



Abortion Rights  
Coalition of Canada

Coalition pour le droit à  
l'avortement au Canada

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## NB's Health Minister Must Resign

*As elected official, Michael Murphy is imposing his religious views and failing to enforce federal laws*

FREDERICTON – A national pro-choice group is demanding the resignation of New Brunswick's health minister Michael Murphy, after he promoted his religious views against abortion at an anti-choice rally in New Brunswick last week. Speaking in his official capacity, Murphy said that because of his personal anti-abortion views, he's not "entirely comfortable" with administering the provincial law that allows funded abortions at New Brunswick hospitals.

"After Murphy resigns, he's free to preach at all the anti-abortion rallies he wants," said Joyce Arthur, Coordinator of the Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada. "But as an elected official with a portfolio, it's inappropriate for Murphy to publicize a direct conflict between his personal religious views and his ministerial duties. He risks losing the confidence of voters, not to mention the thousands of women in New Brunswick who've had or may need abortion care."

"Actually, if Murphy thinks it's his duty to enforce a law he doesn't like, why doesn't he enforce our *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and the *Canada Health Act* instead?" asked Peggy Cooke, an ARCC spokesperson based in Fredericton. "New Brunswick's law is discriminatory and unconstitutional. We are the only province in Canada that forces women through unnecessary hoops to get approval, which results in delays, increased medical risk, and hardship." (The *Medical Services Payment Act* states that Medicare will fund abortions in hospitals only if two doctors agree the procedure is medically necessary.) "These restrictions violate women's Charter rights and the Supreme Court Morgentaler decision of 1988," said Cooke. "Also, women who can't wait are forced to pay out of pocket for an abortion at the Morgentaler Clinic. This contravenes the *Canada Health Act* because it discriminates against women, especially those who can't afford to go to the clinic."

Arthur pointed out that no doctor needs to decide whether an abortion is medically necessary, because *all* abortions are deemed medically necessary under the *Canada Health Act*, whether they're done at a hospital or clinic. "There's absolutely no difference between the abortions done at New Brunswick hospitals and those done at the Morgentaler Clinic in Fredericton," Arthur said. "The only reason most women end up paying for an abortion at the clinic, is because hospitals don't have nearly enough operating room access or abortion providers."

"Murphy's duty as Health Minister is to keep his personal views to himself when they conflict with his duties, and to repeal the discriminatory New Brunswick regulation so women can access abortion without paying," Cooke concluded. "If he can't do that, he must resign."

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