

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 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. Twenty years later, Reg 84 -20 still prohibits abortions performed in clinic settings in New Brunswick from being paid for through public health insurance. Until 2015, this regulation also required that two doctors certified the abortion was medically necessary, which the Supreme Court struck down in principle in *R v Morgentaler (1988)*.

For ten years, the Fredericton Morgentaler Clinic provided pro-bono abortions for thousands of individuals who could not afford the \$700 ancillary fee that the province refused to pay. Financially squeezed as a result, the clinic was ultimately forced to close in July 2014, soon after Morgentaler died. Reproductive Justice New Brunswick (RJNB) and the Fredericton Youth Feminists coalesced at this point, campaigning around the repeal of Reg 84-20. They raised enough money through crowd-sourcing to re-open the clinic in January 2015, which stands in the original location of the Fredericton Morgentaler Clinic and has been renamed Clinic 554.



PHOTO CREDIT: NB Media Co-op

When Clinic 554 opened, it filled not only 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, including providing essential gender-confirming healthcare for patients across the Maritimes. Clinic 554 is highly respected nation-wide 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.

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 flood of 2018 in downtown Fredericton created a crisis in abortion access. When Fredericton flooded again a year later, the province's current Progressive Conservative Premier Blaine Higgs similarly ignored the problem. Clinic 554 became financially unsustainable again as a result, 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 non-hospital-based clinics that provide medically necessary services, including those that provide abortion. In February 2020, the federal Liberals reminded New Brunswick's government that refusing to fund Clinic 554 directly violated the *CHA* and actually withheld health transfer payments to the province. When COVID-19 hit the country a month later, however, the withdrawal was temporarily reimbursed.

Amidst the pandemic, 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 on funding abortion services. The loss of Clinic 554 would be a travesty for healthcare in Eastern Canada, as it would severely erode access to abortion, reproductive health and LGBTQ+ services, and primary healthcare for thousands of Maritime residents.



One of the best things about being underestimated is that you can get away with a lot.

KATHRYN KEATE (KATHRYN JANE HAZEL)

OUR DEMANDS

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



SUPPORT OUR WORK

- [Donate to Clinic 554](#) so it can continue providing 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 federal petition](#), which call for the repeal of Reg 84-20.
- 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.

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.
- Read NB Media Co-op's extensive reporting on 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.



PHOTO CREDITS: [Clinic 554](#)