



Abortion Rights
Coalition of Canada



AccessBC
Campaign
for free
prescription
contraception

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For Immediate Release

Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada and AccessBC Campaign support free prescription contraception (joint statement)

Access to contraception is a human right. Universal coverage for contraception empowers people, improves health outcomes, and leads to significant cost savings. For World Contraception Day, September 26th, 2020, the Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada and the AccessBC Campaign are pleased to release the following joint statement in support of universal no-cost prescription contraception across Canada.

“There are a lot of barriers to accessing effective contraception - social factors, factors within the health system, difficulties due to the current pandemic, and other challenges unique to each individual. But we know that cost is the most significant barrier to contraception access.” said Devon Black, co-founder of the AccessBC campaign. “That’s why we are calling for provincial and federal governments across Canada to ensure that everyone can access the contraception they need by making contraception available at no cost.”

“The burden of contraception, including its costs, falls mostly on women and transgender people who can get pregnant,” said Joyce Arthur, Executive Director of the Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada. “That makes it a gender equity issue. The provision of contraception is also basic preventive care - when most people can access effective contraception at no cost, such as IUDs, the rates of unintended pregnancy and abortion plummet.” Arthur cited a [program in Colorado](#), where teen pregnancies and abortions dropped by 54% and 64% respectively when teens were able to access free IUDs.

Contraception is also a key aspect of primary health care. “Many patients require hormonal contraception to prevent or treat conditions such as endometrial cancers,

polycystic ovarian syndrome, endometriosis, and heavy or irregular menstrual bleeding,” said Arthur. “It’s unacceptable if they have to pay out of pocket when facing such severe health consequences.”

In Canada, unintended pregnancies cost Canadian health systems over \$61 million annually. Studies have shown that providing universal contraception coverage could see that entire amount saved in as little as six to twelve months. An [Options for Sexual Health study from 2010](#) estimated that the BC government could save as much as \$95 million annually - nearly twice the projected cost of implementing this policy. A separate [2015 study in the Canadian Association Medical Journal](#) estimated that the cost of delivering universal contraception across Canada would be \$157 million, but the savings - for direct medical costs of unintended pregnancy alone - would be approximately \$320 million.

“Programs that offer universal no-cost prescription contraception not only make life more affordable for people, but they save governments money,” said Dr. Teale Phelps Bondaroff, Chair of the AccessBC Campaign. “The cost of offering prescription contraception at no cost is considerably lower than the costs associated with unintended pregnancy.”

The Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists of Canada (SOGC) 2015 Canadian Contraception Consensus states that it is both safe and feasible for allied health workers (midwives, registered nurses, nurse practitioners, and pharmacists) to provide contraceptive care. Using allied healthcare professionals in prescribing contraception is an essential avenue for improving access.

A lack of awareness of contraceptive methods and misconceptions about safety and efficacy also impede access to contraception in Canada. An essential component of providing universal access to contraception is increasing public education with evidence-based information. The SOGC provides excellent resources for contraceptive information and they should be an accessible and recognizable resource for all Canadians.

Reflecting on current evidence, universal coverage of contraception in Canada through a federal plan is an effective method to increase healthcare equity and access, and to ease the burden of healthcare spending, especially during the COVID-19 era when many people are financially stressed and contraceptive access has been compromised. The Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada and AccessBC call upon the Canadian federal government to:

- Provide federally sponsored universal coverage of contraception, including IUDs, for all Canadians;

- Sponsor public education campaigns to endorse and circulate the Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists of Canada guidelines and information about contraceptive methods and use;
- Incorporate contraceptive use and methods in Statistics Canada data collection efforts;
- Include all prescription contraceptive methods, as well as both hormonal and non-hormonal IUDs, in the National Pharmacare Plan; and
- Implement a task shifting model in all Canadian provinces and territories to improve access to contraceptive counselling, prescriptions, and IUD insertion.

Contacts:

Joyce Arthur

(she/her pronouns)

Executive Director

Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada (ARCC)

www.arcc-cdac.ca/

joyce@arcc-cdac.ca

604-351-0867

Devon Black

(she/her pronouns)

AccessBC Committee Co-Founder

www.accessbc.org

devon.black@gmail.com

778-350-4032

Dr. Teale Phelps Bondaroff

(he/him pronouns)

Committee Chair and Co-Founder

AccessBC Campaign for free prescription contraception

www.accessbc.org

tealepb@gmail.com

778-678-8325

Teale et Devon sont disponible pour les entrevues en français.

For background research on the issue, see:

- AccessBC Briefing Paper - <https://www.accessbc.org/briefing-paper>
- CDAC position paper on Contraception Coverage: <https://www.arcc-cdac.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/43-contraceptive-coverage.pdf>

About AccessBC

AccessBC is a province-wide campaign that advocates for universal no-cost prescription contraception in British Columbia. AccessBC is currently running a letter writing campaign to urge the BC Government to include this policy in the upcoming 2020 budget. You can learn more about AccessBC, the need for, and benefits of, making all prescription contraception universally available at no cost, at www.accessbc.org.

About the Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada

The Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada (ARCC) is the only nation-wide political pro-choice group devoted to ensuring abortion rights and access. We are a coalition of pro-choice groups and individuals across Canada who work to represent all Canadian women and transgender people who depend on reproductive rights and justice.

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