

# Filing complaints about anti-choice ads: **A how-to guide!**

created by **Niagara Reproductive Justice**, 2022  
[niagarareproductivejustice.com](http://niagarareproductivejustice.com)

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## Radio Ads

### How to submit a complaint to Ad Standards:

**Step 1:** Ensure that the ad goes against at least one of the Canadian Code of Advertising Standards, use your best judgment, most anti-choice ads do.

Here are some of the criteria listed in the Code that may be relevant to deciding if an anti-choice ad violates the code:

- **Accuracy:** is the ad spreading false information or making misleading claims?
- **Unacceptable depictions and portrayal:** is the ad discriminatory? Does it demean or exploit anyone?
- **Scientific claims:** does the ad make scientific claims that you know to be inaccurate?
- **Superstition and fears:** does the ad target people's fears in order to mislead them or convince them of something?

**Step 2:** Fill out the complaint form at [ecomplaints.adstandards.ca/](http://ecomplaints.adstandards.ca/)

#### What you need:

- Name of the advertiser (the anti-choice group).
- Product or service advertised (for this, ARCC suggests "Misinformation about abortion", "A message that abortion should be illegal" or "Propaganda".)
- Name of the radio station that the ad was heard on
- Date heard
- Description of the ad
- Description of your concerns about the ad. This can be as brief or lengthy as you want. You can find examples of complaints filed against ads on ARCC's website ([arcc-cdac.ca/submitting-ad-complaints](http://arcc-cdac.ca/submitting-ad-complaints)). You can also contact NRJ for help writing this part!



**If you see or hear ads in Niagara, let us know!**

We have an anti-choice activity reporting form on our website or just go to [bit.ly/reportantichoicers](http://bit.ly/reportantichoicers)

## Sample complaint to Ad Standards

submitted by an NRJ member:

To [insert name of radio station],

*This ad is extremely misleading and further stigmatizes abortion. It implicitly discourages abortions which are safe and legal, by attempting to invalidate people's personal fears and feelings about pregnancy, implying that "holding the child will make it all worth it".*

*This ad violates Section 1: Accuracy and Clarity of the Canadian Code of Advertising Standards by stating that "it is the same child inside and out". Fetuses are not children and it is misinformative to equate the two. A fetus is not viable outside of the womb and at this point of development (which most abortions are performed), the fetus in no way resembles a human being; there is no "child".*

*Canadian law and court cases have stated that fetuses are not human beings and do not have legal rights in Canada because that would compromise the rights of women (and gender minorities who can get pregnant). It further violates Section 1 by stating that their organization offers "support, guidance, [and] whatever you need" regarding pregnancy, despite being an explicitly anti-choice/pro-life organization. Its website URL is provided in the ad*

*(<https://hamiltonrighttolife.org/issues/abortion/>) where they use inflammatory and frightening language to describe abortion methods. I'm not a doctor but the accuracy is highly dubious to say the least, and they cite very outdated sources. The ad also violates Section 14: Unacceptable Depictions or Portrayals by erasing the critical role and autonomy of pregnant people, and their deeply personal and varied reasons that inform their right to choose. I find the language demeaning and patronizing because it glosses over the real challenges and stresses of an unwanted pregnancy.*

**You can copy and paste this sample or use it as a starting off point!**



# Radio Ads

## How to submit a complaint directly to the radio station

### What you'll need:

- The name of the radio station you're listening to
- Time and date
- Note down how listening to the ad made you feel
- Note down any misinformation. If the ad directs people to a website, you can also include any misinformation or harmful information that is on that website. It is considered part of the ad because the ad is directing people to it.

**Step 1:** Go to the radio station's website and look for a "contact us" section

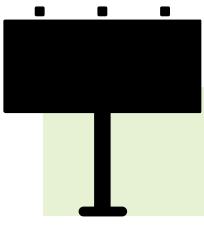
**Step 2:** If they have a list of items to contact them regarding, choose the most appropriate. If "file a complaint" isn't an option, choose "general inquiry"

**Step 3:** In the body of the message, describe the ad that you heard and around what time and day you heard it, how you felt about it, and the action you'd like them to take. If the ad provided information that was factually incorrect (likely), express how concerning it is for a radio station to be spreading misinformation.

## Sample complaint to a radio station

submitted by an NRJ member:

*"Hello, I was listening to your radio station around [time] am/pm today and I heard an ad that made me feel [emotions, e.g.: uncomfortable, upset, angry]. The ad was for [anti-choice group name]. I don't want to listen to anti-choice propaganda when I'm trying to listen to the radio. It is also concerning that your radio station has decided to play ads that are spreading misinformation. For example, [example of misinformation, such as: this ad said that most people who get abortions regret it, but we know from studies done on this topic that this is not actually true at all]. Please remove this ad as soon as possible, and please let me know when you have done so. Until I get confirmation the ad has been removed, I don't intend to listen to your radio station anymore. Thank you in advance for your help resolving this issue."*



# Billboards

## How to submit a complaint to Ad Standards:

If you see an anti-choice billboard, you can submit a complaint to the advertising watchdog Ad Standards. This private agency administers the Canadian Code of Advertising Standards (“the Code”). **It only takes one (1) complaint to initiate an investigation!**

**Step 1:** Ensure that the ad goes against at least one of the Canadian Code of Advertising Standards, use your best judgment, most anti-choice ads do.

Here are some of the criteria listed in the Code that may be relevant to deciding if an anti-choice ad violates the code:

- **Section 1: Accuracy/Clarity** - is the ad spreading false information or making misleading claims?
- **Section 8: Scientific Claims** - does the ad make scientific claims that you know to be inaccurate?
- **Section 11: Superstition and Fears** - does the ad target people’s fears in order to mislead them or convince them of something?
- **Section 14: Unacceptable Depictions and Portrayal** - is the ad discriminatory? Does it demean or exploit anyone?

You can choose whether or not to disclose your name and contact information to the advertiser but ARCC suggests not doing this in order to avoid possible anti-choice harassment.

**Step 2:** Fill out the complaint form at [ecomplaints.adstandards.ca/](http://ecomplaints.adstandards.ca/)

### What you’ll need to include:

- Pictures of Billboard
- Location (be as specific as possible)
- Date seen
- Description of the billboard
- Description of our concerns about the billboard
- Name of the advertiser (the anti-choice group). Sometimes it is not clear and you may have to go to websites to determine the true organization name.

To get more specifics about the Code, you can check it out here: [adstandards.ca/code/the-code-online/](http://adstandards.ca/code/the-code-online/)

### Sample from ARCC:

*The advertisement on this billboard violates Canadian Code of Advertising Standards, Section #, [NAME OF SECTION] because [HOW DOES IT VIOLATE THAT SECTION?]. This is especially concerning given the large amount of misinformation being spread about pregnancy and abortion by anti-abortion groups, and the dangers this misinformation poses to the public. The [INACCURATE CLAIMS/ UNSCIENTIFIC CLAIMS/ FEAR-MONGERING/ DISCRIMINATION/ EXPLOITATION] on this advertisement is unacceptable and it must be taken down.*

# More Resources!

For more information about how to submit a complaint, visit ARCC's guide: [arcc-cdac.ca/submitting-ad-complaints/](http://arcc-cdac.ca/submitting-ad-complaints/)

If you need help submitting your complaint, reach out to NRJ through email ([niagarareproductivejustice@gmail.com](mailto:niagarareproductivejustice@gmail.com)) or over social media and we'll be happy to assist!

Our website [niagarareproductivejustice.com](http://niagarareproductivejustice.com) has more resources, informative guides, and ways to get involved!



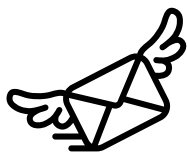
Niagara Reproductive Justice



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**Contact us!**

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