



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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Most Conservative Candidates are Likely Anti-choice

NATIONAL – About 86% of Conservative candidates running in the federal election may be anti-choice, according to research by the Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada (ARCC), a national advocacy group.

Of 337 Conservative candidates running in this election, ARCC has determined their stance on abortion as follows (see Methodology below):

- 114 are anti-choice
- 19 are pro-choice
- 37 are indeterminate (mixed/uncertain info)
- 167 are unknown (no info)

Based on the proportion of *confirmed* anti-choice versus pro-choice candidates, it is reasonable to infer that around 86% of all Conservative candidates may be anti-choice. This is slightly higher than the proportion of Conservative incumbents who are currently known to be anti-choice – 80%.

“Many Conservative candidates have promised to toe the party line and not ‘re-open’ the abortion issue, but the large number of known or likely anti-choice candidates raises the question of whether Andrew Scheer, if elected, will be able to restrain his caucus and shut down any private member bills related to abortion,” said Joyce Arthur, Executive Director of ARCC. “Even under Stephen Harper, who had strong control over his caucus, one bill that would have given rights to fetuses passed second reading, and another bill and a motion proposing fetal rights came to a vote.” (www.arcc-cdac.ca/presentations/anti-bills.html)

Meanwhile in Quebec, which is strongly pro-choice, recent media reports suggest that the Conservative Party recruited pro-choice candidates with the promise that the abortion issue was settled and no private member bills on the issue would come forward. “But Scheer promised an anti-choice group in 2017 that his MPs would be able to introduce private member bills against abortion,” said Arthur. “Is he saying one thing to candidates in Quebec, and another to candidates in English Canada?”

It’s worrisome because the Conservative Party is particularly strong in Alberta, said Kathy Dawson of the Alberta Pro-choice Coalition and an ARCC Board member. “Conservative MPs currently hold 29 of 34 seats in Alberta. Of the 34 Conservative candidates in this election, 25 are known to be anti-choice, mostly incumbents,” said Dawson. “Some felt so strongly about removing rights from women and gender diverse people that they attended the March for Life in Ottawa. Who paid for these trips?” She

also noted that “It was mostly Conservative MPs who showered anti-abortion groups with \$1.2 million in Canada Summer Jobs grants since 2010, then loudly protested when the cash cow was stopped.”

“How can a party with deep social conservative roots change their stripes?” said Arthur. “Can we really trust that Scheer will be able to silence the anti-abortion base that helped elect him as party leader, and keep his MPs in line?”

The mixed messages and the alarming number of anti-choice Conservative candidates spell trouble ahead for abortion rights and access. “Progressive voters can turn this around by volunteering for pro-choice candidates or donating to their campaigns – and showing up to vote for them,” said Dawson.

Methodology

For years, ARCC has maintained a list of anti-choice incumbents. ARCC designates Members of Parliament as anti-choice if they vote in favour of bills or motions that oppose or could threaten abortion rights or access, if they make public anti-choice or “pro-life” statements, if they participate publicly in anti-choice events or campaigns, if they are rated as “pro-life” by the anti-choice group Campaign Life Coalition, or other evidence and considerations. When an MP’s stance is ambiguous, ARCC does further research and if unsure, leaves their stance as “Unknown” (meaning no information is available) or “Indeterminate” (meaning that available information is mixed or uncertain). The same methodology has been followed when researching candidates’ positions in the 2019 election.

Resources from ARCC’s Election Toolkit:

- Selected 2019 Candidates with Stance on Abortion and Voting History – spreadsheet with details on all Conservative candidates, and those from other parties who may not be pro-choice
- Candidates to Support and Oppose – list of about 80 targeted ridings
- Check Your Riding for Candidates’ Stance on Abortion
- ARCC’s list of current anti-choice Members of Parliament (and those with unknown or indeterminate stance)

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