



Abortion Rights  
Coalition of Canada

Coalition pour le droit à  
l'avortement au Canada

*Your  
Voice for Choice*

*Canada's only national political pro-choice advocacy group*

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## **Position Paper #82**

# **Anti-Choice “Crisis Pregnancy Centres” Should Not Be Charities**

The mission and activities of anti-choice counselling agencies, or “crisis pregnancy centres”, are **inherently** political and biased, and should therefore be disqualified from charitable status. ARCC believes that Canada Revenue Agency’s view of “political activities” is:

- a) too narrowly focused on partisan political activities;
- b) overly concerned with “public” communications, neglecting the effects of “private” communications such as occur in counselling sessions;
- c) insufficiently aware of the wider social-political influence some charitable organizations seek to promote.

ARCC has identified about 170 “crisis pregnancy centres (CPCs) in Canada – 125 of them registered with CRA as charities. Between 2011 and 2015, registered CPCs reported revenues of \$67.6 million and issued about \$38.5 million in tax receipts.

CPCs are anti-abortion agencies that present themselves as unbiased medical clinics or counselling centres. They aim to be open and inviting to women seeking support for unwanted pregnancies, and advertise under the guise that they will provide information and help on all options available to pregnant women.

However, CPCs are not unbiased, non-judgemental, or medical clinics. Most are Christian ministries, and are morally opposed to legal rights that Canadian women possess.

In general, they will not refer clients for contraception or abortion; instead, they try to persuade women out of abortion, often through misinformation or scare-mongering.

The public language used in advertising for CPCs is purposefully vague, for example: “Pregnant? Need help?” or “Offering non-judgemental support.” In reading these advertisements, one would not automatically think that these organizations are tied to a particular religious ideology. This strategy is deliberate – CPCs do not want the general Canadian public to know that they are anti-abortion, as this may turn away potential clients, given that the majority of Canadians are pro-choice.

The right to abortion is settled policy in Canada. Yet CPCs **exist** to oppose it and to dissuade Canadians from exercising that right.

CPCs pose a significant threat to Canadians' access to a basic right, because they function as not only a physical barrier, but also as a cultural and psychological barrier by reinforcing abortion stigma in their "private" communications with individuals, and fostering feelings of guilt, fear, anxiety, and confusion in clients considering abortion.

In ARCC's view, no "crisis pregnancy centre" should be registered as a charity. Their mission is literally that – a "mission" to stop abortion based on religious doctrine. They work to stigmatize abortion, constrain individuals' access to it, and ultimately to recriminalize it. They seek to subvert the rights of Canadians through deception and manipulation. Their deeply-ingrained bias means it would not be possible for them to alter their services to the point where they would be legitimately charitable (such as by only providing practical services to women with wanted pregnancies).

In general, ARCC recommends that CRA take a wider view of the mission of organizations and judge whether the purposes of the group – both overt and less overt – are of general benefit to the wider Canadian public.

**References:**

Canada Revenue Agency. 2003. *Policy Statement-022, Political Activities*. <http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/chrts-gvng/chrts/plcy/cps/cps-022-eng.html>

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