

ACTUALLY ACCURATE INFORMATION: ABORTION IN CANADA

*So you were approached by an
anti-choicer. Here's what you
need to know.*



Updated Nov 2022

CLAIM: THERE IS NO LAW IN CANADA ABOUT ABORTION FACT CHECK: ACTUALLY, TRUE

Abortion became legal in Canada in 1969 through the Criminal Law Amendment Act, the same act that legalized homosexuality and contraception. However, abortions were restricted to people who could prove that the pregnancy was life threatening.

In 1988, the Supreme Court ruled in R. v. Morgentaler that **restrictions on abortion are unconstitutional because they infringe on a person's right to "security of the person"** as protected by s.7 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. As Chief Justice Dickson put it, "forcing a woman, by threat of criminal sanction, to carry a fetus to term unless she meets certain criteria unrelated to her own priorities and aspirations" infringes upon her rights and freedoms as a Canadian.

1. Why Canada's Roe v. Wade didn't enshrine abortion as a right | CBC | 2022

**CLAIM: MAKING ABORTION ILLEGAL WOULD
STOP ABORTION IN CANADA**

FACT CHECK: ACTUALLY, FALSE

Before abortion was legal in Canada, it was common for people to perform their own abortions at home, or pay a physician to do it illegally, which was often unsafe and could lead to infection and death. The former executive director of the Canadian Abortion Rights Action League stated that before legalization, “several hundred women per year died from botched abortions.” It is not known exactly how many people were harmed or died from unsafe abortions prior to 1988, but the fact remains that **criminalizing abortion does not stop abortions, it stops safe abortions.**

**FACT: ACCESS TO ABORTION AND
REPRODUCTIVE/SEXUAL HEALTH SERVICES
ARE STILL LIMITED FOR MANY LIVING IN
CANADA**

Despite abortion being fully legalized for over thirty years, **many people still struggle to access abortion services.**

There is also a growing anti-choice presence in Canada, mirroring the anti-choice movement in the United States.

In Niagara, abortion is only offered up to 12 weeks gestation and requires the client navigate numerous appointments that may not be possible for some. Most people have to travel to Hamilton or the GTA to access abortion, which can create challenges such as missed work, childcare needs, and transportation.

For more information and support:
www.niagarareproductivejustice.com

**CLAIM: YOU CAN GET AN ABORTION AT ANY TIME
FOR ANY REASON**

FACT CHECK: ACTUALLY, FALSE

When Canada legalized abortion, they shifted responsibility for regulating abortion from the state to physicians. This means that abortion is *supposed to be* governed by medical standards instead of politics.

Currently, there are *no providers* that offer abortion past 24 weeks in Canada. There are *no reported cases* of someone having a therapeutic abortion (as opposed to a spontaneous abortion, also called a miscarriage) at nine months pregnant.

2.Abortion Statistics in Canada | Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada

3.Induced Abortions Recorded in Canada in 2016 | Canadian Institute of Health Information

**CLAIM: ABORTION IS DANGEROUS
FACT CHECK: ACTUALLY, FALSE**

Abortion is normal and safe. In 2019, a study of the safety of abortion in Canada published by the Canadian Medical Association found that about 0.16% of surgical abortions had severe adverse outcomes, whereas childbirth had a 1.38% rate of severe adverse outcomes (or over 8x higher than surgical abortion).

The decision to undertake the risks associated with abortion or with birth should only be made by the person who is pregnant.

4.Abortion services in Canada: access and safety | Canadian Medical Association Journal | 2019

5.The comparative safety of legal induced abortion and childbirth in the United States | Raymond & Grimes | 2012

DOES ABORTION CAUSE BREAST CANCER?

Crisis Pregnancy Centres (CPCs) are anti-abortion, Christian facilities that masquerade as reproductive health clinics and are known for spreading these myths such as this one. The myth that abortions cause breast cancer has been debunked by every major medical agency for the past 20 years. “Post-abortion syndrome,” which is described as a decline in mental health, has also been proven false; the most comprehensive study on this topic to date found that 95% of people who have an abortion say that relief is the strongest emotion they feel afterward, and 99% of people do not regret it.

6. Countering Anti-Choice Misinformation and Harassment | Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada

7. Emotions and decision rightness over five years following an abortion: An examination of decision difficulty and abortion stigma | Social Science & Medicine Journal | 2020

CLAIM: FETUSES ARE HUMANS AND DESERVE HUMAN RIGHTS

FACT CHECK: ACTUALLY, FALSE

There are many different opinions about when an embryo or a fetus becomes a baby. Currently, legally and scientifically, a baby is classified as a human only after it is born. Regardless, granting it human rights has a number of consequences. Fetal rights treat the fetus as though it is a separate entity from its parent, when it is actually still a part of it. Granting a fetus rights takes away from the pregnant person's rights because it prevents them from exercising bodily autonomy (i.e. having a say in what happens to their body). Women and other people who can get pregnant have long been denied equal rights based on their reproductive capabilities, and it is only recently that their right to control what happens to their own body has been legally recognized. Forcing a person to continue a pregnancy regardless of their own desires or health infringes on their rights.

CLAIM: ABSTINENCE-ONLY EDUCATION HELPS PREVENT ABORTIONS

FACT CHECK: ACTUALLY, FALSE

Some people believe that one way to prevent abortion is to teach abstinence — that is, teach people not to have sex at all unless they are intending to reproduce.

Abstinence-only sex education is frequently taught in schools, churches, and communities in Canada, *but it has been proven ineffective*. Study after study shows that “increasing emphasis on abstinence education is positively correlated with teenage pregnancy and birth rates.” Telling kids to not have sex, and therefore not teaching them about safe sexual practices, does not stop them from having sex, it just stops them from having **safe sex**.

8. Abstinence-Only Education and Teen Pregnancy Rates: Why We Need Comprehensive Sex Education in the U.S | Stanger-Hall & Hall | 2011

MORE INFO ABOUT CRISIS PREGNANCY CENTRES

There are 7 CPCs in Niagara, and they are known to tell people that receiving an abortion will be detrimental to their health.

They spread misinformation about the risks associated with abortion, claiming that people who receive abortions may suffer afterward from breast cancer, “post-abortion syndrome,” and hemorrhaging leading to death as a result of their abortion.

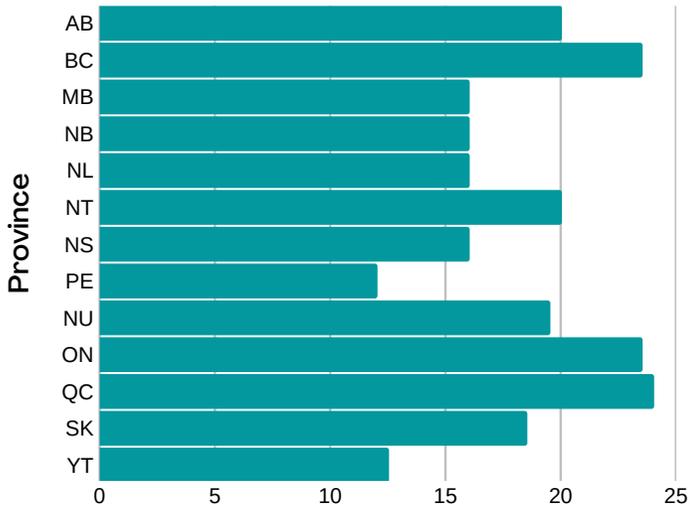


They take out Google ads such as this one to trick people into thinking they are an abortion clinic.

But this ad actually directs to Clarity Pregnancy Options, an anti-abortion fake clinic in St. Catharines, Welland, and Niagara Falls. Be careful to avoid these organizations!

WHAT DOES “LATE TERM” ABORTION MEAN?

You may have heard the phrase “late-term abortion.” This term is incorrectly used to describe people who get an abortion in the third trimester. “Late term” is a phrase used by doctors to describe a pregnancy that is past its due date (40+ weeks). There is no such thing as a “late term” abortion.



9. Gestational limit for accessing abortion (weeks)

WHAT ARE THE WAYS YOU CAN ACCESS AN ABORTION IN NIAGARA?

Niagara Region Public Health runs three Sexual Health Centres that are staffed by nurses who provide medically-informed, non-judgmental pregnancy options counselling and abortion referrals, for local abortion options and out-of-town options. It is free and no health card is needed. Open M-F 8:30am-4:40pm, closed for lunch 12pm-1pm.

Phone number: 905-688-3817

You will likely be able to receive all the support you need over the phone; however, if you do need to come in, you must make an appointment.

Niagara Falls - 7835 McLeod Rd
St. Catharines - 277 Welland Ave.
Welland - 200 Division St.

WILL CANADA MAKE ABORTION ILLEGAL AGAIN LIKE THE UNITED STATES?

Because there is no law governing abortion access in Canada, it is much more protected than in the States.

However, there is an active and well-funded anti-abortion movement in Canada that mirrors the anti-abortion movement in the States. With so many people still lacking access to affordable and safe abortion, as well as other reproductive and sexual healthcare, and with the growing anti-choice and anti-trans movements, now is not the time to let down our guard. We must continue to fight for reproductive justice and sexual liberation.

10.U.S. debate could 'normalize' anti-abortion ideas in Canada, warns Ontario expert
| CBC Hamilton | 2022

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU SEE ANTI-ABORTION ACTIVITY IN NIAGARA?

If you see anti-choice activity in Niagara, please let us know and fill out the Anti-Choice Activity in Niagara Reporting form at **bit.ly/ReportAntiChoicers**.

For more information about anti-abortion organizations to watch out for in Niagara: **www.niagarareproductivejustice.com/monitoring-anti-choicers**

For choice-affirming local sexual and reproductive health resources: **www.niagarareproductivejustice.com/resources**

NEED ABORTION SUPPORT?

or help determining if an organization is safe to go to?

Email us at **support@niagarareproductivejustice.com**

SOURCES

1. www.cbc.ca/news/canada/abortion-rights-canada-morgentaler-court-1.6439612
2. <https://www.arcc-cdac.ca/media/2020/07/statistics-abortion-in-canada.pdf>
3. <https://www.cihi.ca/sites/default/files/document/induced-abortion-can-2016-en-web.xlsx>
4. <https://www.cmaj.ca/content/191/19/E517>
5. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/22270271/>
6. <https://www.arcc-cdac.ca/on-the-issues/#countering-anti-choice-misinformation-and-harassment>
7. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0277953619306999?via%3Dihub>
8. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3194801/>
9. www.actioncanadashr.org/resources/factsheets-guidelines/2019-09-19-access-glance-abortion-services-canada
10. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/hamilton/abortion-niagara-west-1.6448196>

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NRJ is a group of community members in the Niagara Region of Ontario advocating for increased visibility of and access to sexual health resources in Niagara.

Stay in touch!

 Niagara Reproductive Justice

 @niagarareproductivejustice

 niagarareproductivejustice.com

 **Contact us!**
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