

May 6, 2022

Abortion Rights are Human Rights

Leaked draft suggests U.S. Supreme Court poised to overturn Roe v. Wade

On Monday night, a draft decision was leaked indicating that the U.S. Supreme Court is set to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, ending a 49-year-old precedent protecting abortion rights. A final ruling isn't expected until late June or July, but if this decision holds, it will harm millions of Americans.

CUPW is disgusted and enraged with this potential assault on women's rights to control their bodies and their future. The overturning of *Roe* would almost immediately lead to stricter limits on abortion access in large parts of the U.S. South and Midwest, with about half of the states set to immediately impose broad abortion bans.

Abortion is an important part of healthcare. It's a medical procedure that is necessary for millions of women, girls, and others who can get pregnant. Abortion is a human right, and forcing someone to carry an unwanted pregnancy, or forcing them to seek out an unsafe abortion, is a violation of their human rights, including the rights to privacy and bodily autonomy. Countless statistics worldwide show that criminalizing abortion doesn't stop abortion, it just makes them less safe.

Shocking but not Shocked

While reading that the court intends to overturn *Roe v. Wade* is shocking, we shouldn't be shocked. President Trump promised during his campaign that he would appoint Supreme Court Justices who would overturn *Roe v. Wade* and he made good on that promise – three of the last four appointments were pushed through by the Senate precisely to increase the chances of ending abortion protections.

The leaked decision is upsetting because of the now all-too-real possibility that, for the first time in U.S. history, women and girls will not enjoy the same kind of reproductive choices or autonomy over their bodies – at least not in almost half of the states in the United States – that their mothers did.

The loss of a basic right, which was only gained after decades of struggle and in the wake of the deaths of thousands of women whose only option was to undergo illegal and unsafe procedures, is both stunning and devastating.

Could this Happen in Canada?

There are no federal laws governing abortion in Canada. While abortion was decriminalized in 1988, it remains inaccessible for large segments of our population. In fact, there is very limited access to abortion clinics outside of British Columbia, Ontario and Quebec, and access is almost always limited to urban centres leaving those in rural, remote, and Indigenous communities without adequate services.

Women living in these communities must travel out of town or even out of province, using their own funds to access safe abortions. Women in New Brunswick face another dilemma; they live in the only province that does not fund surgical abortions performed outside of hospitals.

Canadians have long held onto the idea that we are somewhat superior to Americans, and that the rise of the far-right in the U.S. could not make its way across the border. But it already has. In fact, it was always here.

When it comes to abortion rights, numerous private members bills have been introduced in Parliament to reduce abortion services, the last one in 2021, where 25 percent of MPs voted in favour. According to Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada, 88 of the 119 Conservative Party of Canada Members of Parliament are anti-choice.

While no private members bills restricting abortion rights have ever passed, they will continue to threaten legal rights to abortion in Canada and cannot be taken lightly. The issue is not resolved, and we've seen what happens when people are complacent.

CUPW has endorsed a person's right to choose in our Constitution under Policy D-8 and supports the on-going work of our allies to protect legalized abortion rights and fight for better access globally and at home.

It's impossible not to be discouraged and enraged with what's happening to abortion rights in the U.S. It feels like we're back at square one. The only way out is for us to organize and fight for our rights. This means lobbying, and electing leaders who support access to abortion and maternal health care but also building strong organizations which can resist when our elected leaders fail us.



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