



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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Position Paper #90

What Does Being Pro-Choice Really Mean?

Introduction

Mainstream media, influenced heavily by anti-choice propaganda and rhetoric, helps to spread the fundamental misconception that there are two sides to the abortion “debate”: forced motherhood and forced abortion. ARCC is opposed to both these extremist positions. In truth, pro-choice is the broad middle of the spectrum on the abortion issue. A large majority (77%) of Canadians¹ believe abortion should be a decision between a woman and her doctor.

What is Pro-Choice?

People who consider themselves pro-choice range from those who are entirely comfortable with the idea of abortion and believe it can be an ethical choice, *as well as* those who would never consider abortion as a solution to their own unplanned pregnancy and believe abortion is immoral, but who would not impose their viewpoint by law onto others.

Pro-choice does not mean pro-abortion and does not mean advocating abortion over birth. It simply means a woman or transgender person has the right to decide for themselves. The pro-choice movement supports and works towards preventing unwanted pregnancies, promoting contraception, educating woman and youth on sexual health, sharing resources, and thus reducing the number of abortions.

The pro-choice movement also supports reproductive justice,² which includes the human right to have a child, not have a child, and parent the children we have in safe and healthy environments. We all deserve the economic, social and political power and resources to make healthy decisions about our bodies, sexuality and reproduction for ourselves, our families and our communities in all areas of our lives.

¹ Scotti, Monique. Support for abortion rights strong in Canada, but Ipsos poll shows we are ‘middle of the pack’ globally. Global News. March 6, 2017. <http://globalnews.ca/news/3290006/support-for-abortion-rights-strong-in-canada-but-poll-shows-we-are-middle-of-the-pack-globally/>

² Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada. *Why ARCC Supports Reproductive Justice*. Position Paper #100. Dec 2015. <http://www.arcc-cdac.ca/postionpapers/100-reproductive-justice.pdf>

Why Anti-Choice Mentality is Dangerous

Most anti-choice groups oppose sex education, often pushing abstinence as the only worthwhile form of contraception and refusing to provide options for women and transgender people who wish to engage in sexual activity in a safe way. This mentality not only serves to create the need for more abortions, but shames and vilifies women after providing no assistance in the prevention of unwanted pregnancy.

Anti-choice groups wish to return to the days of illegal, unsafe abortion. They blatantly ignore the fact that making the procedure illegal does not make it disappear. Instead, women are often injured or even die from unsafe abortion, and they are stripped of their rights and made into criminals and second-class citizens. Anti-choice groups have little thought or compassion for these women though, doing nothing to help women imprisoned for abortion, and often campaigning for harsher laws and punishment for women and doctors.³

False Claims Made by Anti-Choice Groups

Anti-choice propaganda is focused on the pro-choice movement in two major ways: painting pro-choice supporters as “anti-baby” moral degenerates, and demeaning the purpose and work of clinics.

Anti-choice groups accuse the pro-choice movement of believing a fetus to be “lumps of tissue” or “blobs”. In truth, any reputable pro-choice group uses the scientific terms (“zygote”, “embryo” and “fetus”)⁴ that any woman going through pregnancy would hear from her doctor/midwife or from using the plethora of pregnancy apps/websites⁵ available today. We use these scientific terms because they are neutral – a woman going through an abortion should not be made to feel guilty for “aborting a baby” when that term is not accurate. The pro-choice movement is well aware of the pregnancy and gestation process.

Anti-choice groups often protest outside of clinics, arguing that these medical facilities are “butcher shops for the unborn” or “abortion mills”. They make wild and vague accusations about what occurs during an abortion and that women who enter are encouraged or bullied into having abortions. In truth, while providing the service of abortion, clinics also provide an overview of the risks and side-effects to the patient, provide non-judgmental counselling, allow for an ultrasound if the woman wishes it, inform the woman of any special circumstances (such as twins), provide birth control education, and follow proper medical protocols.

Conclusion

The pro-choice movement and abortion providers are in the business of protecting and respecting women's human rights, their moral autonomy, and their choices. We want every mother to be willing and every child to be wanted. We are pro-woman, pro-child, pro-family, and pro-life, in the true sense of that term.

³ Filipovic, Jill. Donald Trump's Abortion Logic Is Totally 100% Right. *Time Magazine*. Mar 31, 2016. <http://time.com/4278462/donald-trump-abortion-filipovic/>

⁴ Sandra F. Differences between human ‘zygote’, ‘embryo’ and ‘fetus’. Feb 2, 2017, <https://www.invitro.com/differences-between-a-zygote-an-embryo-and-a-fetus/>.
Zygote: Hours 1 to 24 of a fertilized egg. **Embryo:** After the zygote is formed (around 24 hours after fertilization) until around 8 weeks gestation. **Fetus:** Weeks 8 until birth. **Baby:** After childbirth

⁵ Apps include: “What to Expect”, “Ovia Pregnancy”, “Pregnancy +”, “Babycenter”, “The Bump”