



Abortion Rights
Coalition of Canada

Coalition pour le droit à
l'avortement au Canada

News Bytes

Autumn 2010

Dear Members and Supporters:

The editors of The Activist/L'Activiste newsletter are taking a fall hiatus, so we've produced this interim supplement to help keep you updated on the latest news and ARCC activities.

Mark the date...

ARCC's **Annual General Meeting** will be held on Tuesday November 30th by teleconference, at 5pm PT (8pm ET). All members in good standing (paid up and pro-choice) are welcome to attend. If you'd like to be on the call, please RSVP to joycearthur@shaw.ca.

Please support ARCC!

Donations and memberships are currently ARCC's only source of revenue, so we truly appreciate all of our members and supporters. Thank you for acknowledging the importance of the work we do!

A renewal notice is being sent with this news supplement to all members whose membership has recently expired or will expire by Oct 31.

But even if you've already renewed this year, would you please consider helping us out a bit more? Here's some suggested ways:

- Add a little extra donation to your renewal.
- Become a monthly donor for as little as \$5 a month.
- Ask your family members, friends, and colleagues to join ARCC or make a donation.
- Volunteer your translation skills (English to French).
- Volunteer your grant-writing skills.

THANK YOU!

No funding for safe abortion

The spring of 2010 was dominated by the controversy over **Canada's maternal/child health initiative for the G8**. Prime Minister Harper announced in January that improving maternal/child health in developing countries would be Canada's signature focus for the upcoming June summit in Ontario for G8/G20 leaders. The Conservative government quickly found itself embroiled in a divisive controversy over abortion and family planning, apparently because no-one in Harper's right-wing camp had a clue that women's lives and health depend in large part on the availability of contraception and safe, legal abortion. Considerable pressure from many sources forced the government to later back down on family planning, but the government refused to budge on abortion, stating in April that abortion would definitely be excluded from any G8 funding.

We have yet to see how this will play out on the ground in developing countries, but it's expected that Canada's opposition to safe, legal abortion will create a chilling effect amongst NGOs and foreign aid groups, as well as reinforce the global stigma against abortion. The predictable results will be an ongoing scourge of deaths from unsafe abortion, the discrimination and abuse of women seeking abortions or post-abortion care in illegal settings, and of course, no movement on badly needed legal reform.

Although improved access to family planning measures will help reduce the incidence of unsafe abortion, women will always need

access to abortion. Mostly overlooked in the debate was the fact that anti-abortion laws serve to kill and maim women, while repealing or liberalizing those laws saves their lives. 68,000 women die every year and 8 million more are injured after having unsafe, mostly illegal, abortions. Until the illegal status of abortion is addressed, it will be impossible to address this major – and entirely preventable – cause of maternal mortality.

ARCC was very active throughout the G8 controversy (please check our website www.arcc-cdac.ca for copies of articles, letters, and other materials):

- We supported Liberal Leader Michael Ignatieff, and the Liberal/NDP/Bloc caucuses in their quest to hold the government to account on the issue, by providing them with information and evidence.
- We published several articles and op-eds, including “Key Facts about Maternal and Infant Health in Developing Countries,” rebuttals to anti-choice views, a review of Marci McDonald’s book *The Armageddon Factor*, and others.
- We issued three press releases between February and June, including a joint initiative with the Fédération du Québec pour le planning des naissances (FQPN, www.fqpn.qc.ca/) and the Anna Project (www.theannaproject.ca). We also gave numerous media interviews and several public speeches.
- We organized a national ad-hoc coalition of pro-choice and women’s groups to inform each other and work together on the issue, via an email list and teleconference calls.
- We supported key groups working in Ottawa, including Action Canada Population Development (www.acpd.ca), a women’s rights group that was instrumental in bringing international attention to the story.
- We mentored the new Anna Project and helped publicize its work.
- We began an online petition to Harper to include funding for safe abortion and family planning in the G8 initiative. We collected over 3,500 signatures and submitted the petition to the Prime Minister’s Office on June 23.

- We maintained a G8 Action Alert page on our webpage, listing actions that supporters could do, such as writing letters. The page also advertised events across the country and internationally.
- We helped organize the Gender Justice contingent for the Toronto Community Day of Action March against the G8/G20 on June 25. ARCC’s President Carolyn Egan and several other pro-choice activists led the march with a giant coat hanger and pro-choice banner. Many of our members marched or participated in other events across the country.

Yet another anti-choice bill

Bill C510, a private member’s bill

introduced in April, would amend the *Criminal Code* to prohibit coercing a woman into an abortion via physical or financial threats, illegal acts, or through “argumentative and rancorous badgering or importunity”. The bill was the brainchild of Conservative MP Rod Bruinooog (Winnipeg South), who chairs the Parliamentary Pro-Life Caucus.

Although the bill is not expected to go anywhere (Harper distanced himself from the bill during the G8 debacle), it’s the latest example of anti-choice persistence to pass any kind of abortion restriction in order to start down the road of recriminalizing abortion in Canada. Bill C510 is offensive because it depicts women as victims of abortion, rather than moral and responsible agents of their own lives. In any case, the bill is redundant because threats and illegal acts are already illegal under the *Criminal Code*.

ARCC issued a press release against the bill that somewhat facetiously pointed out the greater need to pass a law banning coerced childbirth. This would naturally encompass a ban on some forms of anti-choice activism, such as the unprofessional tactics of “Crisis Pregnancy Centres.” The angry reaction of the anti-choice movement to our press release reflected only one concern: the need to preserve themselves and their tactics, with no regard whatsoever for women coerced into childbirth by anti-abortion partners, politicians, and activists.

ARCC on campus

ARCC has continued to be active on campuses on several fronts.

At the **University of Victoria**, the student society (UVSS) elected a more conservative Board during March elections and promptly voted to give back funding and club status to the anti-choice group, Youth Protecting Youth (YPY). Two months later, YPY inexplicably filed a lawsuit against the UVSS demanding reinstatement of funding and club status, along with several unreasonable demands to prohibit future possible actions against YPY.

ARCC issued a press release in May explaining how YPY's lawsuit had no merit because their key demands had already been met, but also because the student society had acted entirely lawfully according to its mandate, bylaws, and policies. Our release (<http://www.arcc-cdac.ca/press/ARCC-CDAC-release-may27-10.pdf>) critiqued YPY's petition to the BC Supreme Court, exposing that the facts and evidence listed by YPY actually refuted its own position and proved that the UVSS had committed no wrongdoing.

Unfortunately, the UVSS Board made further capitulations by granting two demands made by YPY: to permit the lawsuit to stand in abeyance rather than be withdrawn, and to allow YPY to re-activate its lawsuit immediately if the UVSS ever tries to discipline YPY again. These concessions give YPY unprecedented powers, including a privileged status that no other campus club has, and the prerogative to flout UVSS policies without fear of reprisal.

Synergy, ARCC's Student & Youth Network for Reproductive Justice, has hired a new volunteer Coordinator, Tara Paterson, of the University of Victoria. Over this school year, Tara will work to expand and publicize Synergy and connect with students across the country, with the help of the Canadian Federation of Students.

ARCC also plans to recruit students from Simon Fraser University (in Burnaby BC) to carry out projects to upgrade and expand the Synergy website (<http://arccsynergy.wordpress.com>), and research grant opportunities to help Tara expand the network.

Show the lies

This summer, **the anti-choice "Show the Truth" tour** hit the streets of Ontario cities, including Toronto, Guelph, Brantford, Kitchener-Waterloo, Burlington, Cambridge, and Hamilton. "Show the Truth" is a small group of protesters who hold offensive and grotesque signs of alleged aborted fetuses alongside busy streets or intersections.

Hundreds of outraged passers-by vented their anger at the protesters, complained to police, or wrote letters to the editor. ARCC received several letters from upset citizens, including a parent who was driving by with his two young children who felt that his parental rights were being violated.

This fall, ARCC plans to undertake a research project to explore potential legal remedies for banning or limiting these displays on public streets.

CPC sting

On August 7th, reporter Joanna Smith of the *Toronto Star* published **an exposé of anti-abortion "crisis pregnancy centres" (CPCs)**. The *Star* sent a reporter to 3 CPCs in the Toronto area, posing as a pregnant woman considering abortion, but wanting to learn more about the procedure and its risks. The reporter found that staff at the centres gave out misleading or false information about the physical and psychological risks of terminating a pregnancy, including breast cancer, emotional trauma, and infertility.

Over the years, there have been many other investigative reports and exposés about CPCs done in other parts of Canada and the U.S. by pro-choice groups and the media, including one done in BC by the Pro-Choice Action Network (<http://www.prochoiceactionnetwork-canada.org/articles/cpc-summary.shtml>). Without exception, they have all yielded similar findings – that most CPCs use deception to attract women considering abortion, dispense misinformation about abortion, and use unprofessional "counselling" techniques that induce fear and guilt in women who want an abortion.

ARCC helped the *Star* reporter extensively during her investigation. In addition, using recent new bylaws from U.S. cities as models (Austin Texas and Baltimore Maryland), ARCC plans to explore the possibility of enacting city bylaws compelling CPCs to post notices saying they do not refer for abortion or contraception.

Biased poll fuels anti-abortion myths

ARCC recently published a piece in *Straight Goods* called "What the pollster didn't ask: Biased poll fuels anti-abortion myths" (<http://www.straightgoods.ca/2010/ViewArticle.cfm?Ref=756&Cookies=yes>). The article called attention to a **recent misleading poll by Angus Reid that betrays a strong anti-abortion bias** in favour of a new abortion law for Canada. The polling company took it upon itself to conduct this survey to measure the public's knowledge of abortion law in Canada,

and found that only 21% of Canadians surveyed knew that a woman had a right to an abortion "with no legal restrictions whatsoever." The poll left the strong impression that abortion care is a free-for-all in Canada, with women routinely "choosing" abortion right up to the moment of birth. Below is an excerpt from our article.

"Angus Reid's survey reinforces anti-abortion myths and acts like a depth charge in the culture wars. Almost every poll question is biased and can be read as an urgent invitation to 'do something about it.' Suggested options — such as funding bans, parental consent laws, and mandatory counseling — were lifted right out of the anti-choice playbook and have been proven harmful in the US. The survey's apparent objective is to stir the pot in order to 're-open the debate', which is nothing more than anti-choice code for recriminalizing abortion."

Join ARCC Today

ARCC encourages all pro-choice supporters to become members. Please consider signing up for automatic monthly donations to help establish sustainable funding. You can complete the following membership form and mail it to ARCC, P.O. Box 2663, Station Main, Vancouver, BC V6B 3W3. Or, details and the full range of membership and listserv options are available on our website at www.arcc-cdac.ca.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Street

City

Province

Postal Code

Phone: (home) _____ (work) _____ E-mail _____

Basic Membership: \$20 minimum fee Other: _____

Cheque or money order payable to "ARCC" attached.

VISA #: _____ Signature: _____ Expiry Date: _____

Monthly Donations: I want to support ARCC with monthly donations.

Please debit my bank account: \$5 \$10 \$15 \$25 Other: \$ _____

Legal requirements for monthly donations:

Please fill out this membership form in full, and attach a cheque marked "VOID".

Signature: _____ Date: _____

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