

COUNTERING OPPONENTS

HISTORY

Canada's anti-abortion movement formed in response to the 1969 Omnibus Bill C-150 – the same law that inspired the 1970 Abortion Caravan. The [Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops began working to ensure that abortion remained illegal in Canada](#), as well as national organizations such as Birthright and Alliance for Life formed around this time to champion the "pro-life" cause.

The movement gained momentum in the 1970s, after the US Supreme Court [legalized abortion](#) in 1973, and as Dr. Henry Morgentaler and feminist activists began opening illegal clinics in Quebec. When Morgentaler opened a clinic in Toronto in 1983, Ken Campbell of the organization Choose Life urged evangelical Christians to engage in pro-life work, which many did by aggressively picketing outside the clinic.

Following the decriminalization of abortion in Canada via *R v. Morgentaler (1988)*, pro-life organizing in this country escalated. Opponents brought two cases before the same court in 1989—*Tremblay v Daigle* and *Borowski v Canada*—to establish fathers' and fetal rights in relation to abortion – both of which failed. That year, Brian Mulroney's Progressive Conservatives also attempted to recriminalize abortion by introducing Bill C-43. While the bill was defeated in the Senate, a young woman named Yvonne Jurewicz died soon after, from self-inducing because she believed abortion was illegal once again. Around this time, physical violence against abortion providers escalated. The Toronto Morgentaler Clinic was firebombed in 1992 (leading the building to be demolished and the clinic relocated) and between 1994 and 2000 three providers were shot and stabbed in their homes and outside their clinics.

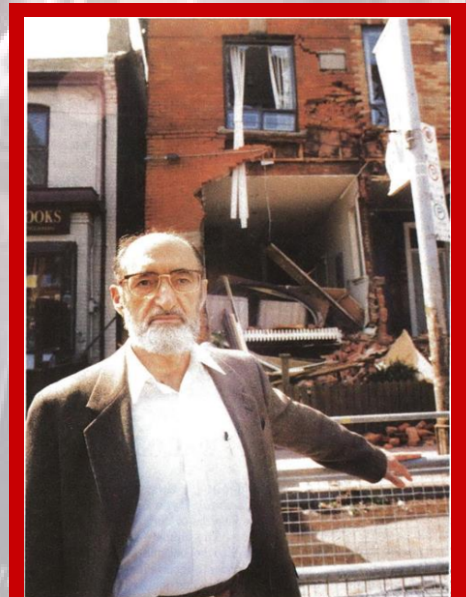


PHOTO CREDIT:
[Maclean's](#)

It was an era of confrontation, of us and them. It was an era when nobody negotiated these things.

**JUDY DARCY,
TORONTO CARAVAN MEMBER**

CURRENT ISSUES

In the past two decades, Canada's anti-abortion movement has shifted away from its explicit violence of the 1990s. Opponents attempt to spread the pro-life message by producing deliberately misleading advertisements, however, which feature graphic, manipulated photos and medically-unsubstantiated claims. These advertisements have been found on buses, on highways, and in people's mailboxes. In response to [Canadians' overwhelming support for the right to choose](#), the movement has simultaneously adopted a [more moderate tone](#) and ["woman-friendly" talking points](#). Many pro-life groups have also emerged to [target students](#), where they engage in advocacy in [high schools](#) and [universities with the explicit purpose of recruiting young supporters](#). Actions such as the annual March for Life bring thousands of [students from publicly-funded Ontario Catholic schools](#) to Parliament Hill to protest abortion.

Pro-life groups also protest abortion by continuing to occupy space outside abortion clinics and provider hospitals - particularly during [40 Days for Life](#). Faith-based organizations [often have connections to the American movement](#) and operate crisis pregnancy centres (CPCs), which [attempt to dissuade women from choosing abortion](#) by disseminating misleading information, dispensing medical advice that is not backed by science, and hiding their religious affiliations. These organizations tend to be next door to clinics that provide abortion services, and choose names that could easily be confused with those that do (e.g., "Aid to Women"). Most CPCs receive charitable tax status and advertise on public transit, as well as charitable giving sites.

In addition to picketing outside clinics and attempting to change public attitudes, Canada's anti-abortion movement also channels its efforts towards electoral politics.

[Organizations such as Campaign Life Coalition aggressively lobby Canadian politicians](#) and [scrutinize their stances on abortion](#), which has resulted in [at least four Private Members' Bills at the federal level since 2010](#) that have circuitously attempted to [recriminalize abortion by establishing fetal rights](#).

Organizations like Right Now and We Need A Law also attempt to promote candidates who commit to doing anti-abortion work while in office, and recruit young voters. Lobbying of this nature promotes the introduction of restrictive abortion legislation in Canada, such as parental consent laws and repealing taxpayer funding (via provincial health insurance plans) for abortion services. In the U.S, these kinds of laws have led to severe restrictions on abortion and sometimes the criminalization of women convicted of harming the fetus they carry.

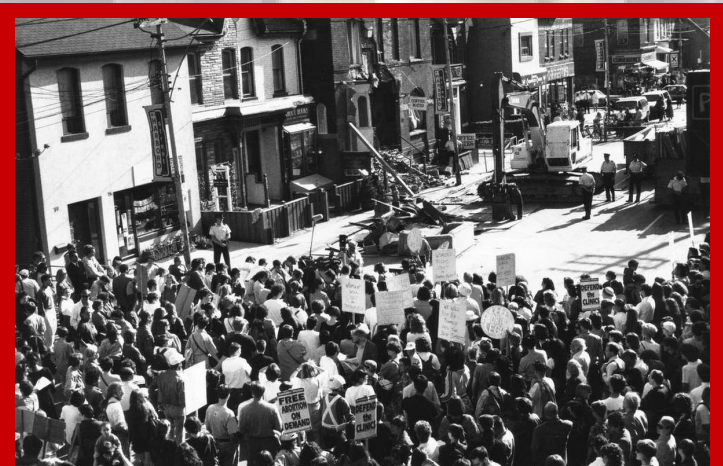


PHOTO CREDIT: [Edward Regan](#)

OUR DEMANDS

- Some provinces have established "bubble zone" legislation that bars picketing outside clinics and hospitals that provide abortion services. British Columbia was the first province to enact this legislation in 1995, and has been followed by [Alberta](#), [Ontario](#), [Quebec](#), [Newfoundland & Labrador](#), and [most recently Nova Scotia](#). All provinces that currently do not have such legislation must look at protecting abortion providers and patients from anti-abortion harassment. [MP Nahanni Fontaine deserves public support for re-introducing a private members bill in May 2020 to establish bubble zone legislation in Manitoba](#).
- Local governments must create bylaws in accordance with the Canadian Code of Advertising Standards to stop anti-abortion groups from disseminating misleading, graphic, and medically inaccurate information.
- The Canadian Revenue Agency must deny charitable status to any group that violates the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, including [CPCs who hold anti-abortion positions](#). In their absence, all levels of government must provide increased funding for social services that support those facing an unplanned pregnancy.

SUPPORT OUR WORK

- Donate to political candidates who explicitly identify as pro-choice. Write a letter to your Member of Parliament and ask what they are doing to expand abortion access in Canada.
- If you see a graphic anti-abortion ad, [submit a complaint to Ad Standards](#), an organization that upholds the Canadian Code of Advertising Standards.
- Counter anti-abortion propaganda in schools and universities by joining pro-choice and feminist groups in your community. If you are not sure who is doing this work, reach out to the [Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada on social media](#) and ask.

LEARN MORE

- Read about [Safe Access Zone Laws and Court Injunctions in Canada](#) from the Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada.
- Understand why some [young people are joining the anti-abortion movement in Canada today](#).
- Listen to journalist Anne Kingston talk about [how Canada's anti-abortion movement changed their political tactics](#) leading up to the 2019 Federal election.