



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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“Hypocritical” for PEI Premier Ghiz to Co-Chair Working Group on Healthcare Innovation

While Ghiz Refuses to Provide Basic Health Services on PEI

NATIONAL: Canada's national pro-choice group was startled to learn today that PEI's Premier Robert Ghiz has been appointed co-chair of a “working group on health-care innovation” at this week's meeting of Canadian premiers. The appointment comes despite the fact that Ghiz himself announced last month that PEI would continue its politically-based refusal to provide a basic, medically required service on the Island that is inexpensive and simple to provide—abortion.

“How hypocritical for the premier to accept this co-chair position. If his province won't even provide basic healthcare services to its residents for ideological reasons, how can Ghiz be in a position to lead other provinces in improving their healthcare systems and delivery?” asked Joyce Arthur, Executive Director of the Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada.

Arthur noted that, ironically, Ghiz was quoted in the media today as saying that “...certain provinces are doing things better than others” in terms of best practices around healthcare, further claiming that “...there's a great opportunity for us to be able to collaborate together, look for best practices and really look for more innovations across our healthcare systems.”

“The first place he should look is in his own backyard,” said Arthur. “Ghiz has no business leading other provinces in talks about “best practices” and looking for “more innovations” when his own province openly flouts the law by not providing a basic and cost-effective service that women have a fundamental right to.”

Premier Ghiz justified his December decision to not provide abortion services on the Island by referring to abortion as “a very emotional issue on both sides.” But the issue is about obeying the law, not the moral controversy of abortion. “Since when do we deny healthcare based on people's emotional reactions to it?” said Arthur. “In fact, Ghiz's decision was unconstitutional and discriminatory because it violates the *Canada Health Act* as well as the 1988 Supreme Court precedent in the Morgentaler decision.” That ruling struck down the same type of arbitrary barriers that PEI currently imposes, which include funding only abortions done at hospitals (outside PEI) if the woman obtains approval from two doctors. “Such requirements create

hardships for PEI women, especially the most marginalized and low-income women,” said Arthur.

“Many if not most PEI women needing abortions end up at the Morgentaler Clinic in Fredericton because that’s the closest service,” said Arthur. “However, they must pay for their own care because PEI won’t fund abortion services at a private clinic, in violation of federal requirements.” In 1995, then-federal Health Minister Diane Marleau ordered all provinces to start funding private clinics that perform “medically required” services under the *Canada Health Act*, which includes abortion care.

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