



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

POB 2663, Station Main, Vancouver, BC, V6B 3W3 • info@arcc-cdac.ca • www.arcc-cdac.ca

For immediate release

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Access to Abortion Needs to Be Improved Now

Oct. 20 National Day for Reproductive Justice Highlights Access Gaps in Maritimes and Across Canada for Abortion and Sexual and Reproductive Health Services

NATIONAL – A coalition of groups and individuals across the country is calling upon governments across Canada to take immediate steps to improve access to abortion and other sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services in neglected regions of Canada – particularly the Maritimes, the North, rural areas, and on First Nations reserves.

“It’s time to change the debate by talking about how to improve access to healthcare, not restrict it like some anti-choice Members of Parliament want to do,” said Joyce Arthur, Executive Director of the Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada (ARCC), the group leading the ad hoc coalition behind the Oct 20 day.

“On October 20, we are demanding that governments across the country start ensuring that abortion care and sexual and reproductive health services are available and accessible to every person who needs them, including women, youth, transgendered persons, and men. We also need to reduce unwanted pregnancy, the main cause of abortion, by making contraception widely available and covered by Medicare.”

At the top of the ad hoc coalition’s list of demands is fully-funded abortion services on request in Prince Edward Island. [see page 3 of this release, or <http://www.arcc-cdac.ca/action/RJ-day-demands.pdf>] “PEI is the only province still violating the law by failing to provide any abortion care inside its borders, forcing women to travel to Halifax or Fredericton for care,” said Arthur. “This creates real hardship and injustice for women, especially those who are young, low-income, aboriginal, and immigrant.” Last November, a research project conducted by Dr. Colleen MacQuarrie at UPEI found that many women have even tried to do dangerous self-abortions on themselves.

Some PEI women are able to arrange an abortion in Halifax paid for by the PEI government, but the process can be time-consuming and difficult to navigate for many women. Many more women end up paying around \$800 to have an abortion at the Morgentaler Clinic in

Fredericton NB. They are forced to pay out of pocket because New Brunswick refuses to fund the clinic, even though Health Canada in 1995 mandated full funding for abortion care at both hospitals and private clinics.

“Abortion is a simple procedure that doesn’t require a lot of resources to provide, so the PEI government has no excuse to not provide it on the Island,” said Arthur. “Our message to PEI Premier Robert Ghiz and Health Minister Doug Currie is: Enough! Women in Prince Edward Island have the same rights as women in other provinces. You should be ashamed of yourselves for needlessly risking the health and lives of PEI women in deference to a so-called ‘pro-life’ ideology. Stop hurting and punishing women and start helping them instead!”

Other leading groups in the ad hoc coalition for the Oct 20 Reproductive Justice Day include the PEI Reproductive Rights Organization (PRRO), and the Ontario Coalition for Abortion Clinics (OCAC).

- The flagship event for the national day takes place in Charlottetown, with a kick-off press conference on Friday Oct 19 (12:15pm, Room 125, Royalty Centre, 40 Enman Crescent, Charlottetown), and a march and “Action Station” event on Oct 20 (1-4pm, Rochford Square & Murphy’s Community Centre).
- Another signature event for the national day takes place in Toronto on Oct 20 – a rally from 1-3pm at Old City Hall, 60 Queen Street West.

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See page 3 of this release for the list of demands for the Oct. 20 National Day for Reproductive Justice, or: <http://www.arcc-cdac.ca/action/RJ-day-demands.pdf>.

See our website: <http://oct20rjday.wordpress.com> for more information on reproductive justice and the October 20 day, as well as details on events across the country.

Contact:

Joyce Arthur	Executive Director, ARCC-CDAC, Vancouver	604-351-0867
Dr. Suzanne Newman	Abortion provider, Women's Hospital, Health Sciences Centre, Winnipeg	204-477-1887
Carolyn Egan	Ontario Coalition for Abortion Clinics, Toronto	416-806-7985
Peggy Cooke	ARCC-CDAC, Toronto	416-709-1457
Julie Lalonde (parle français)	ARCC-CDAC, Ottawa	613-301-2697
Patrice Powers (parle français)	ARCC-CDAC, Montreal	514-486-6376
Josie Baker	PEI Abortion Rights Network, Charlottetown	902-368-7337
Christopher Kaposy, PhD	Ethicist, Memorial University, St. Johns NL	709-777-2338 (w)
Tara Paterson (student/youth issues)	Synergy Coordinator, Victoria http://arccsynergy.wordpress.com	250-893-4158

Reproductive Justice:

Equal Access Now!

Pan-Canadian Day of Action
October 20, 2012

Groups and individuals across the country are calling upon governments across Canada to take immediate steps to improve access to abortion and other sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services in neglected regions of Canada.

Our Demands:

Reproductive justice encompasses a diversity of issues to be addressed, ranging from geographic accessibility to culturally appropriate health care to a universal childcare program. The first National Day of Action calls on Canada's leaders and policy-makers to **take the first step** toward Reproductive Justice by addressing some of the most significant gaps in sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services. In particular, immediate redress is required to correct disparities in abortion services in PEI, New Brunswick, and rural and Northern communities in Canada.

We, the people of Canada, demand Reproductive Justice for women and diverse communities by immediately improving access to abortion and sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services in underserved regions of Canada, as follows:

- 1. Fully funded abortion services on request in Prince Edward Island.** Abortion care is currently not available at all on the Island, forcing those with unwanted pregnancies to travel to Halifax or Fredericton. Abortion is a medically required service under the *Canada Health Act*, which means it must be universally funded and equally accessible in Canada, regardless of where individuals live. We call for:
 - Provincial commitment and follow-through to provide abortion services in at least one hospital in PEI.
 - Federal enforcement of the five principles of the *Canada Health Act*, including financial penalties against PEI if it does not provide abortion services within the province.

- 2. Fully funded abortion on request in New Brunswick,** regardless of where abortion services are provided. We call for:

- Provincial repeal of New Brunswick's discriminatory and unconstitutional regulation that requires permission from two doctors to receive a funded abortion at a hospital. This regulation violates the 1988 *Morgentaler* decision.
- Full provincial funding of the Morgentaler Clinic in Fredericton, to comply with the *Canada Health Act*.
- Federal enforcement of the *Canada Health Act*, with financial penalties against New Brunswick if it does not fund the abortion services offered at the Morgentaler Clinic.

- 3. Improved access to abortion, contraception, and SRH services in rural and remote areas and Canada's North.** We call for:

- Incentives and supports for doctors to provide culturally relevant SRH services, including abortion, PAP smears, and contraceptive education outside of major centres.
- Increased culturally relevant SRH programs and contraception access outside major centres, embracing the unique needs and perspectives of diverse communities.
- An end to disparities between health services for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians by investing equally in culturally relevant SRH services both on and off reserve.