



Canada's only national political pro-choice advocacy group

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July 16, 2024

Dear United Way Centraide Canada,

Thank you for your July 11 reply to our recent [press release](#) about the United Way defending the funding of anti-abortion pregnancy care centres (or “crisis pregnancy centres” - CPCs). We also had contacted UWBC and UW Pembina Valley and received similar replies.

I have consulted with our team on this matter and we continue to have serious concerns as outlined in this letter.

First, we found it concerning that no one signed your July 11 e-mail (copied at the end of this letter). Why is no one at your organization taking responsibility for this statement?

Second, you said that *“Abortion is a right in Canada and United Way Centraide Canada believes strongly that all pregnant people deserve access to information and services delivered in a safe and appropriate manner to help them make choices that are right for them.”*

If that is so, it makes no sense that you would allow local UW groups to fund groups/initiatives that violate these principles. As we had pointed out, anti-abortion CPCs provide misinformation and biased counseling on abortion because of their religious or conservative views. Further, they are not catering just to Christian pregnant women who share their views. They serve the public at large despite often not being transparent about their views on their public-facing materials. This is deceptive and unfair to unsuspecting clients. And since most of their clients are women and other people who can get pregnant, their tactics become discriminatory on the basis of gender.

Third, you are leaving it up to local United Way groups on whether to fund CPCs, rather than issuing a national policy against it. But you already have several national policies or statements on your website that are directly pertinent to this issue, including:

- A statement in favour of “Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and Indigenous Collaboration” (and an anti-racism statement)
- A “Commitment to Responsible Stewardship”
- A “Donor Bill of Rights” endorsed by UW

As currently written, these statements mean that United Way Centraide and its local groups should commit to not funding anti-abortion groups, because the latter do not adhere to values of inclusion and equity. For example, CPCs have no services for 2S/LGBTQIA+ people and they operate from a perspective of traditional Biblical morality that is heteronormative, sex-negative, and paternalizing to women. Further, about half of all CPCs in Canada are members of Pregnancy Care Canada, an umbrella group of pregnancy care centres that requires affiliates to follow religious directives such as signing a statement of faith, hiring only Christian staff and volunteers, and never referring for abortion.

Therefore, allowing funding to go to CPCs fails your DEI aspirations, is not “responsible stewardship” and undermines the donors’ Bill of Rights.

To put this into context, access to abortion is protected by women’s Charter rights to bodily autonomy, conscience and religion, equality, and other human rights. The same can be said for the legal rights of 2S/LGBTQIA+ people, or those of other historically disadvantaged groups such as religious and ethnic minorities. We presume that UW Centraide would not be comfortable with their local groups donating to anti-gay groups or anti-Muslim groups, because to do so would violate your national statements cited above. Women’s equality and human rights, a critical component of which is reproductive rights, must also be covered under your national policies in the same way. This issue should not be delegated to local UWs to decide for themselves, as it shows a lack of accountability by UW Centraide to its policies and donors and to the public.

Fourth, our research to date has uncovered past local UW grants to three anti-abortion centres:

- Pembina Pregnancy Care Centre in Manitoba (2024) – affiliate of Pregnancy Care Canada
- Norfolk Pregnancy & Family Resource Centre in Simcoe ON (2017)
- Hopewell Clinic and Pregnancy Centre in Kamloops BC (several small grants in years past according to Kristi Rintoul of UWBC) – affiliate of Pregnancy Care Canada

However, we suspect there must be more. As a way to show accountability to ARCC and the public, and to begin mitigating the contravention of your statements, we ask United Way Centraide Canada to please undertake an audit of past local UW grants as far back as 2015 to identify any that were given to anti-abortion CPCs. A full list of CPCs is available on our website.

We are happy to provide a few other resources that may be helpful as you work on this issue:

- Examining the Websites of Anti-Choice “Crisis Pregnancy Centres” – ARCC’s study of CPC websites that shows that most continue to present misinformation on abortion or sexual health issues, and/or fail to disclose their anti-choice or religious agenda or that they are not medical clinics.
- How to Identify Fake Clinics – A list of terminology and other typical red flags to watch out for on the public-facing materials of CPCs – including what probably won’t be on their website.

- Why anti-choice groups should not have charitable tax status – A paper that explains the many problematic issues with CPCs having charitable tax status – the same types of issues that should end funding of CPCs by United Way.

To conclude, we would like to please request the following from United Way Centraide Canada:

1. Determine the extent of the problem by undertaking an audit of past local UW grants going back to 2015 to identify grants given to anti-abortion CPCs. We ask that you please share your findings with us.
2. Add a statement to your website and/or to existing policies and statements, to the effect that United Way Centraide Canada and its local affiliates do not fund organizations that:
 - Promote an anti-choice stance on abortion or try to dissuade pregnant people from abortion
 - Engage in misinformation, deception, biased counselling, or other unethical activities
 - Work to undermine other Charter and human rights such as equality rights for 2S/LGBTQIA+ people

Thank you very much for your time and consideration. We look forward to hearing from you.



Joyce Arthur
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July 11 e-mail from United Way Centraide Canada

From: United Way Centraide Canada <info@unitedway.ca>
Sent: Thursday, July 11, 2024 6:03 AM
To: joyce@arcc-cdac.ca
Subject: RE: RELEASE: The United Way funds anti-choice groups - and defends it

Dear Ms Arthur -

Thank you for contacting United Way Centraide Canada (UWCC).

UWCC is the national office for a federated network of 58 independent United Ways and Centraides (UWCs). Programs and services are administered on a local level responding to the specific needs of their communities; therefore, differ across regions. Each UWC makes independent funding decisions with the guidance of local Boards, responding to key needs identified in the area.

For more information on funding policies and decisions, please contact local UWCs directly.

Abortion is a right in Canada and United Way Centraide Canada believes strongly that all pregnant people deserve access to information and services delivered in a safe and appropriate manner to help them make choices that are right for them.

Thank you for raising your concerns with us. We will share information and resources from AARC with our members to raise awareness and understanding of this important issue as they fulfill their local missions.