



# The Brief

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## Clinical abortion services return to Fredericton

By TRACY GLYNN

Fredericton – Clinical abortion services are returning to Fredericton. Clinic 554 announced its opening on Jan. 16, 2015, as a family practice providing integrated abortion care services as well as specialized care for the LGBTQ community. Clinic 554 is located at the former Morgentaler Clinic.

“New Brunswick is more diverse than people think. There are a lot of people here with unique health needs but we’re too strapped for cash. The Province is doing a lot—building Community Health Centres, bringing in allied providers like NPs and Midwives. We just wanted to do our part to contribute—to make sure all New Brunswickers have access to the same quality and range of healthcare services that other provinces have,” said Dr. Adrian Eoin Edgar, Clinic 554’s Medical Director in a prepared statement.

Clinic 554 will take on 600 patients who are currently awaiting a family doctor in Fredericton and will provide healthcare to many underserved communities, including transgender children, youth and adults, people newly infected with HIV, STIs or Hepatitis C, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, two-spirited, and queer patients.

Besides offering abortion services, Clinic 554 will also offer an array of reproductive health services, including contraception, cancer screening and pregnancy options, such as emergency IUDs and prenatal care.

The reopening of the clinic was made possible in part by the fundraising efforts of Reproductive Justice NB and the Fredericton Youth Feminists.

The groups launched the #SaveTheClinic fundraising campaign in the wake of the closure of the Morgentaler abortion clinic in Fredericton. The clinic closed in July 2014 following a 20 year battle with the New Brunswick government to have its abortion services funded for its patients. New Brunswick is the only province in Canada with clinical abortion services that are not funded by Medicare.

The #SaveTheClinic campaign succeeded in raising more than \$125,000 for improved abortion access in New Brunswick. More than 1,500 people and organizations donated.

“It was touching to receive donations in every amount. Many who only had \$5 to spare still took the time to send it along in order to help the people of New Brunswick access safe abortion services in a clinic setting,” says Allison Webster, treasurer of Reproductive Justice NB.

**Reproductive justice activists demand public-funded abortions in clinics.**

While abortion access activists are celebrating, they are also demanding that abortion services offered at Clinic 554 be covered by Medicare and that other barriers to abortion access be removed.

“The New Brunswick government continues to violate the Canada Health Act and put people’s lives at risk,” says Jessi Taylor from Reproductive Justice NB. “New Brunswickers deserve better. We have a system where those with enough luck and privilege can access the services they need, but luck and privilege is not the same as access.”

The fee for an abortion at the Morgentaler Clinic when it closed was \$700 before 14 weeks of pregnancy, and \$850 for 14 to 16 week pregnancies.

The Morgentaler Clinic closed when it was not able to financially sustain itself following the death of Dr. Henry Morgentaler in 2013. Dr. Morgentaler had subsidized the clinic, ensuring that no one was turned away who could not pay for the service.RJNB in collaboration with its partners plan to continue lobbying the government for more comprehensive



Jessi Taylor, Reproductive Justice NB spokesperson, thanking supporters of the #savetheclinic campaign at Clinic 554 on Jan. 16, 2015. Photo by Tracy Glynn.

reproductive health services. They plan to meet Health Minister Victor Boudreau this month to discuss the public funding of reproductive health services throughout the province.

Newly elected Liberal Premier Brian Gallant announced the removal of a restriction to abortion access found in the Medical Services Payment Act last November. The change meant that those wanting access to abortion services no longer had to obtain the approval of two doctors certifying the procedure as “medically necessary.”

Conservative Opposition Leader Bruce Fitch attempted to force a vote on the changes to abortion access in the Legislature in December but was denied when the Liberal party stood united in their support for the changes.

Morgentaler opened his first abortion clinic in Montreal in 1969, when attempting to perform an abortion was a crime punishable by life in prison and the person seeking an abortion faced a two year prison sentence. Abortion became legal in Canada following the 1988 Supreme Court of Canada decision in R. v. Morgentaler.

An amendment to New Brunswick’s Medical Services Payment Act brought in 1994 attempted to restrict abortion access. Then Liberal Premier Frank McKenna vowed to stop Dr. Henry Morgentaler from setting up an abortion clinic in Fredericton. “If Mr. Morgentaler tries to open a clinic in the province of New Brunswick, he’s going to get the fight of his life,” said McKenna. McKenna’s amendments restricted abortion access, but did not stop Morgentaler from operating the only private abortion clinic in the Maritimes in Fredericton for 20 years.

Dr. Morgentaler launched a lawsuit against the New Brunswick government in 2002 in an attempt to get the government to pay for abortions at his clinic. The lawsuit, which did not go anywhere following his death in May 2013, cost Morgentaler more than \$1 million. Attempts to find out how much the governments of New Brunswick have paid on lawsuits fighting abortion access have been denied.

The Morgentaler Clinic in Fredericton was performing about 600 abortions or 60 per cent of the procedures every year in the province at the time of its closure. Currently, only two hospitals in New Brunswick, the Moncton Dr. Georges-L.-Dumont University Hospital Centre and the Bathurst Chaleur Regional Hospital, are performing abortions.

*Tracy Glynn is a member of Reproductive Justice NB and a writer and editor with the NB Media Co-op.*

## In Brief

Fredericton high schools, suspended for protesting their school’s **dress code policy**, had their bans from prom, graduation ceremonies and extra-curricular activities lifted. Fredericton High School’s reprimand of the students was denounced by parents, legal experts and the public.

According to Clean Energy Canada’s report, **Tracking the Energy Revolution**, 23,700 Canadians are now working in clean energy sector compared to the 22,340 directly employed by the tar sands.

**US Iraq war resisters** have been notified that decisions are imminent in their cases. One resister has received a deportation date. For more information on how to support war resisters, visit the War Resisters Support Campaign at [resisters.ca](http://resisters.ca).

The Canadian Union of Postal Workers and organizations supporting seniors and persons with disabilities have launched a legal challenge against Canada Post’s attempt to end **door-to-door mail delivery**. The challenge argues that only the Canadian Parliament, not Canada Post’s management, can make the decision to end home delivery postal service. For more information, visit: [cupw.ca](http://cupw.ca).



“Save door-to-door” lawn signs are springing up on lawns across Canada. Photo by Jonah O’Neil.

Canadian beekeepers have launched a \$400 million class action to recover damages from the widespread use of **neonicotinoid pesticides**, specifically those made by Bayer and Syngenta. The action seeks damagesfortheimpactonthebeepopulation,including dead colonies, contaminated hives and decreased honey production.



# Housing crisis in New Brunswick as thousands wait and federal funds expire

By SHAWN MARTIN and MATT MOSHER

Fredericton - Over 6,000 New Brunswickers are on a waiting list for affordable housing while the province is likely to face more challenges meeting housing needs with the expiration of federal funding support.

New Brunswick currently provides 14,000 units of affordable housing, nowhere near close to the demand, which has been assessed to be 30,000 New Brunswickers in need of core housing, according to Tim Ross, Executive Director of the New Brunswick Non-Profit Housing Association.

“There is much more demand for affordable housing than what we can supply. There is a supply issue in New Brunswick and, indeed, across Canada,” explains Ross.

Nikita Hartt is a single parent and university student living in social housing in Fredericton. She says she was fortunate to get into a place because she met a number of criteria but that’s not the case for everyone. “I have friends, single moms, who were in some pretty rough positions that were worse than mine, and they had to wait up to three years for housing,” says Hartt.

Maintaining and expanding access to affordable housing has become an increasingly pressing issue throughout New Brunswick, with a government committed to reducing spending, and the impending expiry of federal funding agreements that have supported affordable housing in the province and throughout Canada for about 40 years.

“The expiry of social housing operating agreements is the expiry of federal housing subsidies to non-profit, public, and co-operative housing providers here in New Brunswick – affecting just over 10,000 units,” says Ross.

Of the 10,000 affordable housing units affected by the expiry of federal operating agreement subsidies, approximately two-thirds – or between 6,000-7,000 of these units – are expected to face “viability issues” in meeting their mandate of providing affordable housing to those in need.

According to Ross, housing providers facing financial viability issues will have three options: “increase rent, defer maintenance or sell buildings.”

Addressing New Brunswick’s serious lack of affordable housing through “innovation and creativity” was the topic of a recent meeting in Moncton, hosted

by the Greater Moncton Homelessness Steering Committee, and the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC).

The November 26 meeting – taking place within the context of National Housing Day on November 22 – included participation from all three levels of government, over 20 non-profit organizations, several private sector participants, and was open to the public.

Some of these innovative and creative initiatives include further involving municipalities and the private sector in affordable housing development, as well as supporting affordable housing through social enterprise and fundraising.

“The day was dedicated to how we can create more affordable housing, given the Province’s finances, and in terms of the expiry of the [federal] Operating Agreements. How can we be innovative and creative to create more housing?” explained Sue Calhoun, Community Development Officer for the Greater Moncton Homelessness Steering Committee, which helped co-sponsor the meeting with the CMHC.

Some existing examples of creative and innovative affordable housing initiatives include: the City of Moncton providing free land to the YWCA to build transitional housing for pregnant teens and young Moms, partnerships between non-profits and privately-owned rental housing, and rent-reductions arrangements with private landlords in exchange for acquiring tenants, thus helping reduce Moncton’s double-digit rental housing vacancy rates.

Presently, New Brunswick’s total affordable housing stock totals approximately 14,000 units that are operated by public, non-profit, co-operative, and private sectors.

According to the CMHC, housing is deemed “affordable” when costs do not exceed 30% of before-tax income. In 2011, the Statistics Canada found over 29,565 New Brunswickers to be in “core housing need,” according to any of the following criteria: “adequacy” (based on required repairs), “affordability,” (based on the 30% income threshold), or “suitability” (based on housing size and capacity).

Calhoun also spoke to the impacts of financial viability issues on affordable housing providers: “They won’t have a mortgage anymore,” she stated, referring to operating agreements as a capital investment, “but they’ll still have that big gap of the two thirds of rent that the federal government was paying. It’s a real disaster waiting to happen.”

Compounding these challenges is not only the age of New Brunswick’s total housing stock, but also the province’s aging population. Ross described this dilemma: “New Brunswick’s housing stock is a lot older than, for example, Saskatchewan, or other provinces. We have a lot of aging housing stock...maybe with a senior citizen paying exorbitant heating costs. Maybe there are accessibility challenges.”

The recently renewed Federal-Provincial Investment in Affordable Housing Funding Agreement, with costs shared between two levels of government, does provide a lifeline to New Brunswick’s affordable housing stock to the tune of 78 million dollars over 5 years.

Social Development Minister Cathy Rogers and her office were unavailable for comment.

In separate interviews, both Ross and Calhoun commended the 5 year renewal of the Federal-Provincial funding agreement on affordable housing.

In response to questions regarding affordable housing in New Brunswick, Kevin Price, Executive Assistant to Fredericton-Oromocto Conservative MP Keith Ashfield, also referred to the renewal of the Federal-Provincial funding agreement on affordable housing.

While Price also pointed out that under “Canada’s Economic Action Plan 2013” the federal government will invest nationally 1.25 billion dollars over 5 years

into affordable housing, he would not comment on whether or not federal operating agreements would be renewed, stating: “I can’t say that one way or the other, I don’t know that. All I know is that the province is still finishing up agreements with the federal government.”

Ross emphasizes the cumulative funding losses in New Brunswick alone associated with the expiry of federal social housing operating agreements, explaining, “Over the next 20 years, there will be a cumulative loss of over 699 million dollars in operating subsidies to New Brunswick’s affordable housing portfolio.”

At the present time, New Brunswickers such as Calhoun and others present at the November 26 meeting are left to seek out alternative means of funding and creating affordable housing, as federal operating agreements continue to expire.

***Shawn Martin and Matt Mosher are recent social work graduates from St. Thomas University. They were NB Media Co-op interns in the fall of 2014.***

## Community Calendar

For details and updated event listings, visit [nbmediacoop.org](http://nbmediacoop.org). To list your event, email: [community@nbmediacoop.org](mailto:community@nbmediacoop.org).

**Noche Latina.** An evening of Latin American food and music hosted by the Maritime-Guatemala Breaking the Silence Network and the Multicultural Association of Fredericton (MCAF). Friday, Feb. 6 at 6:00pm at Wilmot United Church, Fredericton. Proceeds support ongoing solidarity work in Guatemala and the MCAF Newcomer Scholarship Fund. Tickets: \$12 for adults and \$25 for a family (two adults, two children). Ticket sale locations: Westminster Books and True Food Organics.

**Out with the Old, In with the New: A Compassionate Farewell to Fossil Fuels.** Celebrate Global Divestment Day at the University of New Brunswick on Feb. 12 from 7-8:30pm at Tilley Hall Rm. 102 for an evening focused on confronting the reality and inspirational solutions to our planet’s climate crisis. The event will feature a showing of Bill McKibben’s film “Do the Math” about the growing global Divestment movement that is working to make fossil fuels history and renewables the future. Dr. Louise Comeau, climate advocate and policy expert, will provide us with her analysis of the climate crisis at the global, national, and provincial level, as well as provide an inspirational perspective on how we as a society can come to terms with the end of this era and move forward into a more sustainable future. Hosted by UNB’s Divestment group, Fossil Free UNB and St. Thomas University STUdents for Sustainability.

**Coldest Night Of The Year: A Fundraiser for Homelessness in Fredericton.** February 21st is Fredericton’s inaugural Coldest Night Of The Year walk, hosted by the John Howard Society and Youth In Transition. Since 2011, this national initiative has raised \$5 million for the hungry, homeless and hurting by funding poverty-related projects in communities across Canada. This is a non-competitive, family-friendly walk with 2, 5 or 10km options that gives a hint of the challenges faced by those experiencing homelessness, while raising funds for local charities. Participants have the option to walk and fundraise as part of a team, or individually. Teams can register at [coldestnightoftheyear.org/fredericton](http://coldestnightoftheyear.org/fredericton). Contact: [cnoyfredericton@gmail.com](mailto:cnoyfredericton@gmail.com).

**TREEvia returns!** What bird in our forest sings a song that sounds like “Hey, free beer?” What tree’s tea was used to treat scurvy? What company controls most of our public forest? Save your answers for TREEvia, a special night of fundraising for the Conservation Council on March 11 from 7-10pm. Round up a team and enjoy a night of tree-themed trivia, laughs, and specials on drinks and wings at Dolan’s Pub. Registration is \$10 per team. Sign up your team (max. 6 players/team) by contacting Tracy at [forest@conservationcouncil.ca](mailto:forest@conservationcouncil.ca) or 506-458-8747. All proceeds support the Conservation Council. Prizes will be given to the TREEvia winners and for best team spirit!

**NB Media Co-op Story Meetings.** Join us at our monthly story meetings in Fredericton where we discuss politics and current events and decide what to put in this paper every month. To find out the meeting time and venue, email [info@nbmediacoop.org](mailto:info@nbmediacoop.org).

**Cinema Politica** believes in the power of art not only to entertain but to engage, inform, inspire, and provoke social change. Cinema Politica is the largest volunteer-run, community and campus-based documentary-screening network in the world. Cinema Politica Fredericton is back this fall screening films on Fridays. Check out film schedules and venues, or start your own chapter at: [cinemapolitica.org](http://cinemapolitica.org).



From left to right, Sue Calhoun, Greater Moncton Homelessness Steering Committee; Joanne Murray, Executive Director, John Howard Society of Southeastern NB; Francine DiMambro, Corporate Representative of the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC); Marisa Piccini, YWCA Moncton; and Sylvie Rancourt, CMHC Halifax. Photo courtesy of Sue Calhoun.

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