



Action Canada
for Sexual Health & Rights



Human Rights Council – session

Item : Universal Periodic Review Outcomes: Canada

Statement by Action Canada for Population and Development

Speaker: Meghan Doherty

Mr. President, Action Canada for Sexual Health and Rights and the Canadian Alliance for Sex Work Law Reform makes this statement in collaboration with the Sexual Rights Initiative.

We welcome Canada's acceptance of the recommendation to ensure equal access to abortion and comprehensive sexuality education across all provinces and territories.

Major systemic barriers exist across the country that prevent individuals from accessing the abortion services to which they are entitled. These barriers often intersect with a person's age, immigration status, race, class, sexuality and gender, as well as an individual's geographic location. In accepting this recommendation, we will look to the federal government to take immediate steps to address the barriers and discrepancies across provinces and territories in access to abortion care.

Regarding comprehensive sexuality education, swift action is required to ensure curricula is implemented consistently, effectively and in a way that supports young people's rights to information, non-discrimination, health and to be free from gender-based violence. Federal leadership to promote and protect evidence-based sexuality curricula is sorely needed, particularly in the wake of the Ontario government's decision to regress their sex-ed back to a 20-year old curriculum.

We remain disappointed that the human rights of sex workers continue to be ignored by our government. In 2013, laws that criminalized sex work were struck down as they were in violation of the rights of sex workers. Since then, new legislation that effectively re-criminalizes sex workers was passed. The lives and health of sex workers remain at risk. This legislation must be swiftly repealed to prevent further harm, prevent gender-based violence and ensure the rights and dignity of sex workers. Decriminalization of sex work, removing all criminal provisions related to sex work, including those criminalizing clients and third parties, is a necessary step to achieve the goals of many UPR recommendations such as ending the criminalization of poverty, ensuring equal labour rights for women, upholding Indigenous women's human rights, and fighting human trafficking, which can only be done by ending the conflation of sex work and trafficking.

We look forward to seeing our government take concrete steps to protect, promote and respect sexual and reproductive rights of all in Canada. Thank you.