

# NEW BRUNSWICK MUST FULLY FUND ABORTION:

#SAVECLINIC554

## HISTORY

In 1970, the Caravaners drove across Canada demanding that everyone have the right to access free, safe and legal abortion in their own communities. Fifty years later, the province of New Brunswick still refuses to fully fund terminations performed outside of hospitals, forcing many to travel far from home to access time-sensitive abortion care.

In 1989, a year after abortion was decriminalized in Canada, New Brunswick legislators added [Regulation 84-20, Schedule 2](#) (Reg 84-20) to its *Medical Service Payment Act*. Originally, they did so to prevent Dr. Henry Morgentaler from opening a private clinic in Fredericton, but [undeterred, he opened a clinic in the provincial capital in 1994](#). Two decades later, [Reg 84 -20 is still on the books in New Brunswick, which prohibits abortions performed in clinic settings from being paid for through public health insurance](#). Until 2015, the regulation also required that two doctors certify the abortion was medically-necessary, which the Supreme Court struck down in principle when it decriminalized the procedure in 1988.

For ten years, the Fredericton Morgentaler Clinic provided pro-bono abortions for thousands of individuals who could not afford the \$700 ancillary fee the province of New Brunswick refused to pay. The clinic was financially squeezed as a result and soon after Morgentaler died, was [ultimately forced to close](#) in July 2014. Grassroots collectives Reproductive Justice New Brunswick (RJNB) and the Fredericton Youth Feminists coalesced at this point, and responded by [raising money through crowd-sourcing to re-open the clinic](#) and by campaigning to repeal Reg 84-20. In January 2015, Clinic 554 thus opened in the original location of the Fredericton Morgentaler Clinic. The new clinic not

only filled the gap in abortion services, but provided primary medical care for 600 patients on a lengthy provincial waitlist. It also launched services for LGBTQ+ people in need of a family doctor. Clinic 554 is highly respected nationwide as a result, with medical director Dr. Adrian Edgar being recognized for his work both by [Inter Pares](#) and the College of Family Physicians of Canada. Today, Clinic 554 continues to provide essential gender-confirming healthcare for patients in the Maritimes - indeed, it the only clinic to do so.



PHOTO CREDIT: [NB Media Co-op](#)

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## CURRENT ISSUES

Since opening in 2015, Clinic 554 has been hampered by New Brunswick legislators' refusal to fund clinic-based abortions. Although former Liberal Premier Brian Gallant claimed his government had done more than any other by removing the two-doctor permission in *Reg 84-20*—which, albeit, allowed for a modest expansion of hospital abortion services—he simultaneously refused to acknowledge that the Spring 2018 flood of downtown Fredericton (and Clinic 554, by proxy) created a crisis in abortion access. When Fredericton flooded again in 2019, Progressive Conservative Blaine Higgs—the province's current Premier—similarly ignored the problem. As a result, Clinic 554 became financially unsustainable once again, and the building was put up for sale in Fall 2019.

In 1995, the federal Minister of Health directed all provinces to obey the Canada Health Act (CHA) by funding clinics outside of hospital settings that provide medically necessary services, including abortion. Last year, the federal Liberals reminded New Brunswick's government that not funding Clinic 554 violated the CHA and, in February 2020, actually withheld health transfer payments to the province. When COVID-19 hit the country a month later, however, the withdrawal was temporarily reimbursed.

Despite the crisis, Clinic 554 remains open – dependent on community support and crowdfunding until a new buyer for the building is found or until the province radically shifts its position. The loss of Clinic 554 would be a travesty for healthcare in Eastern Canada, as it would severely erode abortion access, reproductive health and LGBTQ2S+ services, and primary healthcare for thousands of Maritimes residents.



PHOTO CREDITS: Clinic 554

## OUR DEMANDS

- The federal government must withhold health transfer payments to the province of New Brunswick and redirect those funds to directly fund Clinic 554.
- New Brunswick must repeal *Regulation 84-20* and fully fund clinic-based abortions.
- Community-based abortion care must be expanded throughout New Brunswick and other Maritime provinces.



## SUPPORT OUR WORK

- [Donate to Clinic 554](#) so it can continue provide pro-bono abortion care in New Brunswick under *Reg 84-20*.
- Sign [Clinic 554's petition to the provincial government](#), as well as the [Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada's petition to the federal government](#), which call for the repeal of *Reg 84-20* in New Brunswick.
- Write to [Premier Blaine Higgs](#), demanding that New Brunswick reverse its 30+ year violation of the *CHA* and fully fund abortions in all medically-licensed facilities.
- Get involved in the Campaign to Save Clinic 554 by emailing [saveclinic554@gmail.com](mailto:saveclinic554@gmail.com).

## LEARN MORE

- Watch the NFB (2012) documentary [Status Quo? The Unfinished Business of Feminism of Canada](#) for in-depth coverage of Clinic 554, abortion barriers in New Brunswick, and original video footage of the 1970 Abortion Caravan.
- Follow and share @SaveClinic554 on Twitter and Facebook and @ReprojusticeNB on Twitter and Facebook.
- Read the NB Media Co-op's extensive coverage of Clinic 554, starting with this article: "[The Truth About Clinic 554 in Fredericton](#)".
- Read Lianne McTavish's (2015) [essay about the history of Abortion in New Brunswick](#).

