



Abortion Rights
Coalition of Canada

Coalition pour le droit à
l'avortement au Canada

Court Injunctions and Bubble Zone Laws in Canada

Protecting facilities that provide abortions, abortion providers' homes, doctors' offices, and patients.

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Table of Contents

Court Injunctions	1
Kensington Clinic, Calgary	1
Woman's Health Options, Edmonton	1
Cabbagetown Clinic, Toronto; and four Ontario hospitals*	2
Morgentaler Clinic, Toronto	2
Chaleur Regional Hospital, Bathurst, NB	2
Bubble Zone Laws	3
British Columbia.....	3
Newfoundland and Labrador	4
Quebec.....	4
Ontario (pending)	6

Court Injunctions

A total of four clinics and five hospitals in Canada have court injunctions that create a bubble zone area around the facility that prohibits or controls the presence of protesters. The terms for these injunctions are as follows.

In Quebec, two previous injunctions protecting two different clinics are no longer in force, after the provincial government passed a province-wide bubble zone law in December 2016.

Kensington Clinic, Calgary

An injunction was obtained in the early 1990's, which divided areas around the clinic into zones. A maximum of four protestors were allowed in certain areas, and a maximum of 20 protestors were allowed to gather across the street.

Woman's Health Options, Edmonton

An injunction was obtained in 1993 which prohibited picketing along the entire back alley behind the clinic, and half a block along the side street.

Cabbagetown Clinic, Toronto; and four Ontario hospitals*

The Dieleman injunction was obtained in 1994 for three clinics in Toronto: Cabbagetown, Scott, and Choice in Health. The latter is no longer protected as they have moved to a new location, and the Scott Clinic closed in 2016 due to owner/doctor retirement.

The Dieleman injunction also protects four specific hospitals in the province:

- Victoria Hospital (Westminster Campus), London
- University Hospital, London
- North Bay Civic Hospital, North Bay
- Brantford General Hospital, Brantford

It provides for a 60-foot (18m) “no protest” zone around the hospitals, surrounded by a 100-foot (30m) “deep zone” of restricted access in which staff and patients have a 10-foot (3m) personal zone.

It also provides for a 500-foot zone (150m) around the homes of seven named doctors in the same cities plus Kingston, and a 15-foot zone (5m) around their office buildings. However, since 23 years have passed since the injunction was granted, it’s likely that at least some of these doctors are no longer practicing, or no longer working/living at the addresses as recorded in the injunction. If not, they would no longer be protected by the injunction.

** The injunction was mistakenly dismissed by a court in January 2017, but the Ontario Liberal government brought an urgent motion in June to reinstate it. However, the judge declined to do so, saying the matter required a hearing. This is still pending.*

Morgentaler Clinic, Toronto

This private injunction specifies a 500-foot zone (150m) around the clinic. The injunction is not location-bound and can move with the clinic. It is enforced by the sheriff rather than the local police, so protestors sometimes come on Saturdays when the sheriff’s office is closed.

Chaleur Regional Hospital, Bathurst, NB

In May 2017, the New Brunswick was granted a permanent injunction against protesters, by Court of Queen’s Bench Justice Reginald Leger. The injunction bans protesters from demonstrating anywhere on the hospital grounds. The judge said that anti-abortion picketers affiliated with the “40 Days for Life” campaign had put the safety of patients and employees at risk.

The hospital is operated by Vitalité Health Network. It applied for the injunction after the anti-abortion group obstructed traffic at the hospital and forced an ambulance to stop enroute to the emergency department in 2012. At the trial, the ambulance driver described having to brake “as fast as possible” because a picketer at the hospital had stepped off the sidewalk. His co-worker was tossed toward the back of the ambulance, causing the mask on a patient suffering from cardiac discomfort to be dislodged.

Link: *N.B. judge bans anti-abortion group from protesting outside Bathurst hospital.* Canadian Press. May 29, 2017. <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/new-brunswick/anti-abortion-injunction-bathurst-hospital-vitalite-1.4136390>

Bubble Zone Laws

British Columbia

The *Access to Abortion Services Act* was passed in 1995 after years of heavy and aggressive protesting at two clinics, especially Everywoman's Health Centre, and also in response to the shooting of provider Dr. Gary Romalis in November 1995.

The Act creates "access" zones around facilities which provide abortion services, the homes and offices of doctors who provide abortion services, and the homes of other abortion service providers (e.g., clinic staff). The dimensions of these zones are calculated from the edge of the lot on which the home or facility is located and are set at:

- 160 metres for a doctor's or service provider's home
- 10 metres for a doctor's office (which can be extended up to a maximum of 20 metres through an Order in Council)
- up to a maximum of 50 metres for a facility (the distance to be determined by Cabinet; facilities must apply for a zone so it can be customized)

Within those access zones, it is an offence to engage in any of the following activities:

- sidewalk interference
- protesting
- besetting
- physical interference with, or attempted interference with, a patient, doctor, or abortion service provider
- intimidation of a patient, doctor, or abortion service provider

Currently, only three clinics are protected by the bubble zone (no hospitals): Everywoman's Health Centre, Elizabeth Bagshaw Women's Clinic, and Vancouver Island Women's Clinic.

Links:

Law: http://www.bclaws.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/96001_01

Pro-Choice Press, Winter 95-96. See first four stories: <http://www.prochoiceactionnetwork-canada.org/prochoicepress/9596win.shtml>

Convicted anti-abortion protesters challenge clinic access zone (and lose). by Joyce Arthur, Pro-Choice Action Network. Sept 2007, revised Jan 2009. This is an account of the final appeal by protesters. They lost this case and appealed to the Supreme Court of Canada, which declined to hear the appeal. This means the Act stands as constitutional. <http://www.prochoiceactionnetwork-canada.org/articles/bubble-zone-case.html>

Newfoundland and Labrador

The Nfld/Labrador *Access to Abortion Services Act* was passed in November 2016. It is nearly identical to the BC Act. Athena Health Centre, the abortion clinic in St. Johns, had moved in 2015 and became besieged by protesters. The clinic began to collect evidence and do research, and met with government ministers to get support. The Justice Minister advocated the law in public, and in the meantime before it passed, the clinic was given an injunction to protect patients. The government adapted BC legislation because BC's law had already withstood constitutional scrutiny by the courts.

Links:

Law: <https://www.canlii.org/en/nl/laws/stat/snl-2016-c-a-1.02/latest/snl-2016-c-a-1.02.html>

Bubble Zone Gets Royal Assent: NL Becomes Second Canadian Province to Have Bubble Zone Law. The Overcast. By Elizabeth Whitten. December 28, 2016. <https://theovercast.ca/bubble-zone-gets-royal-assent-nl-becomes-second-canadian-province-to-have-bubble-zone-law/>

Anti-abortion protest 'bubble zone' law on the right side of Charter: lawyer. CBC News. Jun 20, 2016. <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/newfoundland-labrador/anti-abortion-protest-jonathan-mcdonald-bubble-zone-law-1.3643249>

Quebec

The Morgentaler Clinic in Montreal was protected by an injunction, but it needed regular renewal and the process was very costly. In 2015, the clinic moved to the same building as Clinique médicale Fémina, and the injunction then covered both clinics. Protesters openly said they would start picketing other clinics, so at least one other clinic went to court and got an injunction too. The Morgentaler Clinic then decided to pursue a provincial bubble zone law, and got the support of the Health Minister, who ended up adding the law to another law related to drug marketing. The National Assembly of Québec unanimously passed Bill 92 on Dec 7, 2016, without fanfare. The law was inspired by BC's law.

The law increases the powers of the Régie de l'assurance maladie du Québec to regulate commercial practices in the field of medicinal products, and to protect access to services for voluntary termination of pregnancy. The Act amends a number of statutes, including the *Health Services and Social Services Act*, to prohibit impeding access to a place where health or social services are provided, and demonstrations in the vicinity of places where voluntary abortion services are offered. Thus, it is forbidden for any person to "demonstrate, in any way, or perform any other form of intervention in an attempt to discourage a woman from obtaining [a voluntary abortion] or to contest or to condemn their choice of obtaining it "within 50 meters of an abortion clinic in Quebec". Anti-abortion protesters who violate the "security perimeter" will be subject to a fine of \$250 to \$1,250. Those who, in addition, "threaten or intimidate a person who goes" to a clinic where abortions are practiced will incur a doubled fine of \$500 to \$2,500.

Below are some links, mostly in French. A Google Translate of the clinics' press release is also below.

Projet de loi no 92 (2016, chapitre 28) : (Note: The bubble zone law is one small part of the legislation, see Sections 75, 76, and 79):

English: *Chapter S-4.2, Act respecting health services and social services:*
<https://www.canlii.org/en/qc/laws/stat/cqlr-c-s-4.2/latest/cqlr-c-s-4.2.html>

Français: *Loi visant à accroître les pouvoirs de la Régie de l'assurance maladie du Québec, à encadrer les pratiques commerciales en matière de médicaments ainsi qu'à protéger l'accès aux services d'interruption volontaire de grossesse :*
<http://www2.publicationsduquebec.gouv.qc.ca/dynamicSearch/telecharge.php?type=5&file=2016C28F.PDF>

Press release from Régie de l'assurance maladie du Québec :
<http://www.ramq.gouv.qc.ca/fr/regie/salle-presse/communiques/2016/Pages/adoption-projet-loi-92.aspx>

History of law (government site): <http://www.assnat.qc.ca/fr/travaux-parlementaires/projets-loi/projet-loi-92-41-1.html>

FQPN report, Jan 18, 2017: <http://www.fqpn.qc.ca/actualites/zone-de-protection-autour-des-cliniques-davortement/>

FQPN press release: <http://www.fqpn.qc.ca/actualites-sujet/communiques-de-presse/>

Press release from Quebec clinics, Nov 29, 2016: <http://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/creation-de-zones-de-protection-autour-des-cliniques-davortement---la-securite-et-lacces-aux-cliniques-davortement-enfin-protéges-603671486.html>

English translation of clinics' press release:

Creation of protection zones around abortion clinics - Safety and access to abortion clinics finally protected

MONTREAL, Nov. 29, 2016 / CNW Telbec / - The Morgentaler Clinic, the Clinique médicale Fémina, and the Alternative Medical Clinic applaud the unanimous adoption of measures to protect women's privacy, security and access to clinics Planning and abortion. In the context of clause-by-clause consideration of Bill 92, An Act to increase the powers of the Régie de l'assurance maladie du Québec, to regulate drug marketing practices and to protect access Voluntary abortion services, the government is creating areas in which women can access clinics without fear of being harassed or harassed by activists who challenge the right to abortion.

"We demand that the government not wait for an unfortunate incident to legislate. We are grateful that Minister Barrette has taken government leadership in these legislative changes. We also want to highlight the work of Carole Poirier, MP for Hochelaga-Maisonneuve, who was the first parliamentarian to table a bill to this effect last February," said France Désilets, Executive Director of the Morgentaler Clinic.

With the creation of protection zones in the vicinity of family planning clinics, the government was able to protect women while preserving the freedom of expression of anti-choice activists. Thus, the government allows abortion-seeking women and health care professionals to do so safely and with respect for their right to privacy. Moreover, it does not ban the right to protest against abortion, but

provides a framework for the places where such demonstrations can take place.

It should be noted that the three clinics had to multiply the interventions before the courts to keep away the demonstrators who were setting up at the very door of the clinics to discourage women who had chosen to interrupt their pregnancy. Nicknamed the "Pavement Shelters" and displaying placards and rosaries, they literally called on women. The Superior Court upheld the clinics and granted an interlocutory injunction delimiting a quadrilateral in order to keep the demonstrators at a distance who had declared in court that they could move in front of other clinics. Given the nature of the testimony presented by these groups, it is clear that their real wish is first and foremost to use the court as a forum to question the right to abortion.

Such legislation was demanded by many groups, which in February 2016 had signed a letter to the elected representatives.

Quebec joins two other provinces

Quebec therefore joined British Columbia, which passed an Access to Abortion Services Act in 1996 that defined a perimeter around abortion clinics where protesters can not demonstrate or question, Nor harass, nor photograph the women and doctors of the clinics. This legislation also passed the Charter test in *Oakes (R. v. Oakes)*, [1986] 1 R.C.S. 103). On November 21, Newfoundland and Labrador acted on a commitment and enacted similar legislation.

Ontario (pending)

Ontario Attorney General Yasir Naqvi announced on May 29, 2017 that he intends to draft a provincial bubble zone law and introduce it in the fall. This resulted from increasingly aggressive protests at the Ottawa Morgentaler Clinic. Responding to clinic and community complaints, Ottawa Mayor Jim Watson had decided to address the issue by writing a letter to the Ontario A-G asking for a provincial bubble zone law, because a municipal law would not carry adequate penalties.

Links:

Ontario plans 'safe access zones' for abortion clinics. Lawyer's Daily. By Tom Venetis. May 31, 2017.
<https://www.thelawyersdaily.ca/articles/3853>

Ontario government to establish 'safe zones' around abortion clinics. Iheart Radio. May 29, 2017.
<http://www.iheartradio.ca/580-cfra/news/ontario-government-to-establish-safe-zones-around-abortion-clinics-1.2643883>

Abortion clinic 'safe zones' to be introduced. Toronto Star. by Kristin Rushowy. May 29, 2017.
<https://www.thestar.com/news/queenspark/2017/05/29/abortion-clinic-safe-zones-to-be-introduced.html>