

Choosing Hope, Building People Power

2024-25 Annual Report



Action Canada
for Sexual Health & Rights



Action Canada for Sexual Health & Rights

Follow Us



Sign up for our Newsletter

[actioncanadashr.org/
sign-our-newsletter](http://actioncanadashr.org/sign-our-newsletter)

Donate

[donate@
actioncanadaSHR.org](mailto:donate@
actioncanadaSHR.org)
613-241-4474 x10800

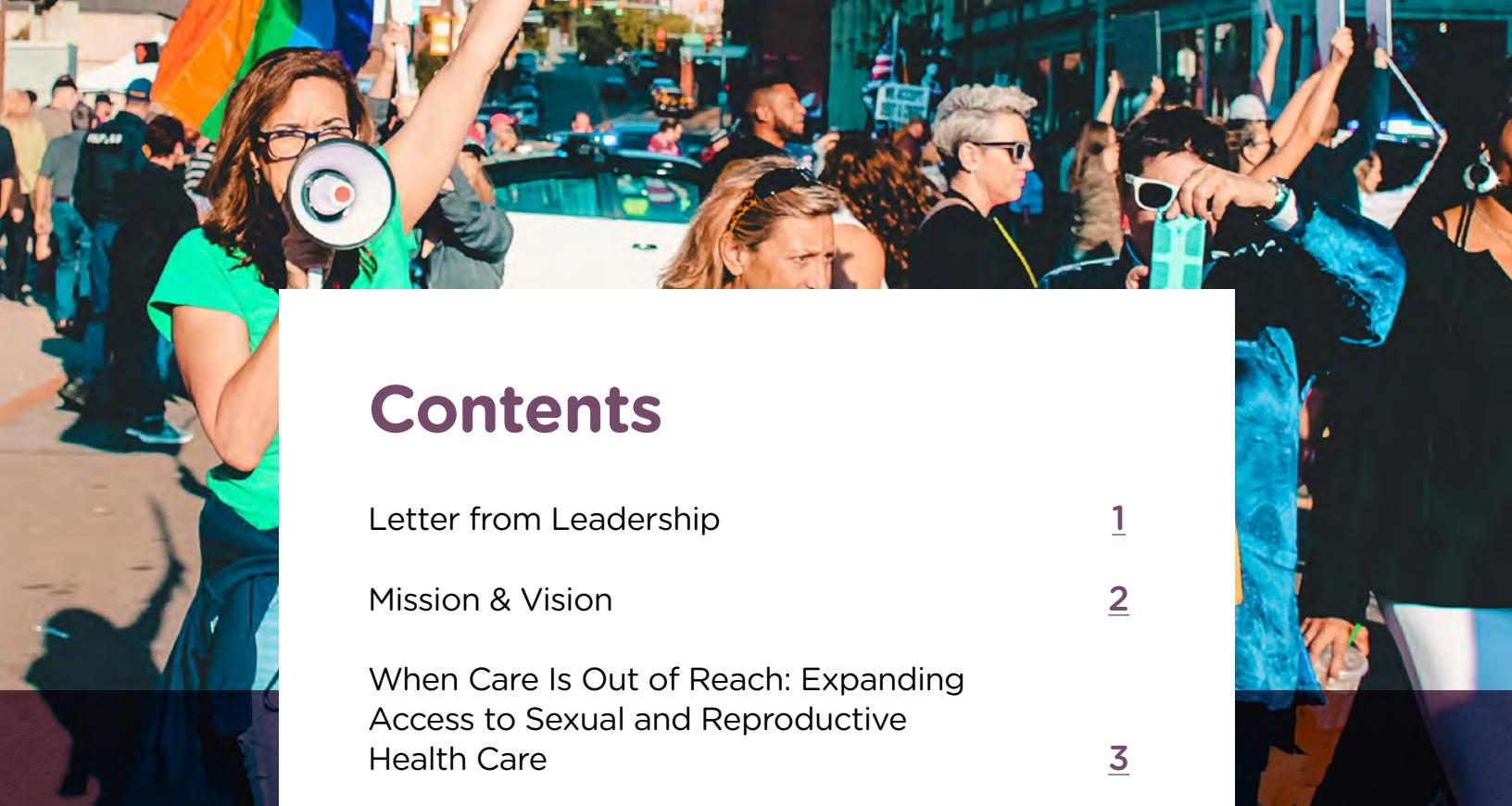
Contact Us

275 Bank Street, Suite 302
Ottawa, ON
K2P 2L6

actioncanadaSHR.org
info@actioncanadaSHR.org
613-241-4474

Media Inquiries

media@actioncanadaSHR.org
613-241-4474 x10700



Contents

Letter from Leadership	<u>1</u>
Mission & Vision	<u>2</u>
When Care Is Out of Reach: Expanding Access to Sexual and Reproductive Health Care	<u>3</u>
Strengthening Policies and Systems That Protect and Advance Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights	<u>8</u>
Shifting Hearts and Minds: Building Public Support for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights	<u>14</u>
Building Collective Power Through Movements and Coalitions	<u>20</u>
Demand Better: Building Collective Power to Shift the Economic Narrative	<u>27</u>
Financial Overview	<u>30</u>
Board of Directors	<u>31</u>
Forging the Path Ahead	<u>32</u>

Letter from Leadership

At Action Canada, the team often returns to the moments that first called each of us to this work. We have all seen what happens when systems meant to care for people simply... don't. When someone walks into a clinic they've relied on for decades only to learn it's closing. When a newly pregnant woman is told her immigration status makes her ineligible for basic care. When a young couple sits at the pharmacy counter doing the math — contraception or food — health care stops being a right and becomes a luxury. Those moments shape us. They make doing nothing impossible.

Across Canada, the rights our movements fought for and won over decades have been chipped away through a thousand quiet cuts — closed doors, reduced hours, programs quietly disappearing. Sexual health centres buckled under strangled public health budgets. Programs that support people facing violence, discrimination, or barriers to care questioned in a moment of economic tightening. Access to free essential medications for everyone, including contraception, pushed aside in the name of austerity and presented as "common sense". These aren't isolated issues; they are part of a wider pattern in which systems, and the elected officials who govern them, decide whose health is optional and whose rights are treated as "nice to haves."

And yet, something powerful is rising to meet this moment. Health workers, labour unions, patient advocates, parents, and young people came together to demand universal access to essential medications, because too many people are being forced to choose between their health and their finances. Our Demand Better campaign, built by a broad coalition of advocates from close to 90 national organizations, made a shared call for governments to reject the false choice between a strong economy and strong social programs. These were examples of solidarity in action, and they worked. Across the country, harmful decisions were reversed because communities organized, spoke up together, and refused to look away.

In this moment, Action Canada has focused on building the strategies, partnerships, and policy tools needed to confront what's at stake, and on bringing together coalitions strong enough to shift what is politically possible. Our Access Line remained a lifeline for hundreds navigating barriers to reproductive health care, while those same realities informed advocacy that advanced human rights, from Parliament Hill to the United Nations. As we look ahead, we do so grounded in what we've learned, and with courage. Hope, for us, is a political duty. It means that even when the odds seem stacked against us, we still rise and do what we must. Together, hope becomes power.

In solidarity,



**Frédérique
Chabot**
Executive Director



Anvita Akkur
Board Chair

Mission & Vision

Our Vision

All people everywhere have full control over and are able to decide freely upon all matters related to their sexuality, reproduction, and gender, including their reproductive and sexual health.

Our Mission

To advance and uphold sexual and reproductive rights and health in Canada and globally.

Our Work

To fulfill our mission, Action Canada focuses on:

Increasing access to sexual and reproductive health care and information

Advancing enabling laws and policies

Shifting public understanding through engagement and education

Building strong, well-resourced coalitions for change

When Care Is Out of Reach: Expanding Access to Sexual and Reproductive Health Care



Increasing costs of care have deepened existing gaps in access—especially for people in rural and remote communities. People are now travelling farther, paying more, and waiting longer, often juggling work, childcare, and time off, just to reach essential services.

Increasing costs of care have deepened existing gaps in access—especially for people in rural and remote communities. People are now travelling farther, paying more, and waiting longer, often juggling work, childcare, and time off, just to reach essential services. Amid this growing strain, the Access Program has become an even more critical point of support, with demand for assistance outpacing what the sector can provide.

Over the past year, our frontline team operated within a healthcare ecosystem under immense pressure. The **Access Line** and the **Norma Scarborough Emergency Fund (NSEF)** together form a lifeline for people navigating barriers to sexual and reproductive health care.

Our navigators and volunteers respond daily to calls, texts, and emails about abortion, contraception, pregnancy options, and STBBIs. Without this service, many—particularly people who are uninsured or already pushed to the edges of the healthcare system—would have no access to vital health information, emotional support, or financial assistance for abortion care.

More people needed sexual and reproductive health support just as resources were shrinking, as many partner organizations were forced to scale back their programs or close their doors entirely, sometimes after decades of serving their communities.

Direct Support When It's Needed Most



The Norma Scarborough Emergency Fund saw **607 clients** getting our help to access abortion care

↑ 38% increase in requests for support



30%
of Access Fund clients travelled at least **100km** to access abortion services



Most clients were from

Ontario, Quebec, Alberta & British Columbia

11% approximate clients from rural/remote areas



The Access Line team received **7591 calls**

↑ 16% increase in the need for support



Up to 60% of Access Fund clients were uninsured

What drove people to reach out for support?

- Precarious immigration status
- No health insurance
- Geographic distance to available services
- Financial insecurity
- Complexity of psycho-social circumstances
 - e.g. intimate partner violence, mental health, housing insecurity, etc.



Our Impact

Our frontline work is deeply connected to our broader mission: defending and expanding access to care so that people across Canada can actually access the care they need to make decisions about their bodies and lives. In January 2025, we launched our first evaluation survey for Access Line users, collecting direct feedback from people. We partnered with researchers, parliamentarians, and coalitions like the Canadian Health Coalition to track more trends and translate knowledge into action—advancing solutions to close gaps in health care and strengthen public systems.

The stories from the Access Line and our experience supporting people reveal the human cost of policies that fail people.

The stories from the Access Line and our experience supporting people reveal the human cost of policies that fail people. This shapes our advocacy for change that is sustainable and far-reaching. By bringing our frontline work to collaborate with decision-makers, and with coalitions of partners, we strengthened health systems, we reversed harmful decisions, we prevented future harm, and we changed the conversation to one where the priorities are care, equity, and the right to health. Our struggles are interconnected, and so are our solutions. People in Canada deserve access to the kind of care that is free from stigma, barriers, or compromise.

Improving Access to STBBI Testing Through Youth-Focused Prevention

Persistent stigma, misinformation, and uneven access to testing continue to prevent many people, particularly young people, from accessing timely sexually transmitted and blood-borne infections (STBBI) testing and care. In response, Action Canada uses targeted public health campaigns to normalize testing, reduce fear, and support earlier engagement with sexual health services. Building on an approach honed over the last decade, this year's efforts focused on Winnipeg, Manitoba, where STBBI rates remain the highest in the country. These elevated rates reflect gaps in sexual health education, access to testing, and stigma reduction, making it harder for youth and marginalized communities to access timely care.

The goal of our **Once a Year campaign** is simple but powerful: to normalize STBBI testing and encourage sexually active young people to make testing a routine part of their healthcare. By integrating testing into regular health conversations, the campaign reinforces testing as a standard part of caring for one's health, supporting earlier diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of ongoing transmission.

The campaign was developed in close collaboration with Action Canada's National Youth Advisory Board (NYAB), from shaping overall strategy and testing messages to refining tone, language, and delivery. The NYAB brings lived experience and regional perspectives that help ensure the campaign reflects how young people access information, navigate stigma, and what makes testing feel approachable and relevant.



Campaign Highlights



Featured in
30 public areas
across Winnipeg



21 million
impressions



68% of queer, trans
and BIPOC youth surveyed
remembered
seeing the ads



Youth who recalled
seeing the ads were
2x as likely to
know where to
get tested

This work recognizes that STBBI testing is one part of a longer sexual health journey, shaped by education, access to care, trust in health systems, and the broader policy environment. Through their involvement in this campaign and across Action Canada's work, NYAB members contribute insights that inform our public-facing messaging as well as policy analysis and advocacy priorities. They also share these perspectives with decision-makers, including through engagement with parliamentarians in Ottawa and in their home regions.

By working alongside young people in this way, Action Canada strengthens its understanding of the barriers and opportunities that shape sexual health access over time, ensuring that campaigns, services, and advocacy are informed by those most directly affected.

By working alongside young people in this way, Action Canada strengthens its understanding of the barriers and opportunities that shape sexual health access over time, ensuring that campaigns, services, and advocacy are informed by those most directly affected.



How the Campaign was Received

Youth reported that the campaign increased their understanding of why STBBI testing matters, helped position testing as a routine part of healthcare, and provided a timely nudge to get tested in the near term. At a moment when many young people are experiencing social media fatigue and tighter restrictions on sexual health promotion, Action Canada expanded the campaign offline to meet youth where they are. Survey results confirmed that this approach resonated, with respondents describing the campaign as empowering and supportive of informed decision-making.

At the same time, youth consistently identified that the most significant barriers to testing were not lack of information, but past negative experiences within the healthcare system, including feelings of judgment rooted in sex negativity, racism, homophobia, and transphobia. Structural factors such as inaccessible clinic hours, lack of access to family doctors, and distance to care further shaped whether and when testing felt possible.

Strengthening Policies and Systems That Protect and Advance Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

Action Canada's policy and advocacy work focuses on shaping the conditions that make access possible—by bringing lived experience into decision-making, strengthening public systems, and embedding sexual and reproductive health as essential public infrastructure.

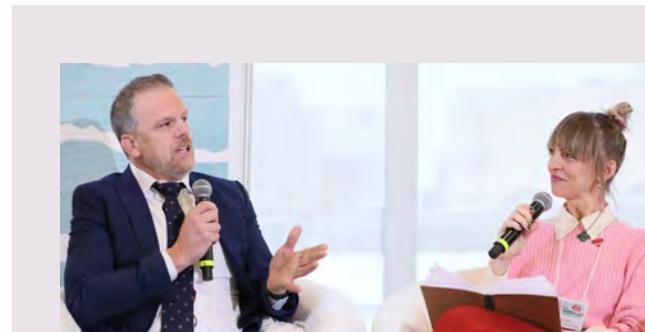
Progress Toward Universal Access to Contraception

Bill C-64, enacted in October 2024, established the first national framework for pharmacare by guaranteeing public coverage for contraception and diabetes medications. While it does not yet deliver free essential medication for all people in Canada, it marks a significant shift toward a system where fewer people are forced to delay or forgo essential medications because of cost, laying important groundwork for a more equitable approach to care.

Reliable access to contraception, one of the first two classes of drugs to be rolled out for free across the country, supports bodily autonomy and reduces unintended pregnancies, while broader pharmacare begins to address the affordability pressures that leave many people choosing between filling prescriptions and covering basic living expenses.

Taken together, these shifts signal a move away from patchwork access toward a more coherent public approach, one where cost is less likely to determine whether people can exercise control over their reproductive health.

Action Canada's advocacy helped connect lived experience to policy design. We drew on insights from the people we speak to on the Access Line, frontline health care providers, young people, and our colleagues in sexual health centres across the country—to bring real-world barriers



The Honorable Mark Holland, Federal Minister of Health and Fred Chabot, Executive Director SOS during a fireside chat at SOS Medicare 3.0 Conference in 2024.



Debbie Owusu-Akeeyah, Co-Director of Policy and Advocacy, testifies at the Senate in support of the Pharmacare Act, October 2025.



into federal briefings, Senate testimony, and public debate. This sustained, coordinated advocacy with partners in government and across the country helped translate political commitments into concrete progress, with three provinces and one territory now rolling out universal access to free contraception, and building the foundation for continued reform as public and provincial momentum grows.

Embedding Sexual and Reproductive Health in Federal Health Policy

In December 2024, the federal government announced its commitment to make the **Sexual and Reproductive Health Fund** permanent. Beyond funding individual programs, this decision establishes dedicated sexual and reproductive health capacity within Health Canada, creating a sustained policy focus on sexual and reproductive health to ensure better outcomes for all Canadians. It represents an important milestone after years of advocacy, particularly for rural and underserved communities where access to care remains uneven and where one in five Canadians lives without nearby services.

This commitment matters nationally because sexual and reproductive health is foundational to people's wellbeing, economic security, and ability to plan their lives. When access is fragile due to clinic closures, misinformation, or uneven policy attention, the impacts are felt most acutely in isolated communities but ultimately weaken access for everyone. Embedding

sexual and reproductive health within the federal health portfolio helps normalize its central role in health outcomes and strengthens the policy infrastructure needed to respond consistently across regions.

For Action Canada, this commitment supports our frontline services at a time of rising demand, while also reinforcing the importance of policy leadership grounded in lived experience. We look forward to continuing to work with government as a policy partner, contributing evidence and recommendations to ensure the permanent fund prioritizes equity, strengthens rural access, and includes accountability mechanisms that allow it to deliver meaningful impact for people across Canada.

These domestic gains do not exist in isolation. They are shaped by—and help shape—the global policy and human rights environment in which sexual and reproductive health is contested, defended, and advanced.

Strengthening Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in a Fractured Global Context

For decades, anti-human rights movements have sought to dismantle progress on gender equality, sexual rights, and bodily autonomy. In 2025, this pressure intensified, contributing to global backsliding and growing instability in human rights protections.

For many people around the world, this has translated into lost access to essential care—including maternal health services, abortion, HIV treatment, and contraception—as funding was cut and systems weakened under austerity, polarization, and coordinated attacks on human rights.

At the same time, this moment of disruption has created a critical opportunity: to rebuild institutions so they better serve people, strengthen accountability, and secure sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) as foundational to health, safety, and equality worldwide.

Action Canada's Role: Leadership, Accountability, and Norm-Shaping

In this context, Action Canada plays a strategic leadership role within global human rights spaces, particularly at the **United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC)**. As a technical advisor, strategist, and convenor, we work to hold governments accountable and shape evolving human rights norms—from advancing obligations under the **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)** to connecting local realities to global policy agendas.

Our engagement focuses on countering polarization and ensuring that international norms remain grounded in human rights, evidence, and lived experience. This mirrors our approach in Canada: pairing insights from the ground with policy expertise to influence systems-level change. It also ensures that the standards and protections shaping global debates reinforce—not undermine—public health systems and rights at home.



Members of the United Nations Population Fund, Global Affairs Canada, Canadian Association of Parliamentarians for Population Development and Action Canada gather to mark the launch of the 2024 State of the World Population Report.

Connecting Lived Experience to Global Policy

Through networks of Canadian organizations and partnerships with feminist advocates around the world, Action Canada helps make emerging threats to SRHR visible—both in Canada and internationally. In 2025, as anti-rights groups drove funding rollbacks that denied millions of people access to care, we convened movement leaders, supported advocates engaging in UN spaces, and submitted reports documenting how these decisions affected people's lives.

These interventions highlighted shared challenges across countries. Austerity, privatization of health and social services, and chronic underinvestment in public

systems are global realities—including in Canada, where more than six million people lack access to a family doctor.

In joint statements prepared with partners across sectors, including on the elimination of violence against women and girls, we called on states to address root causes of harm—such as limited access to education, health care, housing, and decent work—that shape people's safety and options long before violence occurs. We urged governments to advance universal social protections, dignified health services, and recognition of care work as foundational to economic security and equality.

Austerity, privatization of health and social services, and chronic underinvestment in public systems are global realities—including in Canada, where more than six million people lack access to a family doctor.

Impact on Canadians: When Global Norms Shape Local Access

Our work in international spaces informs Action Canada's domestic policy leadership and strengthens our ability to protect access to care in Canada. High-level interventions at the **Human Rights Council** are paired with behind-the-scenes strategy, translating research and global standards into domestic advocacy and coalition-building that shape how policies are interpreted, funded, and implemented at home, too.

By holding Canada to account within international human rights frameworks and advancing narratives that frame sexual and reproductive health as inalienable rights, we help stabilize expectations for public systems before rollbacks become normalized, reinforcing protections against service cuts or lost access. For Canadians, this means that global instability does not become a reason to erode healthcare access or policy coherence; instead, it can be leveraged to build momentum for stronger standards, clearer accountability, and more resilient systems that people can rely on over time.

From responding to STBBI crises in Manitoba to addressing clinic closures nationwide, Action Canada's leadership helps ensure that global commitments translate into local care, safety, and dignity so that decisions made in international forums are felt not as abstractions, but as real improvements in clinics, homes, and communities across the country.



Debbie Owusu-Akyeeah, Co-Director of Policy and Advocacy, at the Commission on the Status of Women in New York City, discussing Canada's progress on women's rights since 1995.



Meghan Doherty, Co-Director of Policy and Advocacy, presenting a panel on gender-based violence with representatives from Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic, Inter Pares, and the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies at the Commission on the Status of Women in New York City.



Participants at the Association of Women's Rights in Development's International forum in Bangkok. Action Canada joined activists in raising chairs, signaling the need for diverse women to have a seat at the table in international forums.

What gives you hope?



“Every day, I work alongside advocates from around the world who refuse to give up on human rights—not as an idea, but as something that should show up in people’s lives. They expect a United Nations that holds governments to account, without exceptions, and they push for societies where people’s needs come first. I am hopeful because I see human rights practiced every day: when people imagine a fairer world and insist on it—at parliaments and city councils, in hospitals and schools, and in workplaces where dignity and care should never be negotiable.”

-Meghan Doherty

Co-Director of Policy and Advocacy

Shifting Hearts and Minds: Building Public Support for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

A major challenge in advancing sexual and reproductive health and rights is the belief that sexual and reproductive health is merely an optional addition to basic public healthcare, or unrelated to other economic and social policies. This misconception turns sexual and reproductive health into a political weapon, dividing communities along ideological lines and slowing progress on fundamental human rights.

At the same time, there is limited support and funding infrastructure for progressive sectors to implement evidence-based approaches to engaging the public and building broad, durable support for policies that help communities thrive.

For Action Canada, public engagement and narrative change are a core part of protecting sexual and reproductive rights. Narrative change is how movements shape the conditions under which policy decisions become possible. The stories people hear—and repeat—shape what feels normal, who is seen as deserving of care, and what political leaders believe they can act on. Our work focuses on shifting these underlying narratives so that sexual and reproductive health is understood as essential to wellbeing, dignity, and community health, rather than something fringe, optional, or controversial.

What Is Narrative Change?

Narrative change is the long-term work of shaping the shared understanding that makes certain policies possible and others impossible. It influences how people explain problems, who they believe deserves care, and what kinds of solutions feel legitimate or realistic.

Narrative change works over time to shift what feels normal, acceptable, and common sense in public life. Stories, campaigns, and public engagement are tools used to reinforce a consistent

narrative framework, so that across different contexts and conversations, people encounter the same underlying logic about responsibility, care, and belonging.

When narrative change is effective, it reduces polarization, widens the circle of who is included in “us,” and creates the conditions for decision-makers to act without fear of backlash. Following is how Action Canada put this approach into practice this past year.



Get Offline & Talk: Rebuilding Community with Real Conversations

At a time when social media algorithms reward outrage and division, Action Canada's **Get Offline & Talk** campaign invited New Brunswickers to remember that meaningful change often starts with real, face-to-face conversations. Launched amid rising disinformation about comprehensive sexuality education and the rollback of protections included in **Policy 713**—a school policy developed to create safer learning environments for queer and trans youth in public schools—the campaign encouraged people to put down their phones and talk with those in their lives about the kind of communities they want to live in, and what young people need to thrive.

Online, debates about gender and sexuality often collapse into polarized exchanges; offline, the campaign helped create space for conversations grounded in shared values such as safety, care, and dignity. Rather than trying to “win” arguments, the campaign focused on rebuilding trust and connection. Through community events, conversation guides, storytelling, and local engagement, *Get Offline & Talk* supported people to reconnect on a human level—to listen, to be heard, and to find points of connection, even when they disagreed.

Our Impact

By centering empathy over algorithms, the campaign offered New Brunswickers a hopeful way to push back against disinformation, resist polarization, and stand up for human rights. Running throughout September 2024, it demonstrated that when people step outside of online echo chambers and into real conversations, they can begin to imagine—and talk about—a future where everyone can thrive. This is one way narrative change shows up in practice: by creating permission for different kinds of conversations to happen.

Scale & Reach

- On **Meta and Instagram** platforms, we reached approximately **256,956 unique users**—nearly one in three New Brunswickers—many of them multiple times.
- On **YouTube**, we reached an estimated **169,040 unique users**, or roughly one in five New Brunswickers.
- Through seven days of local radio activation on **Bounce Radio, Pure Country Radio, and Move Radio**, we reached an estimated **53,000 unique listeners**.
- We deployed a **microsite** and downloadable conversation guides and resources, which received more than **110 downloads**.

This reach mattered because it ensured that people encountered the campaign's messages repeatedly and across trusted local channels, helping establish shared language and norms, at a critical moment of public debate.

What We Heard from the Field

The narrative environment in New Brunswick began to shift. Local civil society organizations, advocates, and faith-based leaders shared that the campaign arrived at a moment when communities were struggling with the effects of disinformation and political polarization. Many noted that repeating the campaign's messaging and using its framing helped support the central call to get offline and talk within their own networks.

Anecdotally, community members shared that the campaign helped them practice having difficult conversations about gender and sexuality, and that these conversations felt more achievable—and less intimidating—when approached face-to-face, using the tools provided.

“Thank you for this much-needed campaign! [Anti-rights actors] have done far too much to poison the public conversation, amplified by anti-social media. So, it is hard to get messages of calm conversation and dialogue into the public attention. Your vignettes are excellent!”

—David-Roger Gagnon

United Church Minister, Moncton, NB

One of our most important measures of success for this awareness campaign was ensuring that New Brunswickers encountered these messages during a period of heightened public attention and debate. Policy 713 was all over the news and social media feeds. By that measure, we consider the campaign a strong success.

Get Offline & Talk contributed to a broader climate in which the reversal of changes made to Policy 713 became possible, and it has since been referenced by local advocates, educators, students, and youth as a shared point of connection. The campaign demonstrates how narrative change works: when grounded in shared values and real relationships, public discourse can help depolarize and reconnect communities and then, protect space for decision-makers to act without fear of backlash.



Recognition & Accolades

The **Dave & Greg short video** was given a Silver Award at the 2024 CICLOPE International Film Festival of Craft.



Action Canada was interviewed by **CBC Moncton** on the first weekend of campaign launch, to discuss how rising polarization is targeting youth and educators, and how face-to-face conversations could break down barriers and build understanding.

Get Offline & Talk was the winner of two international awards recognizing impactful campaigning work at the 10th Annual Shorty Impact Awards. We won for the LGBTQ+ category and Audience Honour (given to the entry with the highest number of public votes).

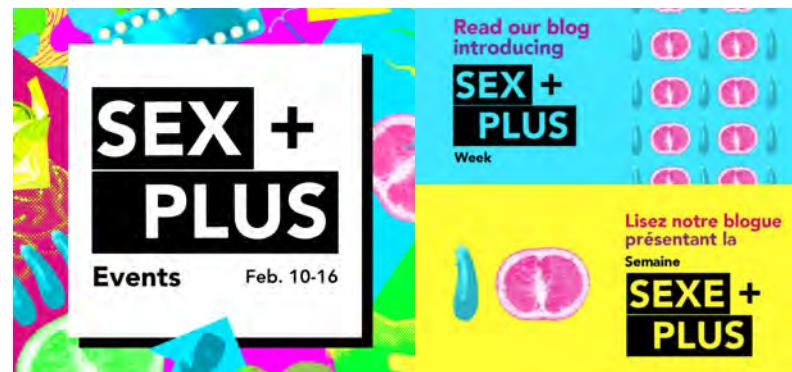


SexPlus Week: Normalizing Sexual Health in Every Conversation

SexPlus Week marked a reimagining of Action Canada's long-running Sexual Health Week as a platform that normalizes conversations on sexual health. Rather than focusing only on information, the refreshed, scalable approach worked to make sexual and reproductive health an ordinary part of everyday health conversations, something people feel permitted to ask about, discuss, and act on without fear or stigma.

Through events, webinars, and community discussions led by Action Canada's Associates Network and many other partners, Canadians engaged with topics like abortion, contraception, menstrual equity, Indigenous health, STBBI testing, sex-ed, pleasure, and healthy relationships. By meeting people in familiar community settings and trusted spaces, these activities helped normalize talking about sexual health openly, framing it as a vital component of overall well-being rather than something taboo. This repetition across regions and topics reinforces a shared norm: sexual health belongs in everyday life, and is something people can talk about without fear or hesitation.

By centering stigma-busting, inclusivity, and everyday language, SexPlus Week is laying the groundwork for an annual, nationwide movement, one where asking questions about sexual and reproductive health becomes the norm, not the exception, and where people feel more confident seeking information, support, and care. Over time, this shift in public comfort and understanding helps build broader support for care, consent, and bodily autonomy for all.



Campaign Highlights



SexPlus Trivia Challenge:
528 entries in French
227 entries in English



719 webinar
registrations to Public Health Agency of Canada



10 regional events
supported through the Stand Up grant



2 million digital impressions in **6 days**

Narrative change extends beyond campaigns. Throughout the year, Action Canada team members brought evidence and lived realities into media and public forums, reinforcing campaign messages and helping normalize sexual and reproductive health as essential to everyday life and public policy.

Media Mentions & Social Media Engagement

This year, Action Canada team members were invited to share their expertise across Canada and internationally, contributing insights on human rights, sexual health, and reproductive justice. Through national media interviews, policy panels, podcasts, and academic forums, the team helped bring evidence and lived realities into public and policy conversations.

Each of these moments strengthened our collective voice—countering disinformation, grounding debates in real-world experience, and helping decision-makers understand what access to care actually looks like for people. Together, this visibility supports a broader vision of a future where everyone can exercise autonomy over their bodies and lives, and where sexual and reproductive health is treated as essential, not optional.



Notable Media Outlets

CALGARY HERALD



CityNews



Global NEWS



THE GLOBE AND MAIL*

By the Numbers



33 Media Mentions



28 Articles



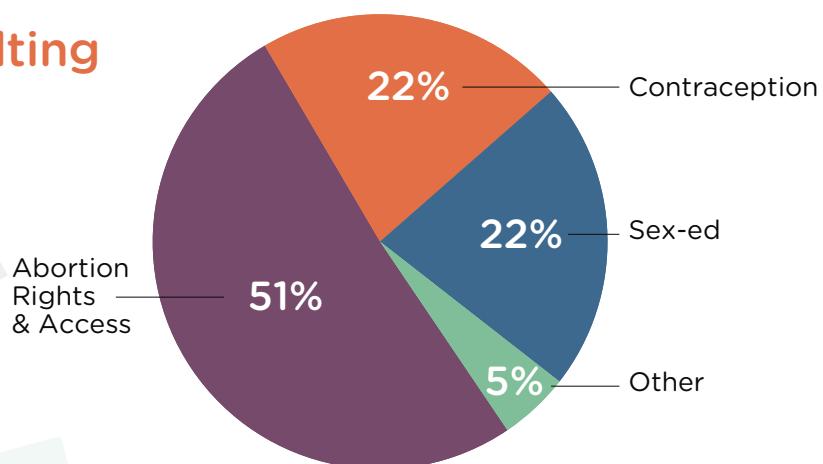
7 Radio + Podcasts



3 TV Features



Consulting topics



Building Collective Power Through Movements and Coalitions

In an increasingly polarized climate, our work to strengthen Canada's movement for sexual and reproductive rights has never been more vital. When movements are fragmented or under-resourced, the consequences are real—policy progress stalls, services are strained, and communities are left more vulnerable to backlash. We are building connections across issues and sectors to counter division and ensure our shared struggles are met with shared solutions.

This year, we deepened collaboration with coalitions and partners advancing bodily autonomy, gender equality, and collective care—joining the **Canadian Health Coalition** to defend public health care, advancing Canada's global SRHR commitments through the **Future Planning Initiative**, and leading a pan-Canadian feminist narrative change campaign with the **Feminist Influencing Group**. By aligning shared demands and coordinating advocacy across movements, we mobilized pressure for renewed political leadership on gender equality, contributing to the appointment of a dedicated Women and Gender Equality Minister in the new federal government.

Our work with the **Sexual Rights Initiative** on global norms and standards, and with our Associates Network countering anti-sex-ed narratives and expanding support for SRH care, strengthened shared capacity across the sector—connecting frontline realities, policy expertise, and public narratives. By intentionally linking movements and rejecting the siloing of issues, we are building resilient coalitions capable of advancing justice and defending hard-won rights—together.



By intentionally linking movements and rejecting the siloing of issues, we are building resilient coalitions capable of advancing justice and defending hard-won rights—together.

Action Canada Strengthening Coalitions

We collaborate with a wide array of partners and communities to strengthen key networks essential for amplifying our shared demands for a future where everyone can freely exercise autonomy over their bodies and lives. Together, we co-convene strategic alliances, coalitions, and networks, investing in the coordination, trust, and shared strategy required for sustained collective action. We recognize that these connections are vital for driving meaningful change, and that robust infrastructure is necessary to support them.

Associates Network

Action Canada's Associates Network brings together more than 20 sexual health centres across nine provinces and territories—organizations that provide essential sexual and reproductive health care, information, and education in their communities, often serving people who are disconnected from the health care system or navigating contexts where providers lack the training or support to deliver quality SRH care.

Action Canada's role within the Network is to support connection, coordination, and shared capacity across this already-strong sector. Through regular convenings, including quarterly meetings, Associates share priorities and realities from their regions, surface emerging trends, and align where collective action can add value.

Action Canada helps bring these insights to national policy spaces, including Parliament Hill, supports capacity-building around advocacy, and coordinates national monitoring so local organizations can situate their work within broader system trends.

This ongoing collaboration has supported more coherent advocacy for universal access to contraception in several regions, while also enabling Action Canada to provide targeted support to individual members navigating acute political or policy moments. Above all, the Network functions as a space for mutual learning and solidarity—ensuring that national advocacy remains grounded in the expertise and lived realities of organizations delivering care on the front lines.



Future Planning Initiative

The Future Planning Initiative (FPI) is a coalition of Canadian organizations working together to champion Canadian leadership on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). Grounded in the understanding that these rights are essential to health, equity, and sustainable development, the Initiative advances collective advocacy to strengthen SRHR policy and practice in Canada and globally.

Action Canada serves as the secretariat for the Initiative, supporting its day-to-day functioning and coordination. This includes convening members, setting agendas,

documenting discussions, preparing shared analysis and reports, and following up to support alignment and momentum across the coalition.

Through this role, Action Canada helps ensure that members' priorities are reflected in coordinated advocacy and sustained engagement with decision-makers. By providing this backbone support, the Initiative is better positioned to translate shared priorities into coherent policy engagement and ongoing political leadership on SRHR at home and abroad.

Feminist Influencing Group

The Feminist Influencing Group (FIG) is a coalition of over 50 national organizations united by a shared commitment to advancing feminist priorities in Canada's federal policy and practice. FIG functions as a coordinating space where organizations align strategy, share analysis, and support one another to advance common policy goals.

This year, FIG members shaped public conversations in support of strong social programming—such as universal access to essential medication and affordable childcare—through the Demand Better campaign during the federal election. By aligning messaging and advocacy across organizations, the coalition increased the visibility and coherence of shared priorities.

Action Canada is an active participant in FIG's coordinating committee and has supported the coalition through strategic and financial contributions, convening support, project management, and communications capacity. This includes fundraising for joint initiatives and supporting sector-wide campaigns that reflect FIG's collective priorities.

Together, FIG members build collective power by sharing advocacy strategies, strengthening cross-movement solidarity, and amplifying a shared vision of a more equitable and just Canada, grounded in collaboration rather than competition.

Together, FIG members build collective power by sharing advocacy strategies, strengthening cross-movement solidarity, and amplifying a shared vision of a more equitable and just Canada, grounded in collaboration rather than competition.

Dignity Network Canada

Dignity Network Canada is a coalition of civil society organizations across Canada working to advance the human rights of people of diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) globally. The Network provides a shared space for organizations to align strategy, exchange analysis, and respond collectively to emerging threats to queer and trans rights.

Action Canada works alongside Dignity Network members as a strategic partner and advisor, supporting alignment on policy priorities, government relations, and public engagement. This includes contributing to strategic conversations, sharing analysis across contexts, and supporting learning and coordination that strengthen collective advocacy.

Together, we work toward a world where 2SLGBTQ+ people everywhere can live with dignity, safety, and full enjoyment of their human rights and socio-economic well-being.

Through this collaboration, Network members enhance their ability to influence policy, challenge discriminatory practices, and advance rights-based alternatives. Together, we work toward a world where 2SLGBTQ+ people everywhere can live with dignity, safety, and full enjoyment of their human rights and socio-economic well-being.

Canadian Association of Parliamentarians on Population and Development

Action Canada serves as the secretariat for the Canadian Association of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (CAPPD). Established in 1997, CAPPD provides a non-partisan forum for Senators and Members of Parliament to exchange ideas and engage on population, sexual and reproductive health, human rights, and development issues.

In its role as secretariat, Action Canada supports the coordination and continuity of the Association's work, including convening meetings and the Annual General Meeting, preparing agendas and briefings,

documenting discussions, and supporting ongoing engagement with members. Action Canada also coordinates CAPPD members' participation in international fora and events, supporting parliamentarians to act as informed champions for sexual and reproductive health and rights in global policy spaces.

Through this backbone role, Action Canada helps sustain long-term, non-partisan dialogue and policy engagement on SRHR within Parliament and across international contexts.



Sexual Rights Initiative

The Sexual Rights Initiative (SRI) is a global coalition of feminist organizations working together since 2006 to advance a broad and intersectional sexual rights agenda within the UN human rights system. The coalition coordinates collective action to influence international norms and standards and to engage UN human rights mechanisms in ways that advance sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) globally.

Action Canada serves as the secretariat for SRI, providing the administrative, operational, and financial backbone that supports the coalition's work. This includes managing grants and resources, overseeing operations and human resources, and supporting the functioning of SRI's office in Geneva. Action Canada also supports coordination across the coalition, enabling members to align priorities, plan joint interventions, and sustain engagement with UN mechanisms.

Through this secretariat role, Action Canada helps ensure that SRI's collective priorities are translated into consistent,

well-coordinated advocacy within complex international policy spaces, supporting the coalition's long-term ability to hold governments accountable to their human rights obligations.

Together, these networks provide the shared infrastructure that makes durable change possible, allowing movements to coordinate across regions and issues, respond quickly to emerging threats, and sustain pressure when individual organizations cannot act alone. The following examples illustrate how this collective approach translates into concrete policy and norm-shifting impact.

Holding the Line When Gender Equality Is Treated as Optional

In the spring of 2025, amid a broader moment of political instability and “wartime” decision-making, the dedicated federal Minister for Women and Gender Equality was excluded from our new Prime Minister’s initial cabinet announcement, signalling that gender equality infrastructure could be treated as expendable in times of crisis by this new leader. This decision coincided with the UN Commission on the Status of Women, a moment when Canada’s commitments to gender equality are typically under international and public scrutiny.

In response, a broad feminist coalition mobilized within hours to push back against the erosion of gender equality infrastructure. Through coordinated advocacy, shared analysis, and aligned public messaging, the coalition helped reassert a clear expectation: that women’s rights and social movements are not optional or secondary, but core to Canada’s identity and to a strong democracy that serves people. The subsequent reinstatement of a stand-alone Minister of Women and Gender Equality reflected this pressure and the strength of collective response.



Jackie Neapole from the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women, Anuradha Dugal from Women’s Shelter’s Canada, Emily Coyle from the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies, and Action Canada’s Co-Director of Policy and Advocacy, Debbie Owusu-Akyeeah, at the Commission on the Status of Women in New York City.

This outcome matters beyond any single portfolio. Dedicated gender equality infrastructure helps safeguard programs and policies that many communities rely on for access to care, safety, and support, particularly in moments of heightened uncertainty. Thousands of supporters, organizations, and movement allies contributed to this rapid response, underscoring how coordinated action across movements can help ensure that gender equality remains a non-negotiable part of public life, even in times of crisis.

What gives you hope?

“Seeing people come together across communities to defend reproductive rights has been deeply energizing. Civil society is galvanized, and people are ready to push back. As a watchdog, expert, and convener, Action Canada is helping to channel that energy—making sure those who refuse to ‘obey in advance’ have the tools, connections, and support they need to create change.”

-Debbie Owusu-Akyeeah
Co-Director of Policy and Advocacy

Building Collective Power to Shift the Economic Narrative

The Demand Better Campaign

Ahead of the 2025 federal election, in the context of economic uncertainty, and households across Canada facing an affordability crisis, a broad feminist coalition came together to advance a shared intervention: *Demand Better*. Developed and coordinated with nearly 50 national feminist organizations, the campaign reflected a collective effort to respond to a moment when social programs, and the people who rely on them, were increasingly framed as expendable.

Action Canada played a coordinating role in the development of the campaign, supporting shared strategy, fundraising, and the creation of tools and resources so coalition members could participate fully, learn together about narrative change work, and carry it forward in their own contexts. This investment in collective infrastructure enabled the coalition to act in a coordinated way at a critical moment.

At the heart of *Demand Better* was a deliberate narrative shift. The campaign challenged deeply entrenched assumptions about how the economy works—rejecting the false choice between a strong economy and robust social programs, and questioning narrow ideas about “balancing

the budget” that treat care, health, and social supports as costs rather than investments.

Together, the coalition advanced a different economic story: one in which accessible healthcare, affordable childcare, stable housing, and reproductive rights are understood as the foundations of shared prosperity and long-term economic resilience.

The non-partisan campaign ran throughout April, during a period of heightened public attention because of the upcoming Federal Election, engaging people across the country in conversations about what an economy should be built to do and who it should serve. It demonstrated how feminist leadership, when coordinated across movements, can shift public discourse, influence political platforms, and create space for more ambitious policy conversations grounded in care, dignity, and shared wellbeing.



Our Impact

By focusing on shared gains over scarcity narratives and clearly linking strong social safety nets to long-term economic stability, *Demand Better* strengthened the movement's ability to respond in a high-stakes moment and helped hold the line on social programs fought for and won by feminist advocates and organizations. The campaign equipped civil society leaders and supporters with a shared narrative framework and practical tools to engage decision-makers, bridge issue areas, and navigate polarized conversations.

In doing so, it reinforced a simple but powerful idea: communities are more resilient when everyone has access to the care and supports they need to thrive.

Scale & Reach

The campaign's reach ensured that this reframed economic narrative was encountered repeatedly and across diverse channels, reinforcing shared language and expectations at a national scale.

- **Over 44 million impressions** generated across digital ads, national radio broadcasts, and prominent cross-country billboards
- **31 billboards** placed across British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island
- **39 radio stations** reaching audiences nationwide
- **242 targeted ads** deployed coast to coast
- **88 organizations across 14 sectors** endorsing and amplifying the campaign

What We Heard from the Field

Across the country, the narrative environment was dominated by polarized conversations—both online and in-person—with many people expressing deep financial insecurity. Partners consistently noted that when rights are framed as competing priorities, it fuels isolation and inaction. *Demand Better* helped interrupt this dynamic by linking rights to everyday economic realities in ways that felt grounded, unifying, and actionable.

Coalitions and local groups reported stronger cross-movement collaboration and more confident public engagement, with core messages echoed directly in election debates and candidate statements. Rather than ending on voting day, the campaign seeded a shared narrative that continues to circulate, now monitored as its frames are repeated by more than 80 organizations, media outlets, think tanks, and political actors.

As a result, people are better positioned to hold the line on programs that support collective wellbeing—such as universal public healthcare, secure housing, food security, and childcare—grounding future debates in the understanding that these are not extras, but essential investments in a stable and thriving society, regardless of electoral outcomes.

What gives you hope?

“Movement building brings me into rooms with people who care deeply, leaders across sectors, advocates, and community members, showing up with courage and a shared sense of purpose. Their commitment fuels my own, and it reminds me, again and again, why we fight to make sure everyone can thrive.”

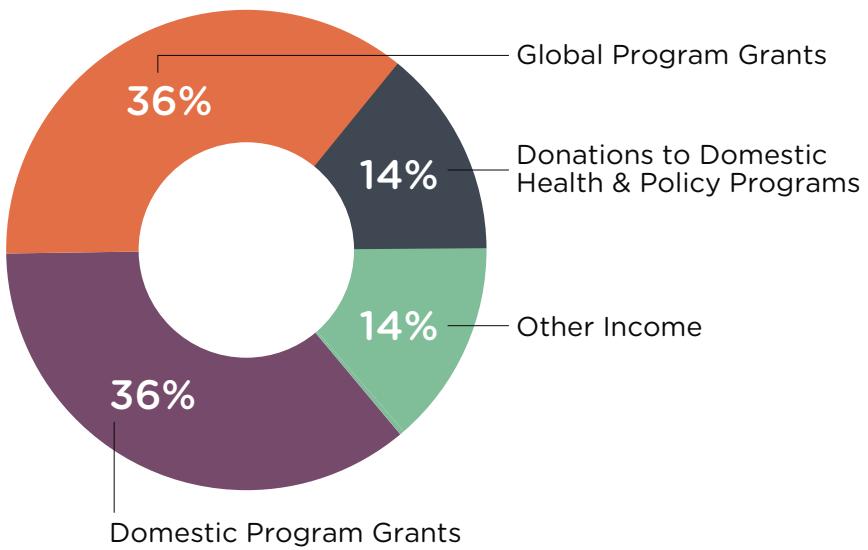
-Jill Oba-McGrath

Director of Communications
and Fundraising

Financial Overview

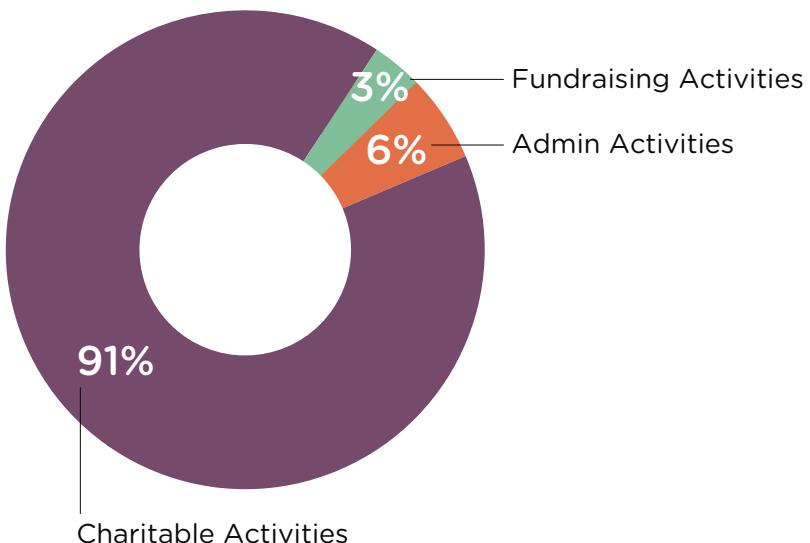
Revenue

Total: \$7,355,442.00



Expenses

Total: \$6,973,343.00



Board of Directors

Anvita Akkur

Chair

Rajesh Pisharody

Vice Chair

Audrey Gagne Breton

Secretary

Tony Cantin

Treasurer

Candice Lys

Kirsten Mah

Patty Skuster

Sarah Biton

Topaza Yu

Forging the Path Ahead

This year made one thing clear: progress happens when people refuse to accept less than what they deserve. In the face of uncertainty, communities organized to protect access to care, defend sexual and reproductive rights, and challenge the forces that rely on silence and stigma to hold people back.

Across provinces and territories, people spoke up—making it clear to decision-makers that rights without access are not rights at all.

We're not only defending what has been won—we're reimagining what's possible. Together with national coalitions, communities, and international movements, we're expanding access to contraception and abortion care, defending inclusive sexuality education, and ensuring Canada's voice for global reproductive rights remains strong and principled. For us, hope isn't

passive, it's the daily work of organizing, telling new stories, and shifting culture and policy so people can make real choices about their bodies, health, and futures.

The path ahead calls for collective effort. Every voice, every contribution, and every act of solidarity helps sustain a movement that holds the line on what makes life good—and ensures people have what they need to thrive. Thank you for your steadfast support. Together, we will continue to imagine and build a world where dignity, justice, and real freedom for all are the rule.



Subscribe to stay updated

Every day, something new is hitting the news cycle and crises seem to pile on top of crises. We are committed to informing our community of supporters about what is happening, and how our team is addressing these events.



Donate today

You can help sustain this work by becoming a monthly donor. We can't do this alone. With your support, we will continue to defend access to sexual and reproductive health care, protect bodily autonomy, and build the systems people need to make real choices about their lives—now and for the long term.



Action Canada for Sexual Health & Rights

