

ABORTION IN QUEBEC

Let's talk about it!



A collection of terms, definitions and facts about abortion in Quebec.

Compiled by the Girls Action team.



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GLOSSARY

Abortion The deliberate termination of a human pregnancy.

Contraceptive pill A hormonal medication in the form of a small ball that must be taken daily to cause temporary infertility.

The morning after pill Emergency contraception taken within 72 hours of unprotected sex or contraceptive failure.

Pro-choice Does not mean pro-abortion. Does not trivialize abortion. It is the opposition to forced termination of pregnancy or forced abortion. It stands for giving pregnant people a choice.

Anti-choice (pro-life) Opposition to abortion and the right of pregnant people to choose for themselves. For this camp, human life begins at conception although this belief is not scientifically sound.

Pregnancy crisis centre Centres that do not necessarily disclose their beliefs in order to better disseminate their anti-abortion messages, especially to those considering abortion. These centres even go as far as presenting medical myths to discourage abortions.



GLOSSARY

**Family
Planning
Centres**

Places that provide access to and information about birth control, with the goal of enabling families to choose whether or not to have a child. They provide information on pregnancy, contraception and abortion.

**Decriminaliz
ation**

Non-criminal responses, such as fines and warnings, are available for designated activities. This is still not legal.

Legalization

Criminal sanctions are removed. Regulatory controls may still apply.

**Physical
autonomy**

Concerns the right to make decisions about one's own life, body and future.

Roe v Wade

A landmark U.S. Supreme Court decision in which the Court ruled in 1973 that the U.S. Constitution conferred the right to abortion. This decision was recently overturned.



LEGALLY SPEAKING

- The consent of the sexual partner is not required.
- Consent can be given alone from the age of 14.
- This medical procedure is free and legal throughout the pregnancy, but access is more complicated in late term (after 23 weeks).
- Since 2016, protests are not allowed within 50 meters of facilities that perform abortions.

Educaloi, 2022

LATE TERM ABORTION

Canada is the only western country without laws on late term abortions. However, these abortions are very rare in Canada. Abortions after 20 weeks of pregnancy represent less than 1% of abortions in Quebec, or about 100 cases.

Conseil du Statut de la femme, 2013

ACCESS STILL UNEQUAL

- Three regions have only one abortion service centre, and some are only open once a week. So some people have to wait up to four weeks for an abortion.
- People still went to the United States because it was the most accessible place, but this option is no longer reliable with the overturning of Roe v Wade.
- The Quebec College of Physicians still limits access to the abortion pill while other provinces and Health Canada have removed these limits in 2019 due to new evidence.



- In Quebec, there are 3 pro-choice resources to accompany pregnant people in their decision making. In contrast, there are at least 20 anti-choice centers

Radio-Canada "Des centaines de manifestantes réunies au Québec pour le droit à l'avortement", 2022

THE DEMANDS OF THE PRO-CHOICE MOVEMENT IN QUEBEC

- Simplifying access to the abortion pill by allowing midwives and doctors to prescribe it (as is the case in other provinces).
- Full access to contraception (for all genders).
- Universal, free and safe abortion services.
- The return of age-appropriate sex education starting in elementary school to educate the youth about safe practices and contraception.

Le Conseil du statut de la femme, 2013



ABORTION: THE MOST COMMON MYTHS

Compiled by the Canadian Association for Choice

"Young people use abortion as a method of contraception."

This myth ignores the reality that abortion is a last resort for many people who have accidentally become pregnant without reliable contraceptive information or products, as a result of rape or poor judgment. Moreover, no contraceptive method is completely reliable even when used correctly. Abortion then becomes the last resort against an unwanted pregnancy.

"She had a good time. Now let her suffer the consequences!"

The most common causes of unwanted pregnancy are improper use or failure of a contraceptive. In addition to its inaccuracy, the misogyny of this statement is problematic because it makes motherhood a punishment for sex, diminishes the value of childhood and motherhood, and perpetuates an unhealthy approach to sexuality.

"Abortion affects the psychological balance of pregnant people."

Any major life decision brings its own set of emotions. People who have abortions do not experience more psychological problems than those who carry an unwanted pregnancy to term. The American Psychological Association (APA) has not identified any evidence to support the existence of a "post-abortion syndrome," a controversial term used to describe the emotional and psychological problems that some people experience after an abortion. It is believed that these problems are most likely to occur in people who are already suffering from psychological problems, or in those whose abortion was forced upon them by a partner or family member rather than their own decision. Overall, a pregnant person is more likely to suffer from such disorders when the abortion she seeks is denied than when it is granted in a timely and compassionate manner.



ABORTION: THE MOST COMMON MYTHS

Compiled by the Canadian Association for Choice

"A person who has an abortion will not be able to get pregnant again, or will miscarry."

Having an abortion does not compromise a future pregnancy. Abortion in the first trimester has become one of the safest and simplest medical procedures. Some people mistakenly believe that an abortion will cause infertility, ectopic pregnancy, miscarriage, birth defect, premature birth or low birth weight later on. In reality, abortion does not lead to any of these consequences. In the past, abortions performed by untrained doctors or under unsanitary conditions have sometimes resulted in injury or infertility. The decriminalization of abortion, however, has ensured that abortion is now performed under proper conditions and by competent personnel, thereby greatly reducing the risk of side effects, permanent injury, or infertility.

"Abortion destroys family life."

On the contrary, giving parents the opportunity to plan and space the number and arrival of their children serves to strengthen family life. This planning is an essential tool in the composition of healthy, happy families, whose children are more likely to become self-sufficient, productive adults.

"Most unwanted children end up being wanted."

It is wonderful that many unplanned children are loved and cherished once born. However, a person who comes to seek an abortion has already rejected their pregnancy. Numerous studies show that children born to people who have been denied abortion are more likely to suffer social, psychological, medical, academic, and criminal problems than children born to families who have accepted their coming from the beginning.



ABORTION: THE MOST COMMON MYTHS

Compiled by the Canadian Association for Choice

"Abortion is the same as killing an unborn child."

From a genetic standpoint, the embryo and fetus are human, just like every sperm and egg. People who describe abortion in inflammatory terms such as "killing" or "murder" are confusing an embryo -something that can become a person- with a real person. Both the Canadian Medical Association and the Supreme Court of Canada differentiate between potential nature and personhood, and consider that personhood begins at birth.

"Abortion will disappear if it becomes criminal."

The abortion rate in countries where it is illegal is about the same as in countries where it is legal. Making abortion criminal will not eliminate it; but it will eliminate abortions performed under safe conditions. Our country's history teaches us that pregnant people often take risky means when they want to end an unwanted pregnancy. The dangerous methods they may use to self-abort, or that unregulated practitioners use to perform an abortion, can cause severe bleeding, infertility or death.

"Educating young people about sex and abortion leads them to have sex anytime and with anyone."

Not true. Studies show that good sex education that includes accurate and up-to-date information about contraception and abortion makes young people more likely to learn about the risks of their sexuality and how to protect themselves if they do have sex. In some cases, programs that promote abstinence only have even led to an increase in pregnancies among participants. Young people who decide to be sexually active have a vital need for reliable information about contraception and abortion.



TIMELINE

According to a report from the Conseil du statut de la femme

1869

Criminalization of abortion by the Canadian Parliament under penalty of life imprisonment

1960

Legalization of the contraceptive pill

1967

Quebec government funds family planning clinics (despite federal restrictions)

1970

Dr. Morgantaler opens an abortion clinic in Montreal even though it is illegal.

1892

Federal criminalization of the sale of contraceptive products

1966

Self-abortion/ clandestine abortion are the leading cause of hospitalization for Canadian women

1969: Bill C-150

- Decriminalization of abortion
- Legalization only in "medically necessary" cases
- Legalization of the sale of contraceptives

1970

Wave of pro-choice protests



TIMELINE

According to a report from the Conseil du statut de la femme

1976

Dr. Morgentaler is acquitted 3x by Jury despite his clinic clearly breaking the law.

1988

Health Canada declares abortion an essential medical procedure

1989

Mr. Tremblay tries to use the courts to forbid his ex-girlfriend, Mrs. Daigle, from having an abortion. The court ruled in her favor, confirming that a fetus is not a human being.

2013

There were 27 anti-choice centres in Quebec and 11 hospitals were referring requests for abortion information to these organizations.

1976

The government stops prosecuting him. Abortion is now performed in Quebec (though illegal).

1988

The Supreme Court decriminalizes abortion under the Canadian Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms.

2008: The Unborn Victims of Crime Act

was passed in the Federal House on second reading. It was eventually defeated, but was followed by several other private bills and similar motions.

2016: Safe Access Zone

Protests are no longer allowed within 50m of sites where abortions are performed.



(RE)SOURCES

Government

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[L'avortement: mythes les plus répandus](#), Association canadienne pour le la liberté de choix, 2013

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[Des centaines de manifestantes réunies au Québec pour le droit à l'avortement](#), Radio-Canada, 2022

Court Cases

[R. v. Morgentaler](#)

[Tremblay v. Daigle](#)

Resources

[Action Canada for sexual health & rights access line](#)

[SOS Grossesse](#)

[National Abortion Federation](#)

[Fédération du Québec pour le planning des naissances](#)