



May 24, 2006

The Honourable Brad Green, QC
Minister of Health
Government of New Brunswick
Carleton Place
P.O. Box 5100
Fredericton, NB E3B 5G8

Dear Honourable Mr. Green:

The National Abortion Federation (NAF) is the professional association of abortion providers representing more than 400 facilities in Canada and the United States. Together, our members provide quality care for more than half the women who choose abortion each year. Our mission is to ensure safe, legal, and accessible abortion care to promote health and justice for women. NAF has developed evidence-based *Clinical Policy Guidelines* which set the standard for quality abortion care in Canada and the United States. NAF also offers abortion-specific ongoing, accredited continuing medical education to health care providers.

I am writing to express our deep concern regarding the impending cessation of abortion services at the Dr. Everett Chalmers Hospital in Fredericton at the end of June. Unless swift action is taken, New Brunswick women will have to overcome tremendous burdens in order to access the abortion care they need. Women may be required to travel longer distances to find a publicly-funded abortion provider, compelled to use their own money to pay for an abortion, or even forced to carry an unwanted pregnancy to term.

The current funding situation in New Brunswick is inequitable. As you are aware, abortion services are covered under the Canada Health Act. For years, the province of New Brunswick has had a policy of only funding abortions provided by obstetrician-gynecologists in hospital settings. New Brunswick also requires approval from two physicians before abortion services are provided. As a result, many women seek care instead at the Morgentaler Clinic in Fredericton, where services are more readily accessible. Approximately 1,000 abortions are provided annually in New Brunswick with at least half provided by the Morgentaler Clinic. However, New Brunswick will not provide public funding for this facility, and instead women must pay with their own money for services. This policy is a clear violation of the Canada Health Act.

president and ceo: Vicki A. Saporta

board chair: Pat Smith, MD ■ *board members:* Carol Ball, MD ■ Margaret Beal, PhD, CNM ■ Vicki Breitbart, EdD, MSW
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It is our understanding that many options are under consideration, including locating another hospital, possibly out of province, to provide abortion services. Sending women to hospitals in other provinces is an unacceptable solution as it would contravene the Canada Health Act's guarantee of services and place unnecessary burdens on New Brunswick women. Requiring women to travel longer travel distances results in increased travel costs, and also makes finding childcare and/or missing work more difficult. These burdens may force women to delay their abortions until later in their pregnancies, possibly leading to increased risks.

All of these harmful consequences are avoidable, as qualified providers of abortion services are readily available in New Brunswick. First, New Brunswick Health can contract with the Morgentaler Clinic to ensure that publicly funded abortion services are accessible. This facility has been caring for New Brunswick women for over 11 years, and is an accredited member of the National Abortion Federation. While this option is by far the most fair and sensible solution for New Brunswick women, the province could also allow family practice physicians to provide abortions in New Brunswick hospitals. Family physicians provide quality abortion care at hospitals and clinics throughout Canada, and there is no reason why they could not provide services at the Dr. Everett Chalmers Hospital as well. These approaches would avoid further limiting access to abortion in the province.

We look forward to your prompt response to ensure that the women in New Brunswick are not left without timely, accessible and funded services. We would be pleased to meet with you to discuss implementing these approaches at your convenience.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Vicki Saporta", with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Vicki Saporta
President & CEO