
PROPOSED ACTION: **Equitable Abortion Rights in Canada**

PROPOSERS: **Betty Donaldson, Gillian Burton, Jane Fox, Margaret Linton of the Canadian Unitarian Universalist Women’s Association** and the requisite 25 individuals who are members of at least three different member congregations located in at least three of the four CUC Regions, as required under Category E of the CUC Resolutions Process.

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DATE: Updated March 2015

Background

1. Unitarian and Universalists have been advocating for universal access to safe and inexpensive abortion services in Canada for more than forty years. In 1980 the Canadian Unitarian Council adopted a Resolution (see Appendix A) promoting wider access, arisen from our principle that affirms and promotes the inherent worth and dignity of every person. Affordable and accessible abortion and counselling services are available to some, but not to all Canadian women. The current situation is inequitable.
 - Since 1988, when the Supreme Court of Canada (SCC) struck down Canada's 1969 abortion law, abortion is treated like any other medical procedure, and is thus governed by provincial regulations.
 - Availability and access to abortion services varies across the country, and for some of limited resources, impossible to access. Clinics set up by Dr. Morgentaler have filled some of the gap that hospitals have not provided, but not all provinces and territories have or fund such clinics.
 - Because abortion is an exclusion under reciprocal billing plans, women who must go to another province for abortion services, are obliged to pay up front and then seek to be reimbursed. This is a barrier for many women.
 - In Prince Edward Island, no hospitals or clinics provide abortions, forcing women to travel to other provinces at their own expense. According to Health PEI, about 70 women from the province travel to Halifax each year to have an abortion, yet travel costs are not covered. The NB Morgentaler Clinic said that every year between 70 and 80 women from P.E.I. paid for an abortion at the clinic. Women without resources are clearly disadvantaged.

2. Our 1980 Abortion Rights Resolution states, “the Canadian Unitarian Council promote changes in the law to permit that the right to abortion be determined exclusively by the woman in consultation with a physician.”
3. The 1980 resolution also directed the CUC to affiliate with CARAL (Canadian Abortion Rights Action League) – this organization no longer exists.

The 1980 resolution needs to be updated. Therefore, the following are proposed:

A. MOTION TO AMEND:

Therefore, be it resolved that:

The 1980 Abortion Rights resolution be amended to:

The Canadian Unitarian Council encourages member congregations and individual members to work to ensure that Canada continues to permit the right to abortion to be determined exclusively by the woman in consultation with a physician, and to ensure that abortions are available and accessible to all Canadians at a reasonable cost.

Action Plan

Each delegate is requested to urge his/her society to become involved and agree on a strategy to further this issue. Suggested ways of involvement could include the following actions:

- a. *To urge members to educate themselves and others in abortion rights, and promote:*
 - *Organizations that support reproductive decisions regarding choice;*
 - *Organizations that provide education, counseling or support in making such choices;*
 - *Organizations that provide comprehensive sexuality education and support services such as counseling and education that is accurate and evidence-based.*
- b. *To disseminate information on “freedom of choice on abortion” in your community;*
- c. *To encourage societies to write politicians and interested citizens to seek support;*
- d. *To form a coalition of like-minded religious groups;*
- e. *To promote joint efforts with other groups to advocate for equal access to Abortion through appropriate action*
- f. *To advocate, at the same time, that birth control information be available and free to all who seek it.*
 - i.

B. BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

The CUC create a national monitoring group with volunteer members from many congregations, in order to further educate members and thus provide support to congregations to promote choice, within our core UU principles.

C. In order to further fulfill the AMENDED resolution of 1980, we propose the following actions and action plan:

1. The CUC encourage members to work with our governments (provincial, federal, territorial as needed) to ensure that abortions are fully accessible, and are fully funded by provincial health plans no matter where performed in Canada.
2. The CUC affirm a woman's right to have the procedure in a supportive and safe environment such as that provided by private clinics.
3. The CUC urge members to cooperate with governments toward the removal of abortion as an exclusion under reciprocal billing between provinces, so that women do not have pay for out of province services from their own funds; and toward the assumption of all costs for women who have to travel to access abortion services.

ACTION PLAN FOR PROPOSERS

An Action Plan accompanies each proposed motion, outlining action steps that might be necessary to implement the motion. This is to provide delegates with a clear idea of the resources that might be involved, and how much staff and volunteer time needs to be allocated.

The Proposers suggest the following actions to support the implementation of their motion, if approved by delegates at the Annual General Meeting:

PROPOSED ACTION	DETAILS	WHO IS RESPONSIBLE	SUGGESTED COMPLETION DATE
For Proposers	<p>Draft sample letters and announcements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • from the CUC to inform members of provincial and territorial governments that restrict access or do not fully fund abortions. • CUUWA proposers will coordinate a process involving the proposers and others members who may wish to participate. <p>Develop supportive strategies that reflect our core principles but that are operational and functional at a local level. These strategies could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • articulating a statement of how our core principles resonates within decisions made concerning the abortion option; • a women's support group, education through OWL and other documents and programs, • sermons or other service alternatives on International Women's Day. 	Proposers, National Monitoring Group, CUC Staff	August 1, 2015

PROPOSED ACTION	DETAILS	WHO IS RESPONSIBLE	SUGGESTED COMPLETION DATE
For CUC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review sample letters and announcements, revise and approve. • Send letters and announcements to congregations. • Form a national monitoring group to sustain relevant dialogue and action. 	President, Executive Director, CUC Staff	September 1, 2015
For Members and Congregations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review sample letters and announcements, revise and approve and send as determined by member or member congregation. • Support and promote organizations that work for affordable and accessible abortion and counselling services. 	CUUWA members, National Monitoring Group, CUC Staff	ongoing

APPENDIX A

ABORTION RIGHTS – APPROVED at CUC AGM, 1980

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the 19th Annual meeting of the Canadian Unitarian Council promote changes in the law to permit that the right to abortion be determined exclusively by the woman in consultation with a physician.

Action Plan

1. Each delegate is requested to urge his/her society to become involved and agree on a strategy to further this issue. Suggested ways of involvement could include the following actions:
 - a. To support the Canadian Abortion Rights Action League (CARAL)
 - b. To disseminate information on “freedom of choice on abortion” in your community.
 - c. To encourage societies to write politicians and interested citizens to seek individual support.
 - d. To form a coalition of like-minded religious groups.
 - e. To promote joint efforts with other groups to lobby local, provincial and federal politician through personal action, written briefs, marches, demonstrations and public meetings.
 - f. To advocate, at the same time, that birth control information be available and free to all who seek it.

2. BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Canadian Unitarian Council affiliates with CARAL. (Canadian Abortion Rights Action League).