



Abortion Rights
Coalition of Canada

Coalition pour le droit à
l'avortement au Canada

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Thousands urge Harper to include safe abortion in G8 maternal health initiative

NATIONAL – Over 3,400 citizens from across Canada have signed a petition demanding that Prime Minister Harper include funding for safe abortion and family planning in his signature G8 maternal and child health initiative. The petition is being delivered to Harper today.

The petition is located at: <http://www.gopetition.com/petitions/safe-abortion.html>

“The signers’ views represent the views of most Canadians,” said Joyce Arthur, Coordinator of the Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada. “A new poll by Nanos Research shows that 67.7% of Canadians want women in developing countries to receive the same access to safe abortion as women in Canada do.”

“About 10% of our signers wrote public comments, all of them strong and heartfelt, many of them angry,” said Arthur. The most common themes running through the comments were:

- Shame and embarrassment at this regressive move by Canada.
- Disbelief that the government simply ignored all evidence and expert advice.
- Outrage that essential healthcare guaranteed to Canadian women will be denied to women in developing countries because of right-wing ideology.
- Concern and compassion for the women of developing countries whose lives depend on safe abortion services, especially those who are victims of rape.
- Disgust that the maternal/child health initiative is being hypocritically used to condemn 70,000 women to death every year, as well as their many of their children.
- Shock and disbelief that Canadian women are having to fight this battle once again, and fear that restrictions on abortion in Canada will be the next step.

(Several typical comments are included on page 2 – please see the petition site to view more.)

Arthur concluded: “Mr. Harper, you have an obligation to respect the views of the majority of Canadians. That majority wants you to save women’s lives and close the abortion debate by reversing your G8 decision now!”

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Sample Comments from the Petition to “Include funding for family planning and safe abortion in Canada’s G8 Maternal/Child Health Initiative”

<http://www.gopetition.com/petitions/safe-abortion.html>

“Canada needs to respect the same rights for women in developing countries that women have in Canada.” (#3305)

“The right to choose is an integral part of a democratic civil society, global human rights and the Canadian identity. I am embarrassed that this is the new face that Canada is projecting in a global platform, negating women's health and human rights and reversing decades of progress.” (#3069)

“As a second year medical student, I fully agree that it is of outmost importance to include funding for safe abortion in the Maternal/Child Initiative. Unsafe abortion is directly linked to poor health outcomes for both mothers and children.” (#3015)

“The Government of Canada claims that they don't want to open the debate on abortion yet they are doing exactly that by including legislation in their foreign policy that is different from that of domestic policy. Not reopening the debate on abortion would mean keeping foreign policy in line with domestic policy. I am so ashamed that this government is representing me right now.” (#3010)

“I am astounded that leaders who should be informed about maternal health would not include access to safe abortions as part of the discussions. This is so important. How many women are you condemning to death by not being a true leader? This is not the 1950's. This is now - there has been so much evidence clearly showing the importance of policies in support of health care that includes safe abortion.” (#3147)

“Mr. Harper is pandering to the religious right on the backs of the world's most vulnerable women.” (#3156)

“Reduction in maternal mortality in developing countries cannot be achieved without comprehensive family planning including safe access to abortion. The evidence for this is overwhelming.” (#2863)

“It is unethical to hinder access to medical care, which includes abortion, and therefore I cannot support the withdrawal of funding from any initiative that would make such care accessible to people that need it. Harper's actions also set a dangerous foot print on the path to a twisted precedent that could make abortion illegal in Canada, and he must be stopped.” (#2839)

“To exclude abortion from any discussion of maternal and fetal health is reprehensible and absurd. The Canadian government's position suggests a paternalism, racism, and misogyny that cannot but work against efforts to provide comprehensive women's health care in developing nations and at home.” (#2817)