

POSITION STATEMENT

Reproductive Health in Canada



The Canadian Federation of Business and Professional Women
La Federation Canadienne des Femmes de Carrières Commerciales et Professionnelles

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*Working towards improving economic, political, social and employment conditions
for women*

“Women working for working women”

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November 26, 2024



Statement

The Canadian Federation of Business and Professional Women (BPW Canada) has advocated, from its inception in 1930, on the issues that affect women in their workplace, in their communities and in their families. Over the years, there have been many steps forward to make situations for women in these places more safe, more equitable and more sustainable.

BPW Canada is encouraged that in 2024 the Government of Canada announced the following initiatives that attempt to alleviate the issues surrounding access to and information for the reproductive health of women in Canada:

- Another term of funding for The Health Canada Sexual and Reproductive Health Fund;
- Inclusion of Abortion in Canada on the Sexual and reproductive health page of the Public Health Agency of Canada website;
- Emphasis on increased internet access for rural areas;
- Increasing the number of clinics available in remote and Indigenous areas that deal with reproductive health;
- Inventive use of transfer fund monitoring (Canada Mental Health Transfer) that could be a model for more health areas, including reproductive health;
- Menstrual Equity Project; and
- Introduction of the Pharmacare Program on January 29, 2024, that includes free contraceptives.

Women are bearing the brunt of gaps in and access to Canada's health systems, and it follows that this has a causal effect on our participation in the economy and society in general. Reproductive health issues (reproductive system health, sexual health, contraception, abortion and similar areas) disproportionately impact women, due to the nature of our reproductive system, and the systemic discrimination within the health system. The impact is even greater for women who are marginalized.

Women in Canada today have inadequate access to sexual and reproductive health services that could support them throughout their lifespan, including to abortion services. They may live in provinces or territories with governments that do not support full services for all the reproductive items outlined in the Canada Health Act (CHA) for a multitude of reasons, meaning they must pay more out of pocket than other Canadian women just to access those services. They may live in provinces or territories where a lack of medical facilities, including hospitals and clinics, and shortages of personnel, especially doctors, limit their access to all health services, including reproductive health programs. They may experience a lack of digital and cellphone infrastructure, which could help with access to reproductive health education and services, particularly in rural, remote or Indigenous areas.



With recent developments and changes in many countries around the world surrounding personal health for women, it is important to our organization that the gains made in Canada are not lost; that legislation and funding already in place are maintained by the current government and future governments; and that progress continues to be made to ensure women have access to the health services they need to fully contribute to the economic success of Canada.

Recommendations

BPW Canada's members, through our advocacy processes, have put forward recommendations that attempt to mitigate access issues, and will continue to do so in the coming years.

BPW Canada urges the federal government to:

- Continue to improve access to health services and health education through technology;
- Improve the process of ensuring access to reproductive health services at the provincial/territorial level; and
- Strengthen access to information and services on reproductive health, including abortion.

BPW Canada acknowledges those provinces that have implemented free contraceptive health care and urges all provincial and territorial governments to:

- Work closely with the Government of Canada on national universal pharmacare, so free contraceptives will be available to all women across Canada.

Conclusion

BPW Canada calls for the maintenance of the human right to body autonomy for all people with female reproductive systems in Canada. BPW Canada also calls for equitable distribution and access to reproductive health care services so that all people with female reproductive systems across our nation can, without barriers or delays and with information, respect and attentive support from education and healthcare providers, manage and protect their own reproductive health.

Allied Partnerships and Contacts

Gender Equality Coalition of Ontario
Action Canada
Legal Education and Action Fund



Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada

Contacts

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