



July 4, 2022

**United States Supreme Court's decision to overturn Roe v. Wade,  
impacting right to an abortion:  
Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres (OCRCC) responds**

The U.S. Supreme Court reversed Roe v. Wade on June 24, 2022, declaring that the constitutional right to abortion, upheld for nearly half a century, no longer exists.

We at Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres (OCRCC) are alarmed by this ruling and its implications. The ruling is an attack on human rights that will bring life-changing repercussions to those living in the United States. Different people and communities – such as racialized, impoverished, young, disabled and 2SLGBTQIA+ people, who already face inequitable access to sexual and reproductive health rights – will experience the impacts of this ruling most acutely. The decision will have additional consequences: for example, more barriers to sexual and reproductive health services, and increased service pressures in places that continue to provide these services. Most concerning, the ruling will pave the way for expanded opportunities for threats to bodily autonomy.

OCRCC extends solidarity to rights organizers in the U.S., who provide reproductive health services or provide support to people whose right to make decisions about their own bodies are threatened.

We also stand in solidarity with those who already face the most barriers to these rights. Threats to bodily autonomy for Indigenous, racialized, impoverished, young and 2SLGBTQIA+ people include the issue of abortion access, but also extend beyond it.

**About the ruling and its impacts**

The recent U.S. Supreme Court decision means that abortion rights will be immediately rolled back in nearly half of American states. Additional restrictions will likely follow. Abortion will not be available in large parts of the country<sup>1</sup>. Bans and other restrictions will limit where abortion services can occur, who can access them, and under what conditions abortion can be provided<sup>2</sup>. All of this will result in high levels of state control over a person's ability to make decisions about their body, with particular restrictions to self-determination for young people and people with limited means to travel or seek alternative options.

We believe this ruling has serious impacts for those whose bodily autonomy is most often appropriated, stolen or imperiled—that is, Indigenous people, racialized people, women, girls, trans, gender diverse and non-binary people.

**Bodily autonomy is a human right**

It stands out to us that certain bodies and populations are most likely to face limits to their bodily autonomy.

For example, Canada maintains a long history of state control against Indigenous Peoples: this has been enacted through many strategies, including sexual violence against Indigenous women, girls and gender-diverse people<sup>3</sup>, as well as colonial intrusion on the reproductive rights of Indigenous communities. The National Aboriginal Council of Midwives (NACM) shares that such actions do not just affect individual Indigenous persons, but “is an assault on...families, communities, and Nations and continues Canada's longstanding history of colonization and assimilation”<sup>4</sup>. This colonial legacy must be challenged so that “Indigenous Peoples have the inherent authority to

<sup>1</sup> Totenberg, Nina and Sarah McCammon, for NPR. June 24, 2022. Supreme Court overturns Roe v. Wade, ending right to abortion upheld for decades. Online: <https://www.npr.org/2022/06/24/1102305878/supreme-court-abortion-roe-v-wade-decision-overturn>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> Native Women's Association of Canada. 2021. NWAC's Action Plan to End the Attack Against Indigenous Women, Girls, and Gender-Diverse People. Online: <https://nwac.ca/assets-knowledge-centre/NWAC-action-plan-English.pdf> : 5.

<sup>4</sup> National Aboriginal Council of Midwives (NACM). Position Statement on Forced and Coerced Sterilization of Indigenous Peoples. Online: <https://indigenousmidwifery.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/PS-ForcedSter.pdf>

bodily autonomy, which includes the right to decide if, when, and how they choose to have — or not have — children”<sup>5</sup>. Canada also has a longstanding history of intervening upon the bodily autonomy of 2SLGBTQIA+ people. For example, conversion therapy<sup>6</sup> was only banned in Canada in 2022. Egale Human Rights Trust shares: “the practice of conversion therapy is abhorrent and its consequences are devastating. It is premised upon the notion that sexual and gender minorities suffer from an illness that must be corrected”<sup>7</sup>.

We can think of many other ways in which the state has impinged upon the rights of the bodies of people with disabilities, Black bodies, the bodies of women, and others. The right to choose abortion is one component of the right to make decisions about your own body, and this right must be protected.

### **There’s work to do to uphold the right to bodily autonomy**

There are things you can do to support these rights:

Support abortion rights and access in the U.S.:

- Donate to and support BIPOC-led abortion and reproductive justice organizations like: [SisterSong](#), [Indigenous Women Rising](#) or [National Asian Pacific American Women’s Forum \(NAPAWF\)](#)
- Donate to local abortion clinics and abortion funds: Visit <https://abortionfunds.org/funds/> to find a local abortion fund
- Promote [WomenOnWeb](#) services, which increase access to medical abortion

Help people access abortion and other sexual and reproductive rights in Canada:

- [Donate to Action Canada](#) to help people facing financial barriers to abortion
- Promote [ChoiceConnect.ca](#) and [WomenOnWeb](#) services
- [Email your elected officials](#) to advocate for universal contraception coverage and abortion services
- Volunteer with your local sexual health clinic or abortion rights group

Other causes to support that will improve bodily autonomy rights, including abortion access, for everyone:

- Racial justice
- Disability justice
- Gender equity work
- 2SLGBTQIA+ rights and equity work
- Universal basic income and living wages
- Status for all/migrant justice
- Comprehensive sexuality education
- Universal contraception coverage<sup>8</sup>
- Gender-based violence prevention and support

You can also commit to increase your awareness about the violence of colonization and assimilation in Canada, especially the control of Indigenous People’s fertility, birth, and the forcible removal of children.

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*Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres (OCRCC) is a network of 30+ community-based sexual assault centres in Ontario. If you or someone you know has experienced sexual violence, go to <https://sexualassaultsupport.ca/support/>.  
Learn more about how to prevent sexual violence at [www.draw-the-line.ca](http://www.draw-the-line.ca).*

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid

<sup>6</sup> Conversion therapy is any attempt to change a person’s sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression (GLAAD. What is conversion therapy? Online: <https://www.glaad.org/conversiontherapy>)

<sup>7</sup> Egale Human Rights Trust. December 19, 2019. Letter, Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity to Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (The Practice of “Conversion Therapy” in Canada). Online <file:///C:/Users/madly/Downloads/FINAL-UN-High-Commissioner-for-Human-Rights-Conversion-Therapy-in-Canada.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> We thank the Action Canada For Sexual Health and Rights for these fantastic suggestions on how to support reproductive and sexual health rights. See more at Action Canada For Sexual Health and Rights: How you can take action to protect abortion. Online: <https://www.actioncanadashr.org/news/2022-06-24-how-you-can-take-action-protect-abortion>. Other suggestions listed include those adapted from SHORE Centre and the National Aboriginal Council of Midwives (NACM).