



Abortion Rights
Coalition of Canada

Coalition pour le droit à
l'avortement au Canada

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A Majority Conservative Government Would Restrict Abortion

NATIONAL — The Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada says it cannot trust Harper's promise on Monday not to re-open the abortion debate, because a majority Conservative government would have enough votes to pass private member bills restricting abortion.

"Harper has made it clear that he would not stop private member bills from going forward and he would allow his caucus a free vote on them," said Joyce Arthur, Coordinator of the Coalition. "That means a majority Conservative government would be able to pass them. Canadians may not realize it, but a large majority of Conservative MP's –74% – have clear anti-abortion records."

Further, 93% of all Conservative MPs voted in favour of Bill C-484, the "Unborn Victims of Crime Act." Dozens of medical organizations and women's groups have protested this private member bill, saying it would endanger abortion rights because it establishes fetuses as legal persons.

"We expect this bill to be re-introduced during the next session of Parliament, along with two other private member bills restricting abortion," said Alison Brown, another ARCC spokesperson. "The Conservatives might have enough votes to pass these anti-abortion bills even with a bigger minority government," Brown said, noting that 27% of the current Liberal caucus is also anti-abortion.

One private member bill (C-537) would shield healthcare workers who refuse to provide medical care that violates their personal religious beliefs – even information or referrals. It would mostly affect women who need abortion and contraception services. The third private member bill (C-338) would criminalize abortion after 20 weeks, even in cases of serious fetal defects. Since 1996, at least 11 private members bills or motions endangering or criminalizing abortion have been introduced, mostly by Conservative MPs. Some of the same bills have come up repeatedly.

The Coalition gave several other examples of actions the Conservative government has already taken to undermine reproductive rights, including appointing right-wing anti-choice judges to high courts in Ontario and Nova Scotia, and refusing to enforce the *Canada Health Act* in New Brunswick, which is the only province still violating the Act by not funding abortion at clinics. Further, Brown noted that "the Conservative government has done absolutely nothing to improve access to abortion, even while access to this required health service fails to meet any of the five principles of the *Canada Health Act*."

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