



Abortion Rights  
Coalition of Canada

*Your Voice for Choice*

Coalition pour le droit à  
l'avortement au Canada

*Canada's only national political pro-choice advocacy group*

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For immediate release

September 4, 2012

## Activists Demand that City of Kelowna Rescind Anti-abortion Proclamation

KELOWNA — The Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada (ARCC) has teamed up with Kelowna activists and many other organizations and individuals from across Canada to protest the city of Kelowna's proclamation of "Protect Human Life Week" on behalf of the Kelowna Right to Life Society. "We demand that the Mayor of Kelowna immediately rescind this proclamation, because it strongly implies that Kelowna does not respect women's legal and constitutional rights," said Joyce Arthur, Executive Director of ARCC.

The full text of an open letter to the Mayor, complete with signatories, is included below. An online petition has also been initiated against the proclamation, which can be viewed here: <http://www.gopetition.com/petitions/open-letter-demanding-that-mayor-of-kelowna-rescind-ant.html>

### Contact:

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September 4, 2012

**An Open Letter to Mayor of Kelowna in Opposition to “Protect Human Life Week”**

Dear Mayor Walter Gray,

The signatories to this letter object to the proclamation you issued on July 3 declaring September 23-30, 2012 as “Protect Human Life Week.” This proclamation, issued at the request of the Kelowna Right to Life Society, is highly inappropriate and should be rescinded immediately.

When the city states: *“It is the intention of this proclamation to promote respect and protection to all human life, especially the infirm, the aged, the handicapped, and the unborn,”* it is an implicit endorsement of the Kelowna Right to Life Society’s opposition to safe and legal abortion for women. A quick perusal of the Society’s [website](#) makes clear that it is a radical political and religious group primarily concerned with opposing and re-criminalizing abortion, not with protecting the infirm, aged, handicapped, or even babies. A majority of Canadians support legal abortion, and our Supreme Court has struck down the previous abortion law as contravening women’s constitutional rights. Therefore, no municipality should make a public statement supporting an organization that is intent on reversing women’s guaranteed rights to “life, liberty, and security of person” under the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. Since the City of Kelowna has no legal jurisdiction to change federal or provincial laws on abortion (or anything else), it has no valid reason to issue the proclamation.

“Protect Human Life Week” is deeply offensive and upsetting to many people in Kelowna and across Canada, particularly women who have had or who are considering an abortion. It is wrong for the city to make proclamations that disregard women’s rights and make women feel disrespected and intimidated.

Although the city has issued this same proclamation in years past, it was never appropriate to do so because of its disregard for and opposition to established human rights under the law, and because it leads the city to improperly intrude into matters of federal or provincial law. Just as the “PRO-LIFE” flag will not be flown, all public support for “Protect Human Life Week” must now be withdrawn. We call upon you to rescind immediately the proclamation of “Protect Human Life Week” and to refrain from issuing it in future years.

Sincerely,

**Signatories:**

**Joyce Arthur**, Executive Director, Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada

**Board of Directors**, Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada

**Dianne Varga**, writer and activist, Kelowna

**Kristin Staley**, Summerland

**Anne-Marie Brun**, Kelowna

**Jennifer Pickering**, Kelowna

**Susan Davenport**, Kelowna

**Kelly Megyesi**, Vernon

**Dr. Jennifer Gustar**, Associate Professor, UBC, Okanagan Campus, Kelowna

**Susan E. Morrison**, Kelowna and District Pro-choice Action Society, Kelowna

**Loren Price**, Centre for Inquiry, Okanagan

**Zena Ryder**, Centre for Inquiry, Okanagan

**Penney Kome**, author, award-winning journalist, and Editor of StraightGoods.com

**Dr. Ellen Wiebe**, Clinical Professor, Reproductive Health, UBC; Medical Director at Willow Women's Clinic, Vancouver

**Jane Cawthorne**, author, playwright, blogger, Calgary

**Dr. Colleen MacQuarrie**, Associate Professor, Graduate Faculty, Psychology Department, University of Prince Edward Island

**Dr. M.K. Bryson**, Director, Institute for Gender, Race, Sexuality and Social Justice (GRSJ); Professor, Department of Language and Literacy Education (LLED), UBC

**Michael Payton**, National Director, Centre for Inquiry Canada

**Marilyn Roycroft**, Acting Executive Director, Legal Education and Action Fund (LEAF), Toronto

**Laura Track**, Legal Director, West Coast Legal Education and Action Fund (LEAF), Vancouver

**Dr. A. Brenda Anderson**, Assistant Professor, Women's and Gender Studies, Religious Studies, Luther College, University of Regina

**Dr. Darlene Juschka**, Coordinator and Associate Professor, Women's and Gender Studies, Religious Studies, University of Regina

**Jennifer J. Breakspear**, Executive Director, Options for Sexual Health, Vancouver

**Anne Rochon Ford**, Executive Director, Canadian Women's Health Network

**Ian Bushfield**, Executive Director, BC Humanist Association

**Board of Directors**, BC Humanist Association

**Vancouver Women's Health Collective**, Vancouver

**Radical Handmaids**, Ottawa