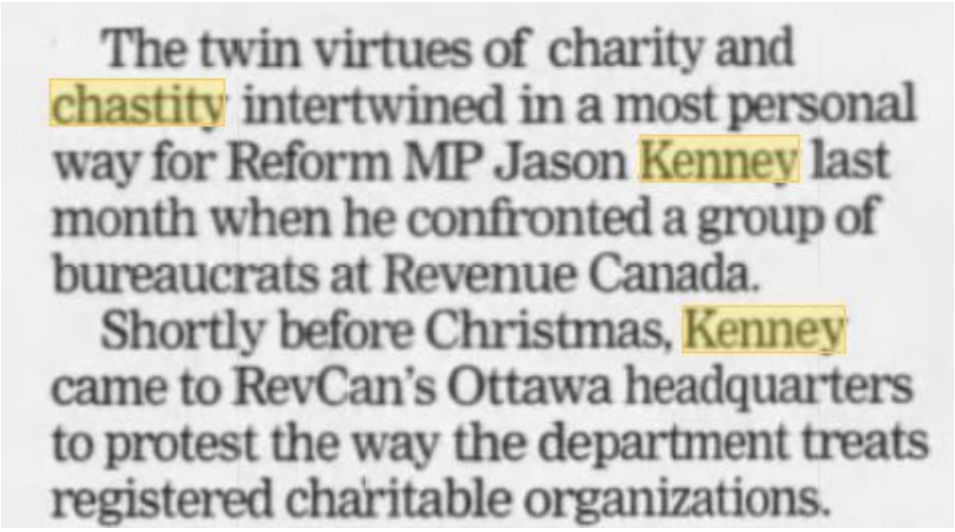
The twin virtues of charity and chastity intertwined in a most personal way for Reform MP Jason Kenney last month when he confronted a group of bureaucrats at Revenue Canada.

Shortly before Christmas, Kenney came to RevCan's Ottawa headquarters to protest the way the department treats registered charitable organizations.

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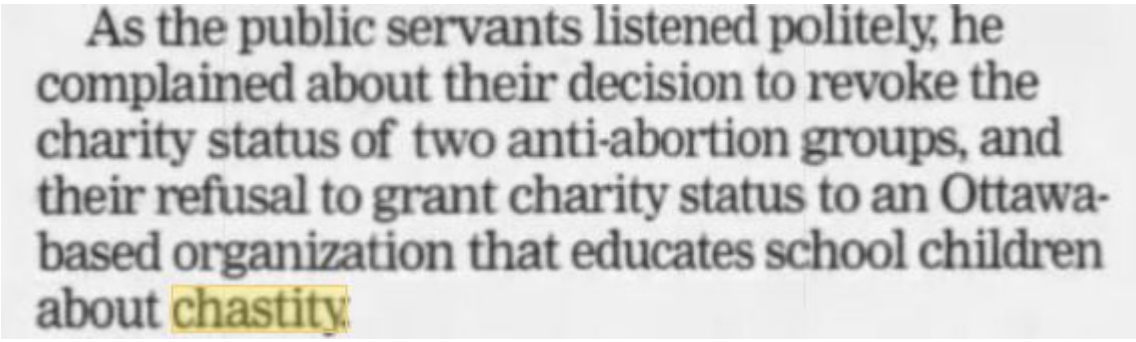
As the public servants listened politely, he complained about their decision to revoke the charity status of two anti-abortion groups, and their refusal to grant charity status to an Ottawa-based organization that educates school children about chastity.

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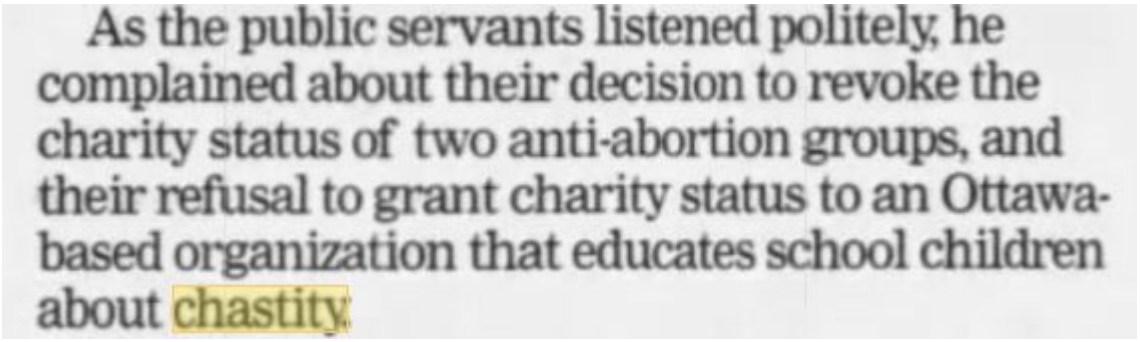
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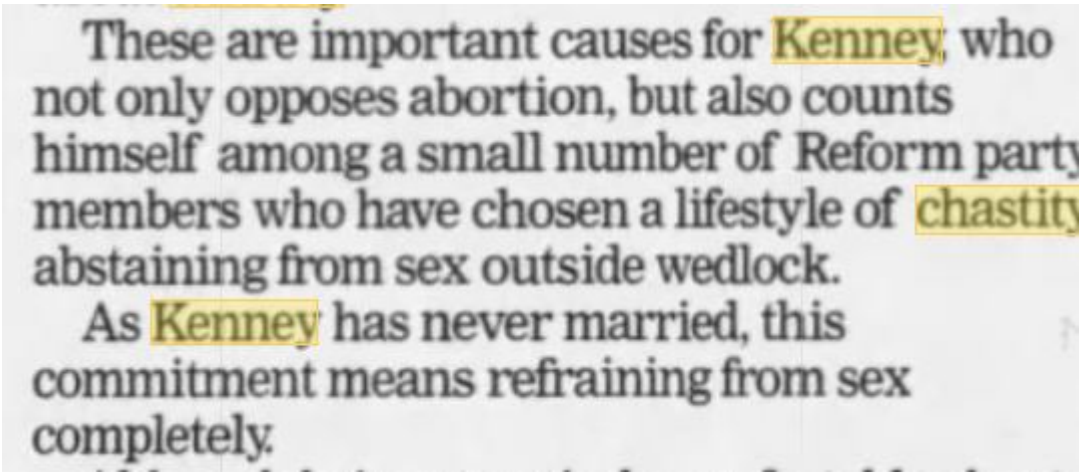
These are important causes for Kenney, who not only opposes abortion, but also counts himself among a small number of Reform party members who have chosen a lifestyle of chastity abstaining from sex outside wedlock.

As Kenney has never married, this commitment means refraining from sex completely.

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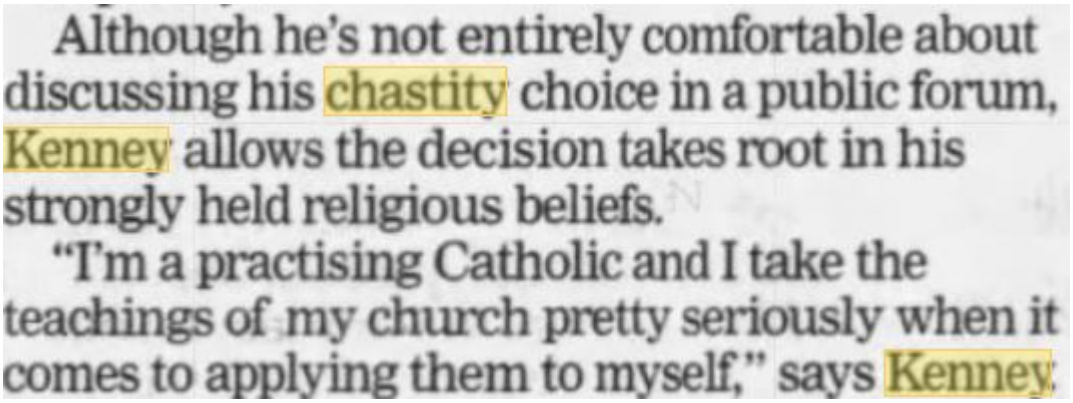
Although he's not entirely comfortable about discussing his chastity choice in a public forum, Kenney allows the decision takes root in his strongly held religious beliefs.

"I'm a practising Catholic and I take the teachings of my church pretty seriously when it comes to applying them to myself," says Kenney.

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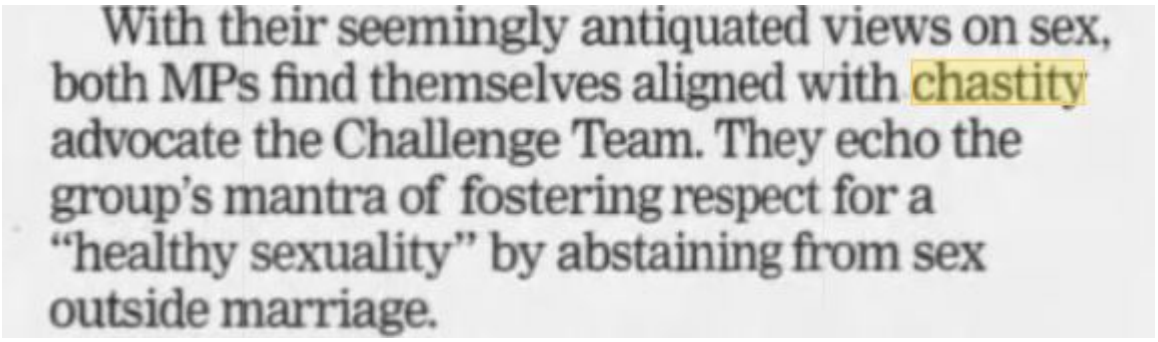
With their seemingly antiquated views on sex, both MPs find themselves aligned with chastity advocate the Challenge Team. They echo the group's mantra of fostering respect for a "healthy sexuality" by abstaining from sex outside marriage.

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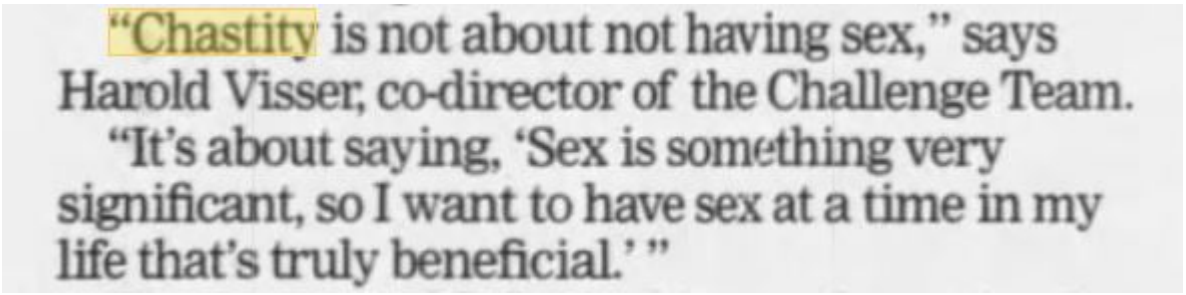
"Chastity is not about not having sex," says Harold Visser, co-director of the Challenge Team.
"It's about saying, 'Sex is something very significant, so I want to have sex at a time in my life that's truly beneficial.' "

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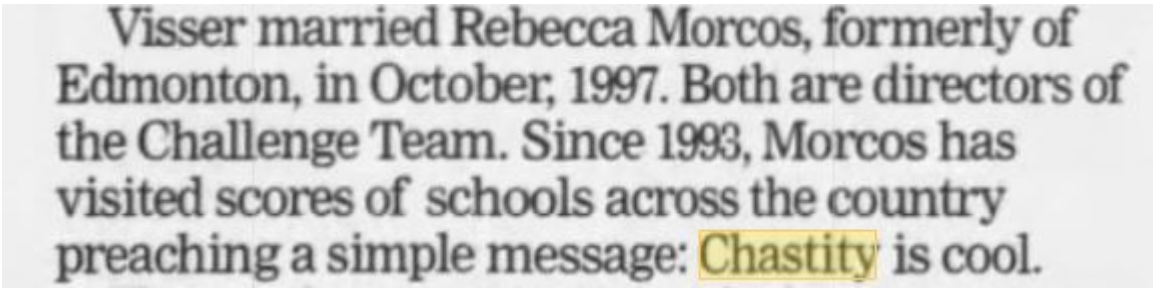
Visser married Rebecca Morcos, formerly of Edmonton, in October, 1997. Both are directors of the Challenge Team. Since 1993, Morcos has visited scores of schools across the country preaching a simple message: Chastity is cool.

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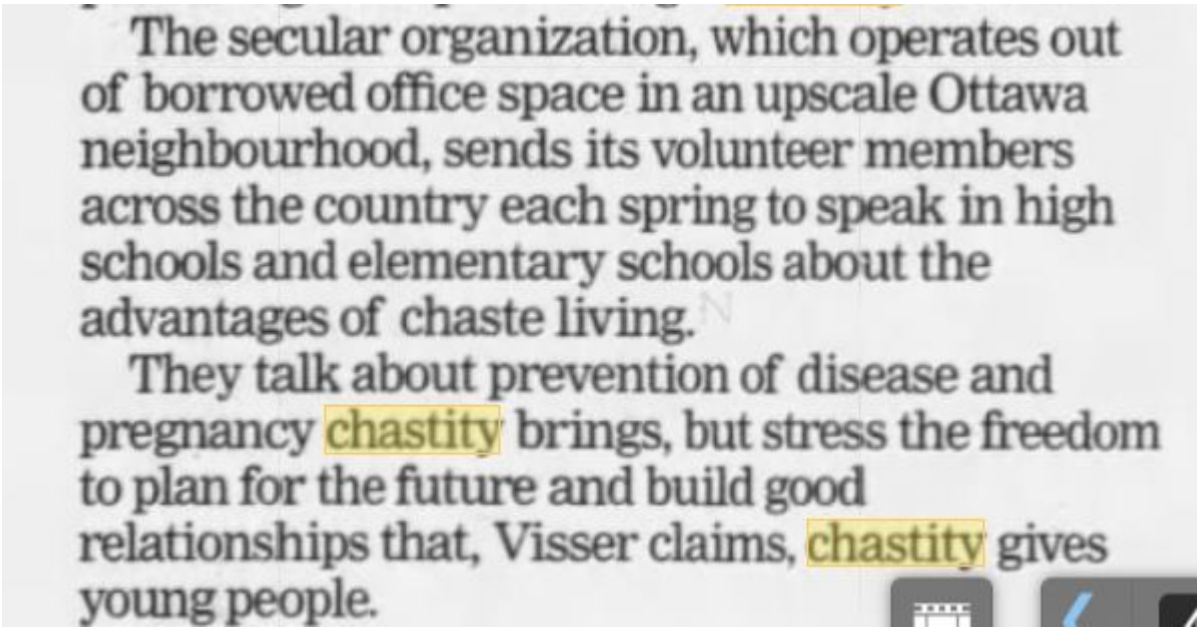
The secular organization, which operates out of borrowed office space in an upscale Ottawa neighbourhood, sends its volunteer members across the country each spring to speak in high schools and elementary schools about the advantages of chaste living.
They talk about prevention of disease and pregnancy chastity brings, but stress the freedom to plan for the future and build good relationships that, Visser claims, chastity gives young people.

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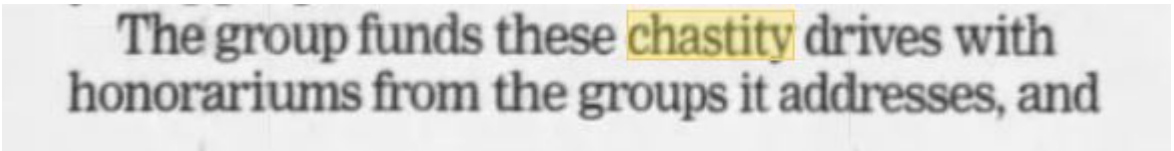
The group funds these chastity drives with honorariums from the groups it addresses, and

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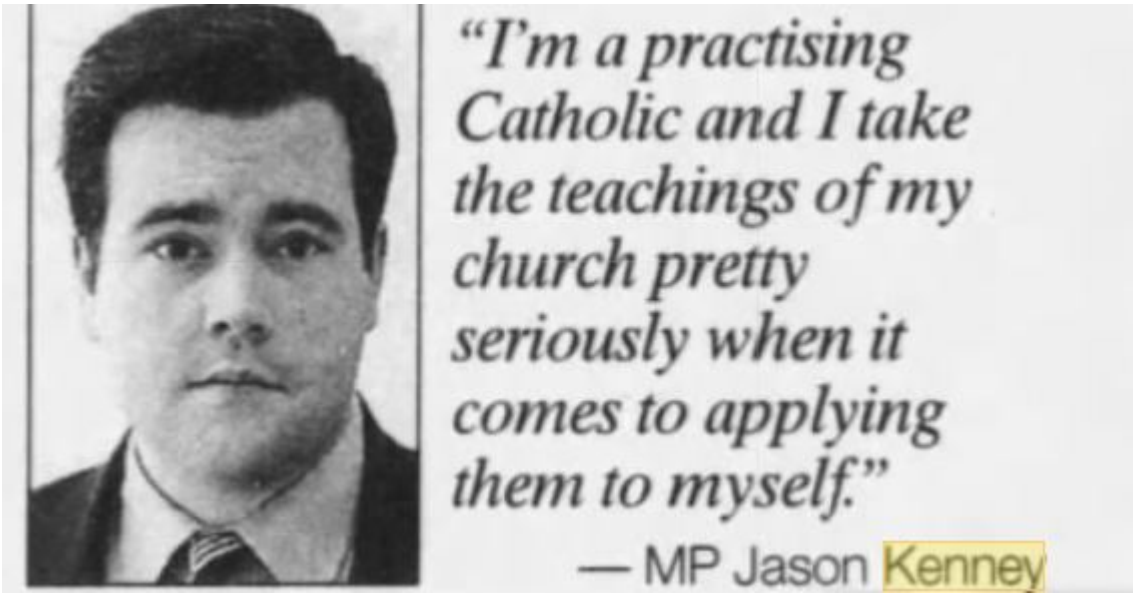

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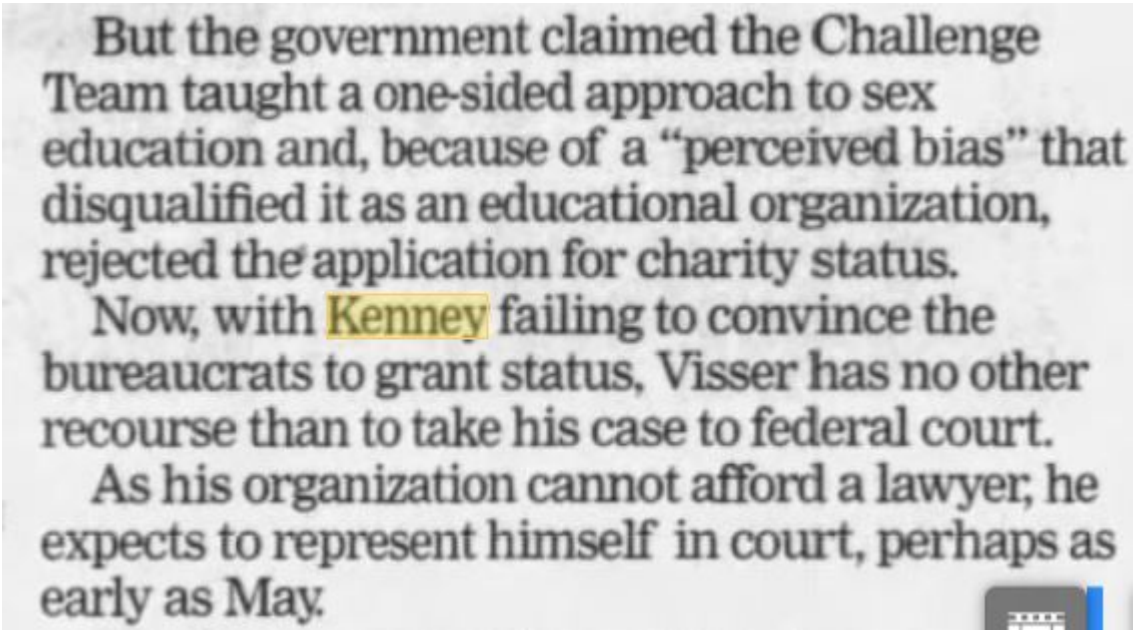

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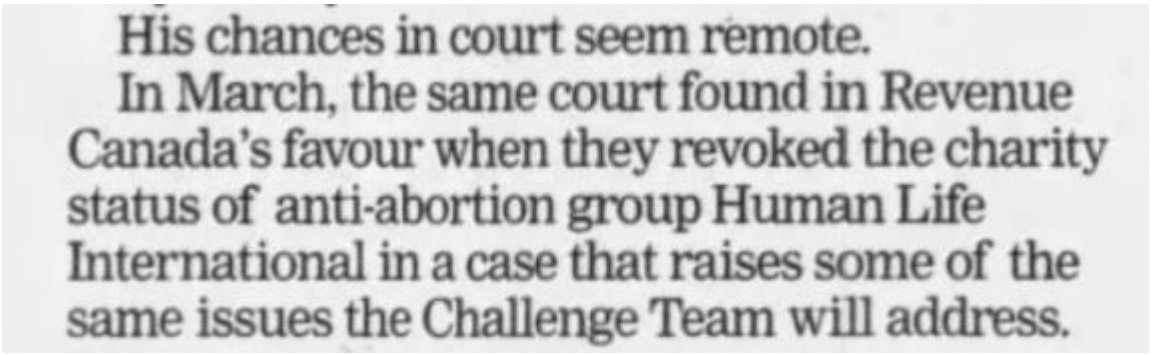

His chances in court seem remote.

In March, the same court found in Revenue Canada's favour when they revoked the charity status of anti-abortion group Human Life International in a case that raises some of the same issues the Challenge Team will address.

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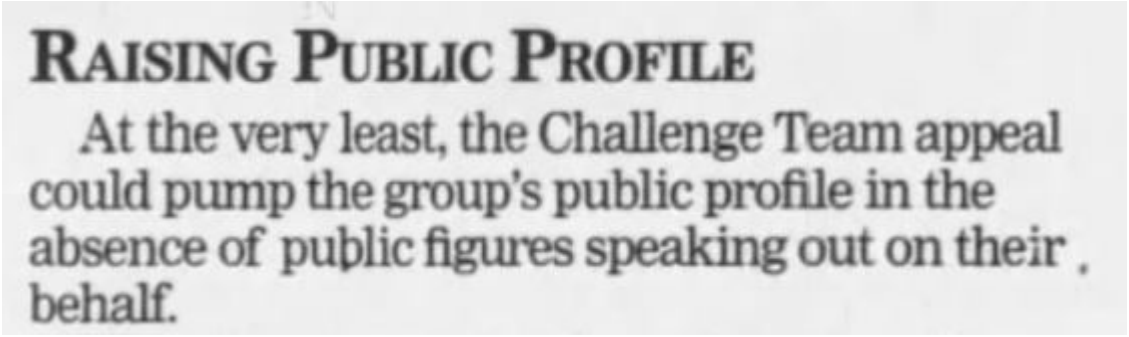

RAISING PUBLIC PROFILE

At the very least, the Challenge Team appeal could pump the group's public profile in the absence of public figures speaking out on their behalf.

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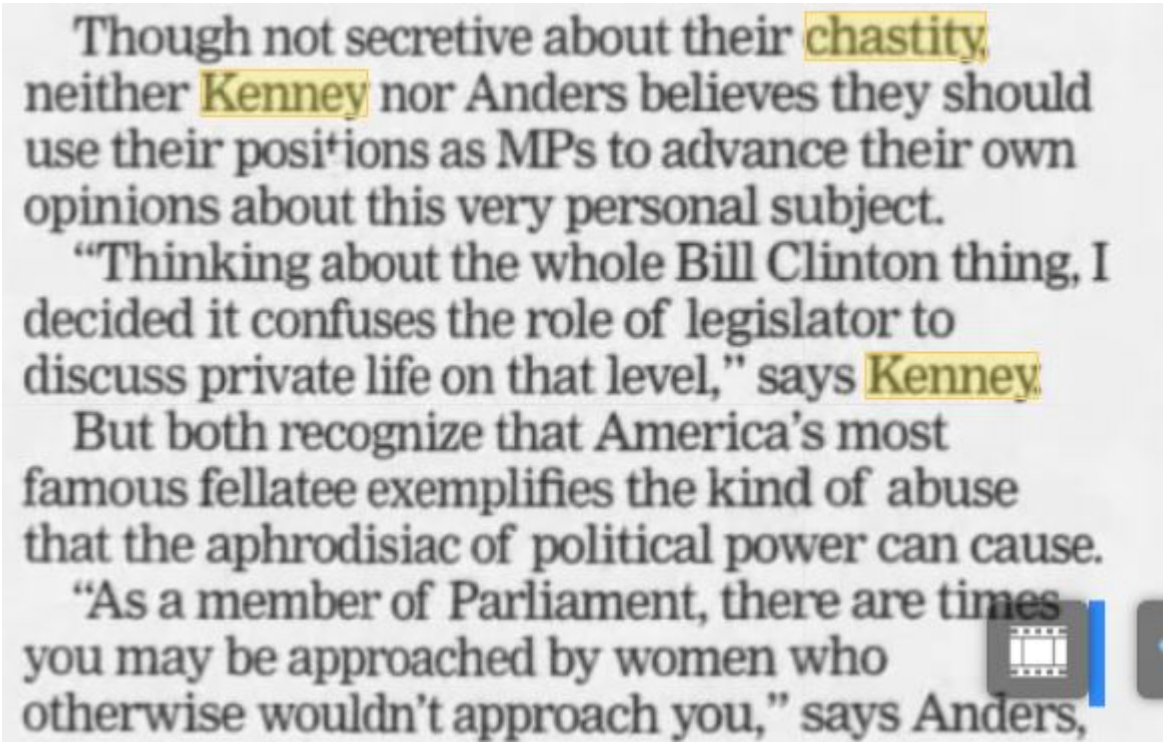

Though not secretive about their chastity, neither Kenney nor Anders believes they should use their positions as MPs to advance their own opinions about this very personal subject.

"Thinking about the whole Bill Clinton thing, I decided it confuses the role of legislator to discuss private life on that level," says Kenney.

But both recognize that America's most famous fellatee exemplifies the kind of abuse that the aphrodisiac of political power can cause.

"As a member of Parliament, there are times you may be approached by women who otherwise wouldn't approach you," says Anders,

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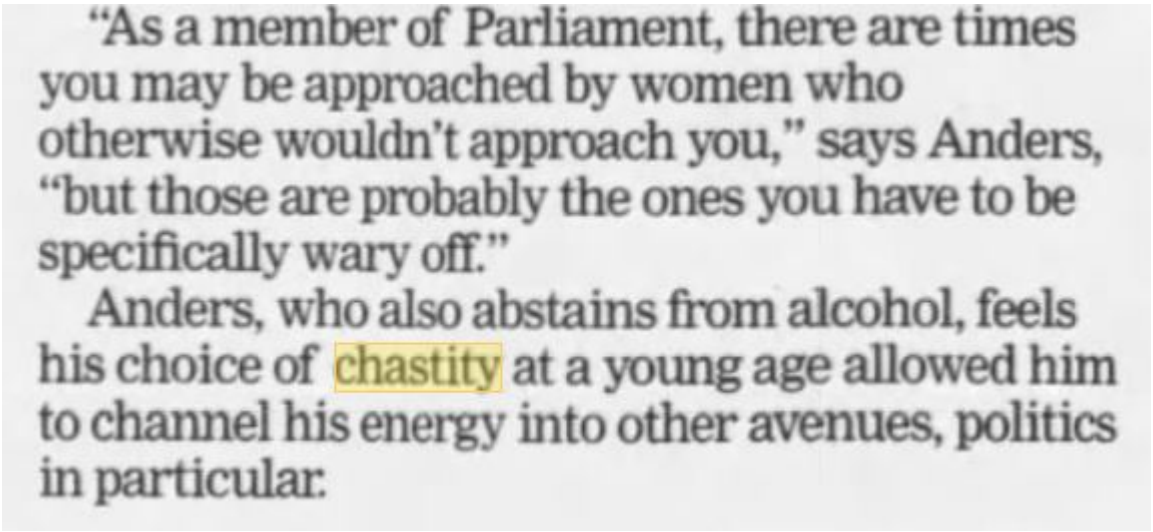
"As a member of Parliament, there are times you may be approached by women who otherwise wouldn't approach you," says Anders, "but those are probably the ones you have to be specifically wary off."

Anders, who also abstains from alcohol, feels his choice of chastity at a young age allowed him to channel his energy into other avenues, politics in particular.

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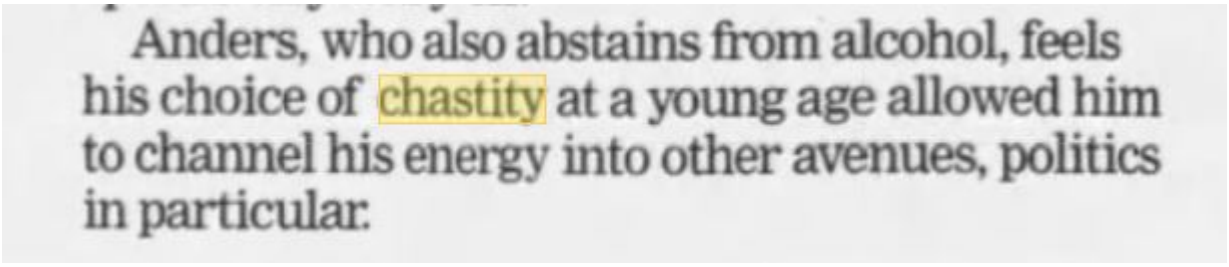
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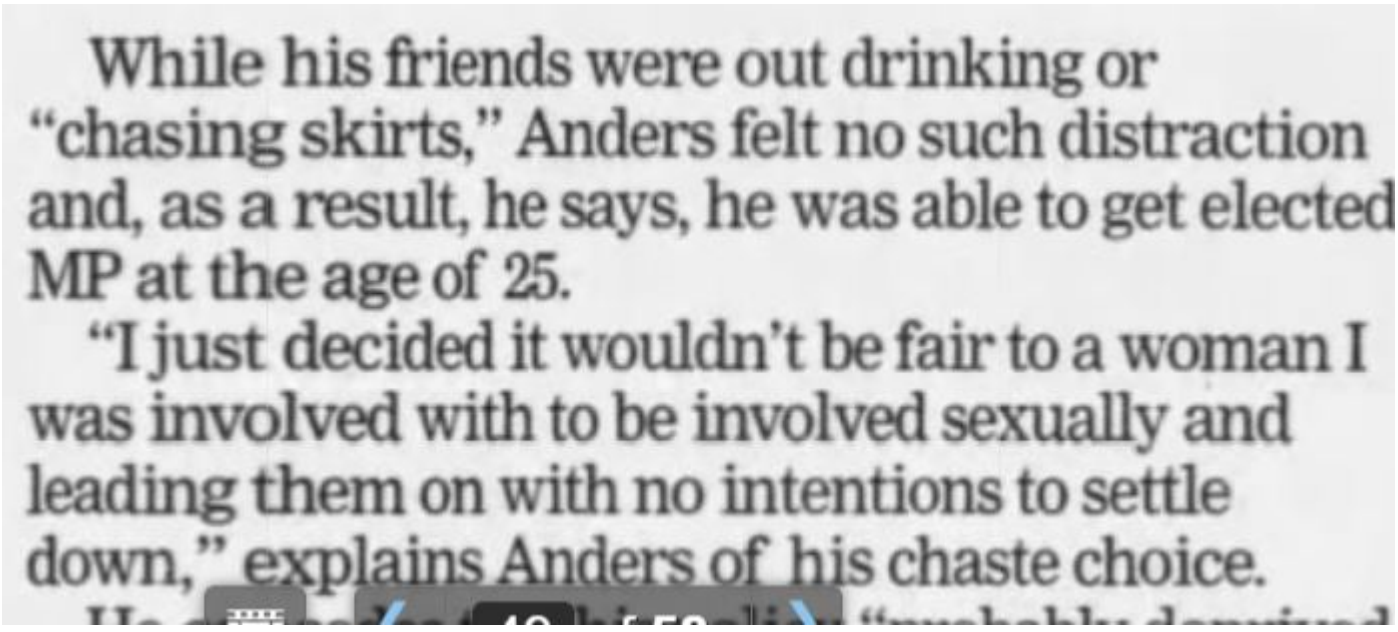
While his friends were out drinking or "chasing skirts," Anders felt no such distraction and, as a result, he says, he was able to get elected MP at the age of 25.

"I just decided it wouldn't be fair to a woman I was involved with to be involved sexually and leading them on with no intentions to settle down," explains Anders of his chaste choice.

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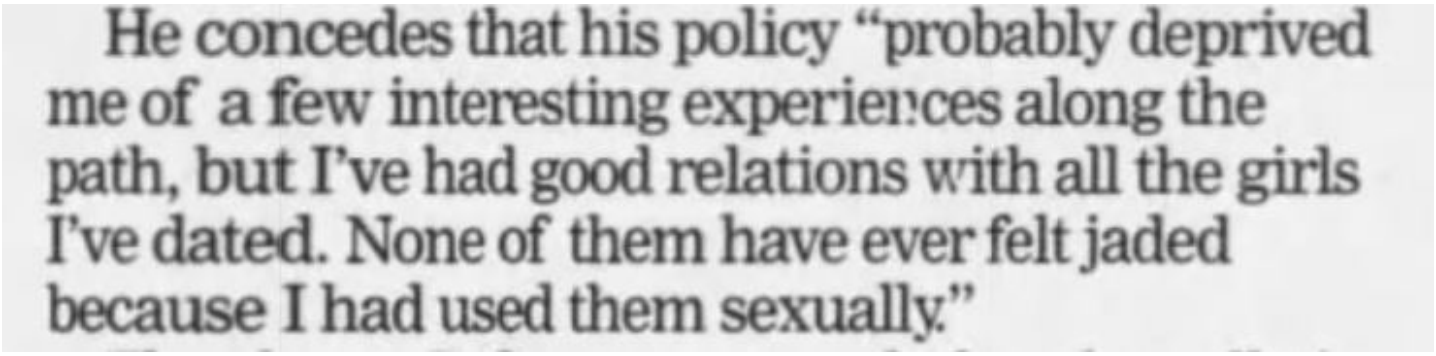
He concedes that his policy "probably deprived me of a few interesting experiences along the path, but I've had good relations with all the girls I've dated. None of them have ever felt jaded because I had used them sexually."

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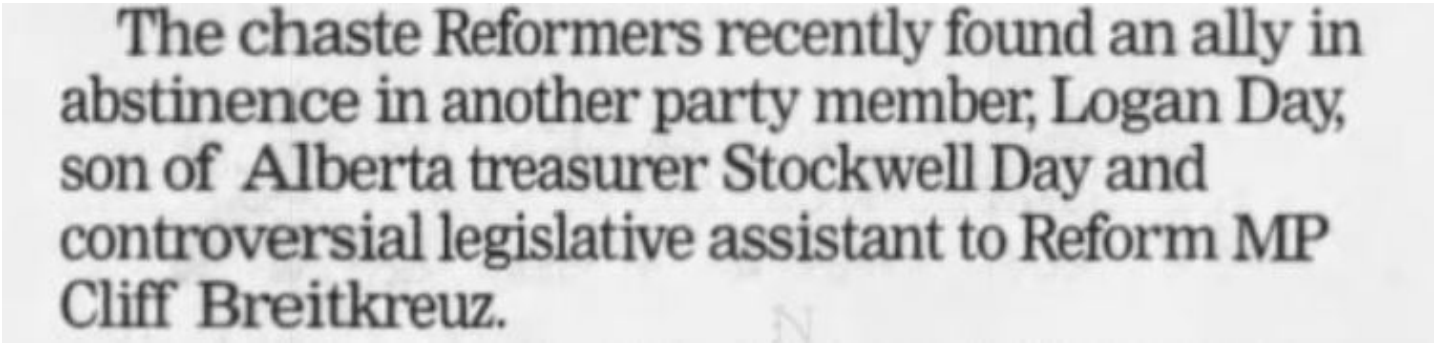
The chaste Reformers recently found an ally in abstinence in another party member, Logan Day, son of Alberta treasurer Stockwell Day and controversial legislative assistant to Reform MP Cliff Breitkreuz.

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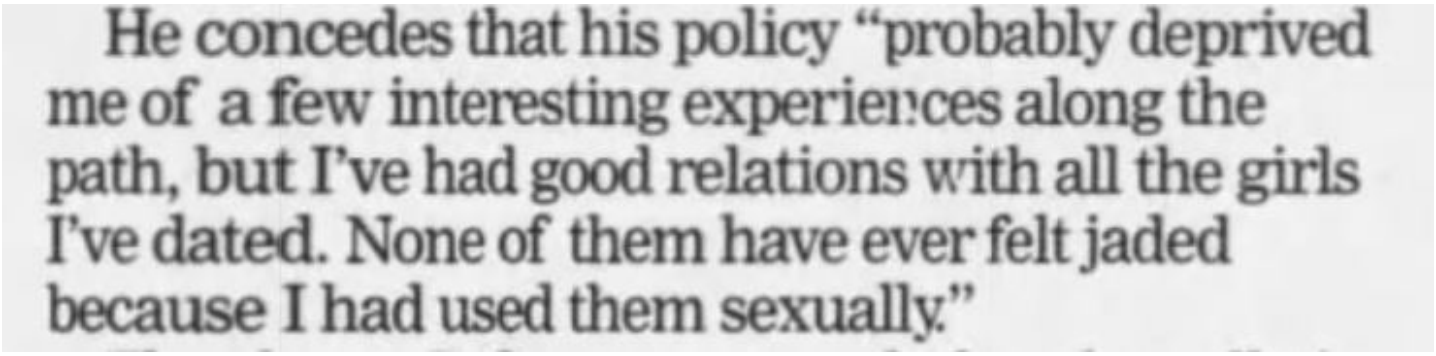
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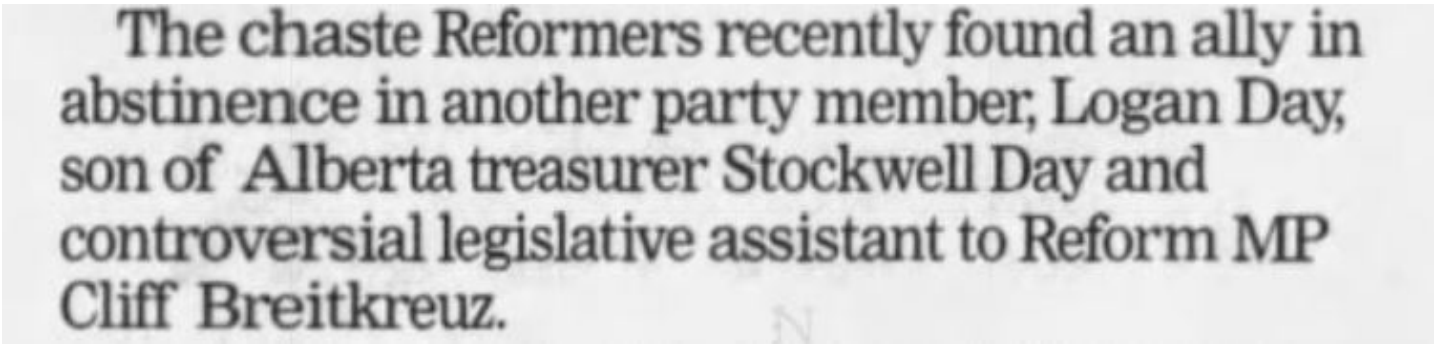
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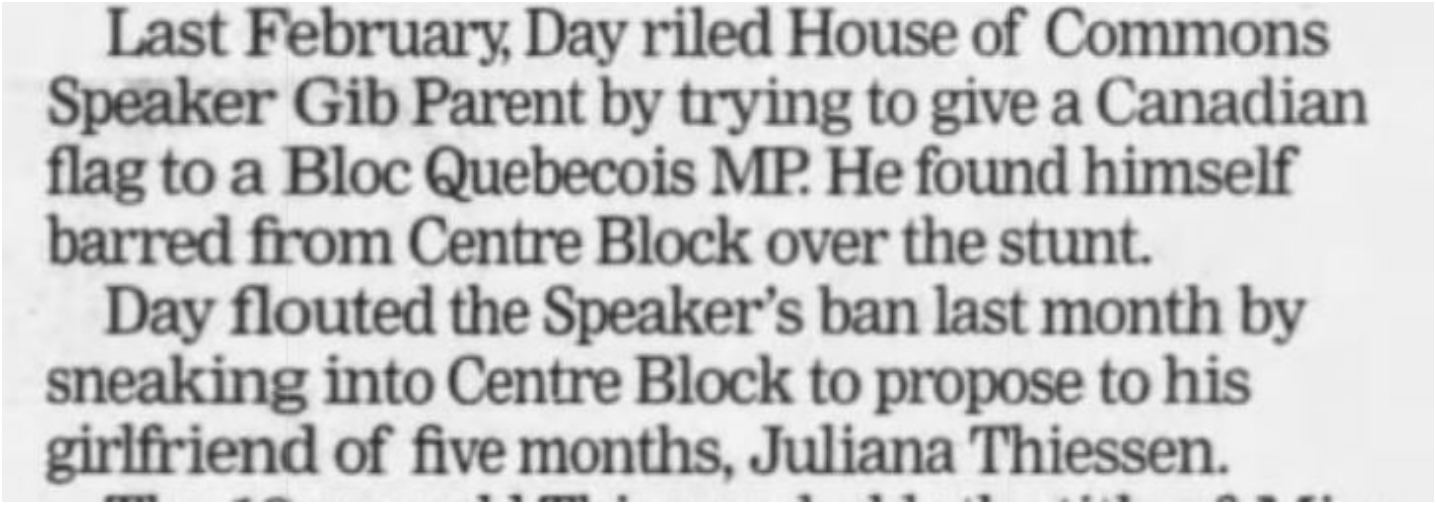
Last February, Day riled House of Commons Speaker Gib Parent by trying to give a Canadian flag to a Bloc Quebecois MP. He found himself barred from Centre Block over the stunt.

Day flouted the Speaker's ban last month by sneaking into Centre Block to propose to his girlfriend of five months, Juliana Thiessen.

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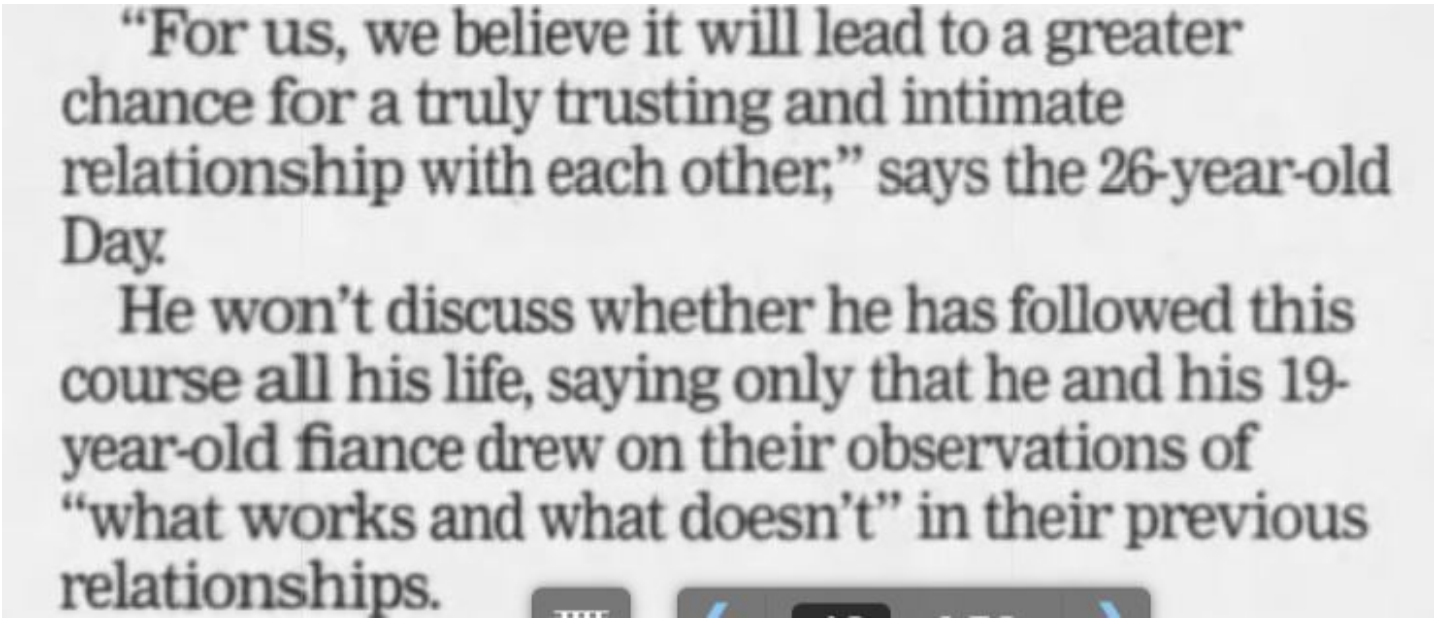
"For us, we believe it will lead to a greater chance for a truly trusting and intimate relationship with each other," says the 26-year-old Day.

He won't discuss whether he has followed this course all his life, saying only that he and his 19-year-old fiance drew on their observations of "what works and what doesn't" in their previous relationships.

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Echoing the secular slant of the Challenge Team, Day says his choice is more pragmatic than a matter of belief, but admits a certain amount of divine intervention in his upcoming marriage.

"Anyone who knows me and saw the headline, 'Miss Canada engaged to Logan Day,' will believe in miracles," he says.

"I believe she's a gift from God and I want to treat her that way."

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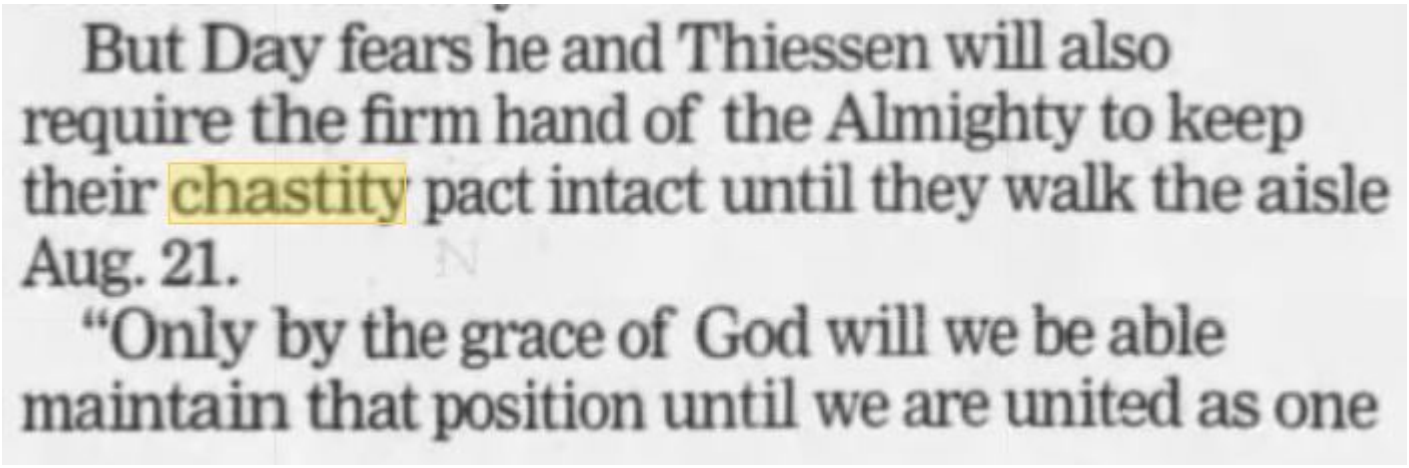

But Day fears he and Thiessen will also require the firm hand of the Almighty to keep their chastity pact intact until they walk the aisle Aug. 21.

"Only by the grace of God will we be able maintain that position until we are united as one

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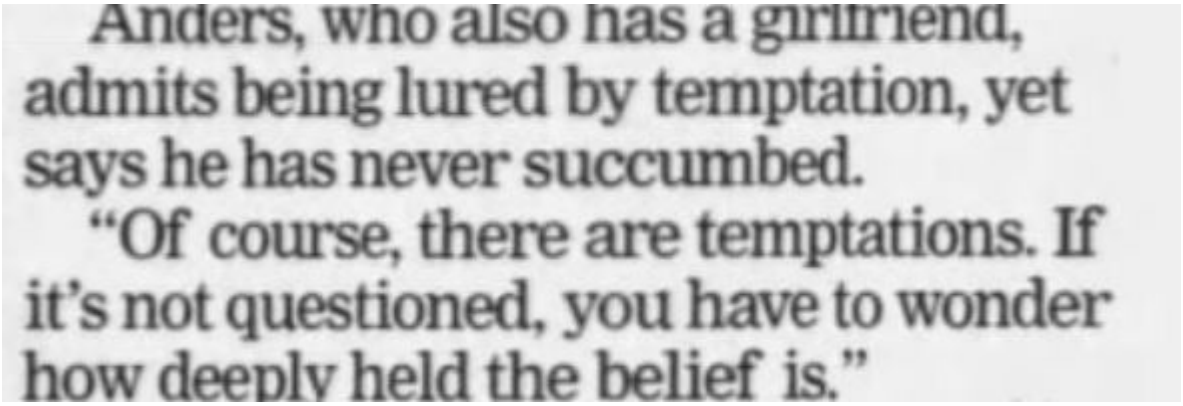

Anders, who also has a girlfriend, admits being lured by temptation, yet says he has never succumbed.

"Of course, there are temptations. If it's not questioned, you have to wonder how deeply held the belief is."

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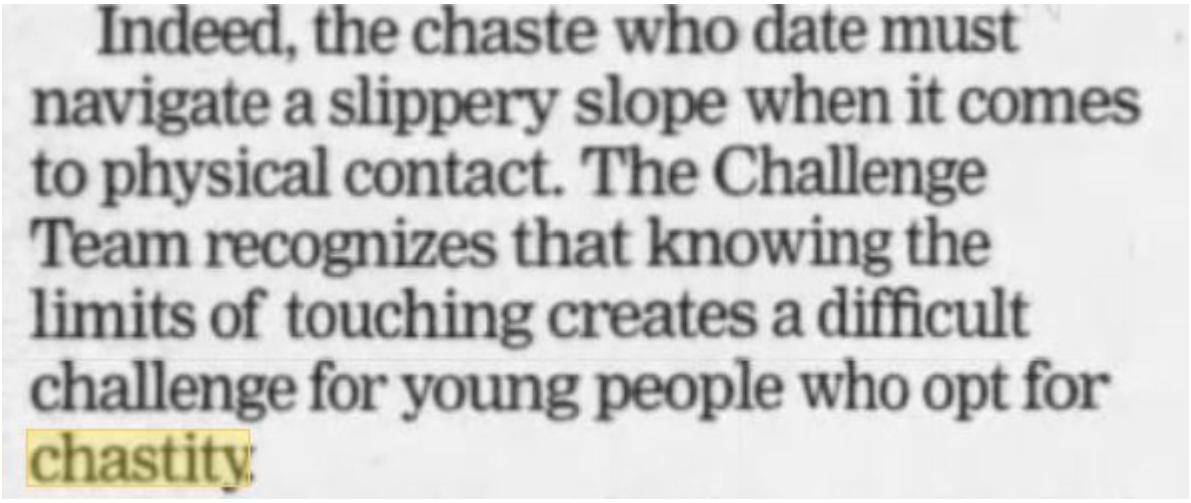
Indeed, the chaste who date must navigate a slippery slope when it comes to physical contact. The Challenge Team recognizes that knowing the limits of touching creates a difficult challenge for young people who opt for chastity.

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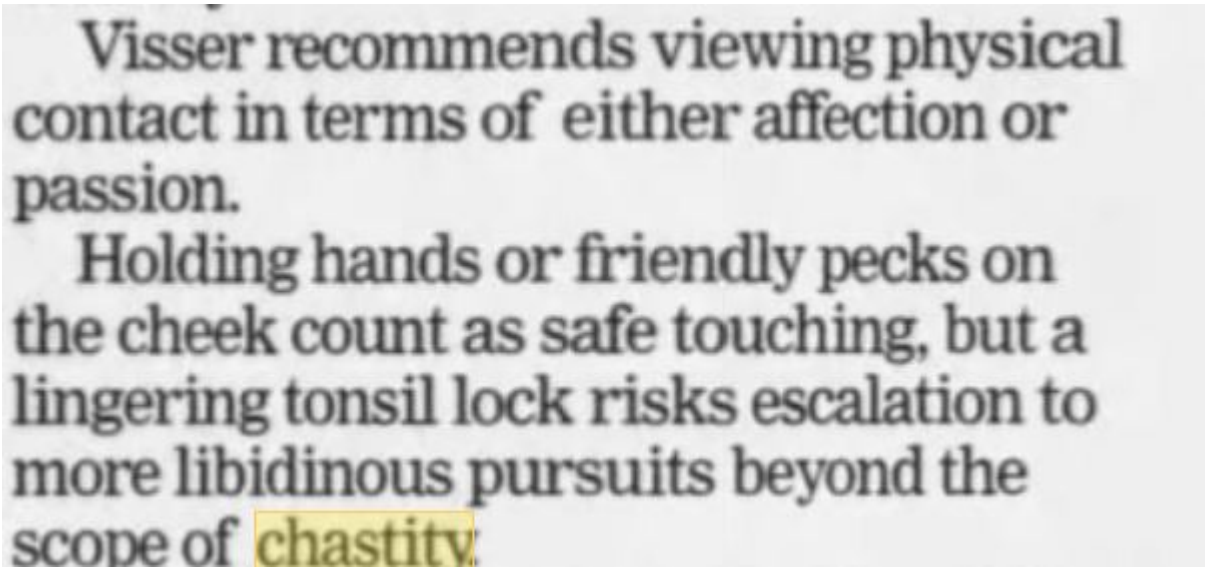
Visser recommends viewing physical contact in terms of either affection or passion.

Holding hands or friendly pecks on the cheek count as safe touching, but a lingering tonsil lock risks escalation to more libidinous pursuits beyond the scope of chastity.

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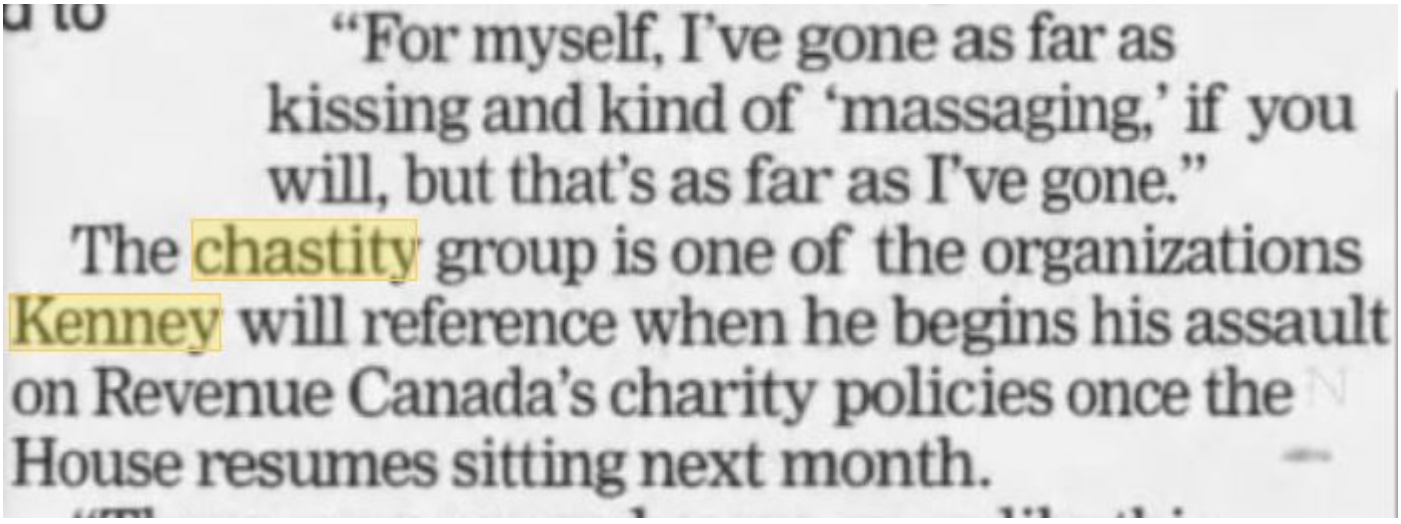
"For myself, I've gone as far as kissing and kind of 'massaging,' if you will, but that's as far as I've gone."

The chastity group is one of the organizations Kenney will reference when he begins his assault on Revenue Canada's charity policies once the House resumes sitting next month.

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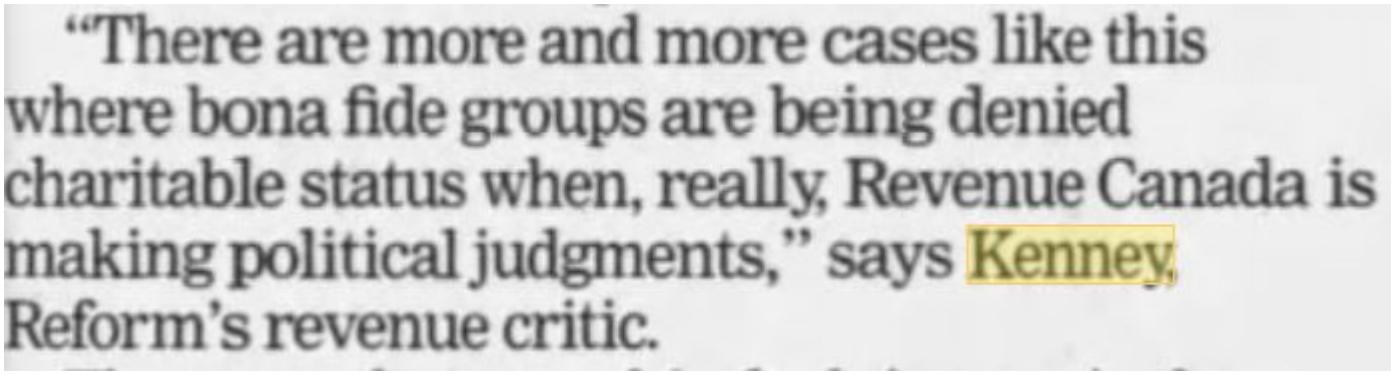
"There are more and more cases like this where bona fide groups are being denied charitable status when, really, Revenue Canada is making political judgments," says Kenney, Reform's revenue critic.

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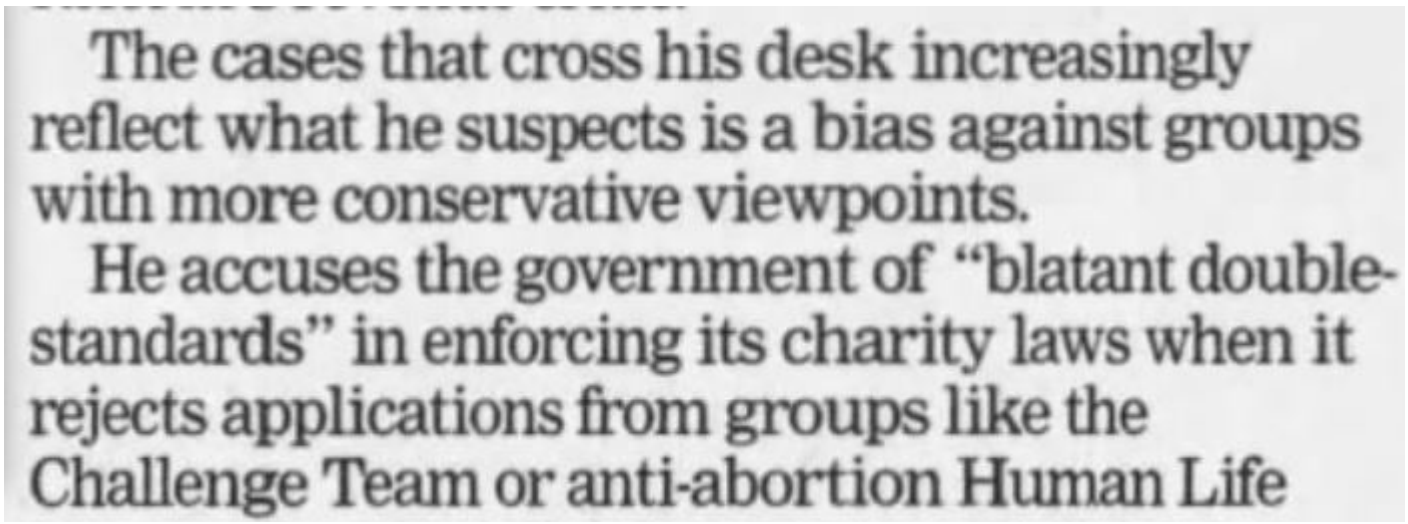
The cases that cross his desk increasingly reflect what he suspects is a bias against groups with more conservative viewpoints.

He accuses the government of "blatant double-standards" in enforcing its charity laws when it rejects applications from groups like the Challenge Team or anti-abortion Human Life

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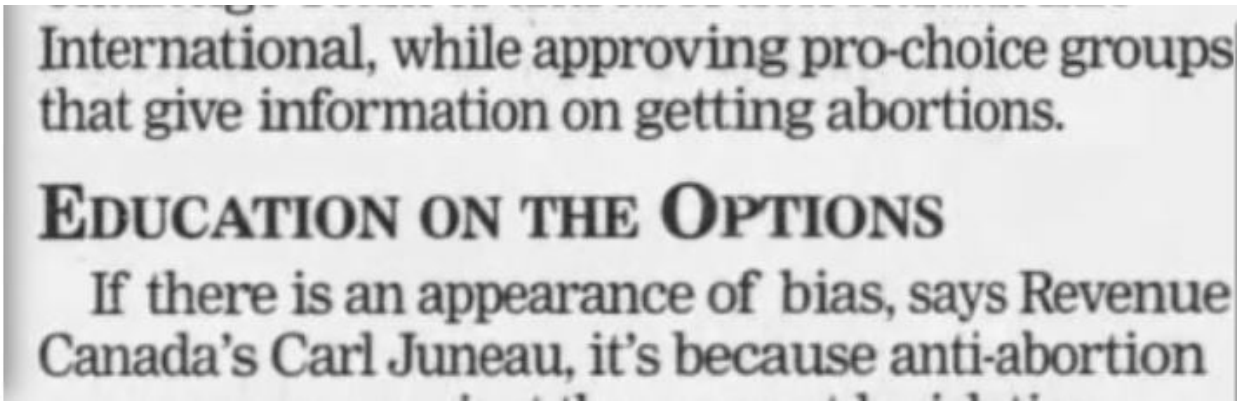
International, while approving pro-choice groups that give information on getting abortions.

EDUCATION ON THE OPTIONS

If there is an appearance of bias, says Revenue Canada's Carl Juneau, it's because anti-abortion

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groups argue against the current legislation, while pro-choicers often provide education about all possible options, including abortion.

"Organizations that go about their job to counsel people about what solutions there are to a crisis pregnancy are okay," says Juneau, "but the organizations that happen to be on the other

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side of the fence are implicitly lobbying in favou of a change in the law. That's the problem."

Juneau is responsible for technical interpretations of charity law in an area tinted by grey-scales of subjectivity. Ultimately, groups that provide a balanced view of an issue get the green light for charity status. Those with one-

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sided opinions, especially in politically combustible areas like abortion, risk losing their charity designation.

The Challenge Team aims to educate young people about "healthy sexuality," yet offers only a model that doesn't include the approximately 50 per cent of Canadian teenagers who are sexually active

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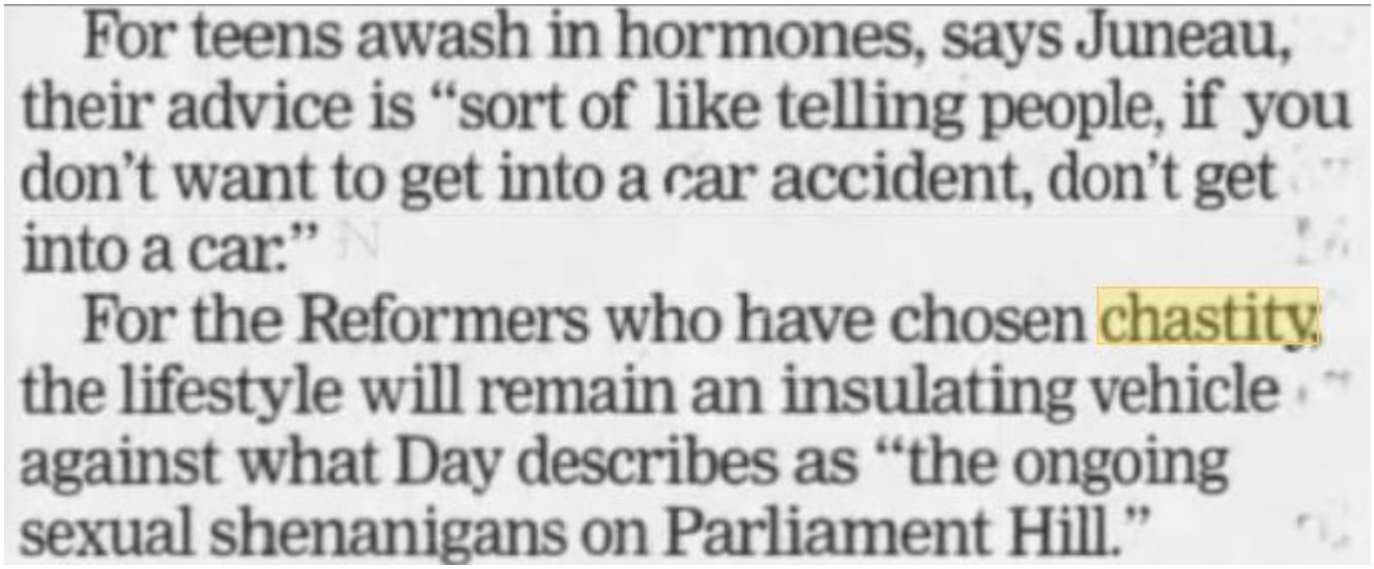
For teens awash in hormones, says Juneau, their advice is "sort of like telling people, if you don't want to get into a car accident, don't get into a car."

For the Reformers who have chosen chastity, the lifestyle will remain an insulating vehicle against what Day describes as "the ongoing sexual shenanigans on Parliament Hill."

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"If you believe the rumours and the e-mails and the stories in the restaurant, I would say that male MPs and female assistants is the hottest recipe here on the Hill," Day says.

"At least, it starts out hot and ends up in devastation."

Ottawa Citizen