

Pro-Choice BC



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Welcome to our premiere issue!

Yes, the Pro-Choice Action Network is still alive and kicking...

We've been working with our new sister organization, the Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada (www.arcc-cdac.ca), on national issues. These include the New Brunswick provincial government's refusal to pay for abortions at the Morgentaler Clinic in Fredericton, and the recent cutbacks and closures to Status of Women offices around the country. The Conservative government has removed "equality" from the mandate of this federal department, even though its only reason for being is to further women's equality.

Meanwhile, there's about 100 MPs in Parliament with a public anti-choice stance – 78 Conservatives and 22 Liberals. Of the remaining MPs, about 140 are pro-choice, while 68 have an unknown stance. Although abortion rights appear to be safe for now in Canada, the danger lies in the possibility of a Conservative majority government after the next election. Even if the Conservatives retain a minority, that may be enough to embolden Harper and his MPs to include abortion rights in their broadening attack against women's equality.

Take action today!

Find out whether your MP is anti-choice (a handy list is available here: www.arcc-cdac.ca/action/conservative-danger.html).

If so, email or call your MP to tell them you strongly disagree with them using their elected status to impose their personal views on the public and their constituents. Demand that they represent the views of their pro-choice constituents in their political work. If your MP is pro-choice or is one of the "unknowns," email or call them and ask them to stand up and defend abortion rights.

- ❖ Write letters to the editor of your local newspaper supporting reproductive rights.
- ❖ Participate in liberal and pro-choice blogs (see www.blogscanada.com/politics/default.aspx) by posting comments informing people about abortion news and supporting reproductive rights.
- ❖ Donate to or volunteer with a pro-choice group, family planning clinic, or abortion clinic.

A bulletin from BC's Pro-Choice Action Network
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Please support this important project!

We need to raise \$2,000 to cover the costs of printing and distributing our research report and information packets.

Thank you!

We truly value your support.



About Pro-Choice BC

This bulletin will be an occasional publication focusing mostly on abortion news in BC, and provincial Pro-CAN activities.

We welcome your letters!

We need your help!

In 2005, we began a project to research anti-abortion counseling centres, or “fake clinics” in British Columbia. This issue of *Pro-Choice BC* features highlights of our research. These centres are anti-choice Christian ministries, but often pretend to be non-biased medical clinics or counseling centres. Their main goal is to stop women from having abortions.

We’re now in the last stage of finishing a research report on our findings. The main aim of the report is to publicize the harmful and deceptive practices of CPC’s.

However, we’ve run out of funds. Our initial project budget didn’t take into account an important research opportunity that we took advantage of. We conducted phone surveys of hospitals, walk-in clinics, and

doctors’ offices across BC to see if they referred appropriately for abortion. Most did not! As a result, we also want to distribute packets of abortion referral information to hundreds of community agencies, clinics, and hospitals, to ensure they can promptly refer women for abortion.

To print and distribute our research report and information packets, we need to raise \$2,000.

To help us meet our goal, may we ask you to renew your membership with the Pro-Choice Action Network today?

If you can afford it, please consider an extra donation of \$25, \$50, or more. A membership and donation form is enclosed. Thank you!

Exposing Crisis Pregnancy Centres

By Joyce Arthur

Some anti-choice counseling centres are called Crisis Pregnancy Centres or CPC’s, although many of them have different names. However, we adopted the term “CPC’s” to refer to all of them, because they are commonly known by that term in North America.

CPC’s far outnumber abortion clinics. There are 4,000 CPC’s in the United States, compared to about 800 abortion clinics. In Canada, there are about 200 CPC’s and about 25 abortion clinics. In BC, there are 39 CPC’s and 6 abortion clinics.

We wanted to find out what these centres were doing and saying to women in BC, and whether they were engaging in deceptive or harmful practices.

We found that they tend to hide their true agenda from women, and dispense inaccurate information about abortion, some of it dangerous. They usually don’t say upfront they are religious, and may disrespect women’s spiritual values by trying to impose fundamentalist Christianity. Their counseling techniques induce anxiety and emotional trauma in women considering abortion.

News bytes

In January, a group of pro-choice activists and attorneys led by lawyer Michelle Caron announced plans to launch a lawsuit this spring against New Brunswick because of its illegal law restricting funding of abortions to hospitals by OB/GYNs with the approval of two doctors.

The law violates Charter rights to life, liberty and security, and to equal treatment under the law. As a result, only two doctors at two hospitals perform abortions, and the only clinic in the province, which is non-funded, is struggling to keep up with a 25% increase in procedures.



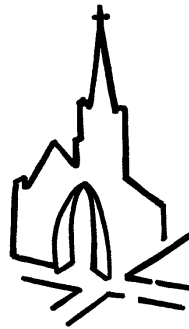
We found a university student who wanted to research CPC tactics and operations. She signed up to train as a volunteer counselor at a CPC. The training consisted of a few group seminars, some reading and videos, and “on-the-job” training at a CPC. Our volunteer sat in on a few real counseling sessions with women, but decided to quit the training program at the point where she would have to start counseling women herself.

Before being fully accepted into the training program, our volunteer was carefully screened. The application asked for her church affiliation and past pro-life

activities. Since she wasn't attending church at the time, she was required to join a fundamentalist Christian church for two months so she could obtain a reference from the pastor.

Our volunteer had to sign a Code of Counselling Ethics, which stipulates that counselors must “not provide, recommend, or refer clients for abortion or abortifacients.” In fact, in the first interview, volunteers are asked: “Under what circumstances would you consider counseling for an abortion as an alternative for a woman experiencing a crisis pregnancy?” Only if you answer “Never an option” are you accepted into the program.

During training, volunteers are given scenarios where fetuses have extreme medical problems where it cannot survive outside the womb, but ending the pregnancy still can't be considered.



Our volunteer was required to abide by a Sanctity of Life Statement, a Statement of Faith, and a Statement of Principles, all of which required belief in fundamentalist Christianity, including the sanctity of life from “conception to natural death”, an infallible Bible, the Trinity, Jesus' virgin birth and miracles, and heaven and hell.

During the training, our volunteer obtained copies of the CPC Volunteer Training Manual and other literature. The Training Manual was an eye-opening look at the religious basis upon which CPC's operate, their strategies and counseling techniques, and the information they provide to clients. The very first chapter of the manual is called the “Biblical Basis for the Sanctity of Human Life.” Some of their counselling principles are found in chapters called the “Biblical View of Sexuality”, and the “Role of the Gospel.”

CPC's pretend to have a woman-centred view, but in reality, they promote traditional ideals of femininity. Their manual states that women look for long-term commitment much more than men, and that sex outside marriage is “inherently wrong” and has “grievous consequences.” Also, that people who are sexually active outside marriage have a “deep void of intimacy,” and people who live common-law “lack commitment.”

Their counseling techniques are designed to induce guilt and emotional stress in the woman for even considering an abortion. If she's coming to the CPC for post-abortion counseling, the counseling is designed to make a woman feel guilty for killing her baby, requiring her to personify and mourn her fetus before she can obtain forgiveness from God.

News bytes

In November, an anti-choice group at Okanagan campus of University of British Columbia, lost a vote to ratify the group as an official club.

About two-thirds of the Student Union membership voted against the club after the group applied for official status, presumably because of the potential for discrimination and harassment against women.



Catholic priest Jim Roberts, 78, died from cancer on Dec. 23. Roberts frequently challenged Vancouver's Catholic archdiocese over its conservative views on abortion, divorce, homosexuality, birth control, and female priests.



We hired a doctor and medical researcher to go through the Training Manual and identify and refute any medical errors or scientific distortions. The result was a detailed report critiquing many aspects of the manual. There were serious inaccuracies and distortions in most areas. These errors are taught to the counselors, who pass them on to unsuspecting women. Here are some examples:



- ❖ Abortion methods are described incompletely and inaccurately, and usually in inflammatory ways. Several methods are described that are not even used in Canada. There is an over-emphasis on later abortion methods, which are always rare.
- ❖ Abortion results in many serious physical complications, including perforation of the uterus, laceration of the cervix, infection, and hemorrhage. It's strongly implied that these complications are routine and frequent, with no mention that the probability of a serious complication is very low.
- ❖ Abortion leads to a higher risk of breast cancer and infertility.
- ❖ In future pregnancies, abortion leads to higher rates of miscarriage, ectopic pregnancy, and placenta previa.
- ❖ In most women, abortion causes "post-abortion syndrome", a form of post-traumatic stress that leads to such things as depression, nightmares, and suicidal thoughts.
- ❖ Contraception has a high failure rate, and condoms do not protect adequately against sexually transmitted diseases.

We conducted various other activities to find out more about CPC's and their influence in communities across BC.

- ❖ We called and visited CPC's posing as pregnant women or mothers of pregnant women. They provided us with the same types of misinformation on abortion as in the Training Manual.
- ❖ We sent a survey to women's centres and other women's community groups to find out how much staff knew about their local CPC's, and what impact they had on women and communities. Many centres were unaware of the CPC's and their agenda. Those that knew about them often reported that their clients had had negative experiences there.
- ❖ We phoned almost 300 walk-in medical clinics, doctor's offices, and hospitals throughout BC, posing as a pregnant woman who wants an abortion, to test if they referred appropriately to an abortion clinic or a pro-choice family planning service.

The majority of healthcare agencies did not refer appropriately for abortion, and a few even referred our caller to a CPC.

- ❖ We visited some Women's Centres, family planning clinics, and public health nurses across BC. We talked to them about the local availability of abortion and family planning services, and if women encountered problems finding services. We also provided information to them so they could refer women appropriately for abortions.