

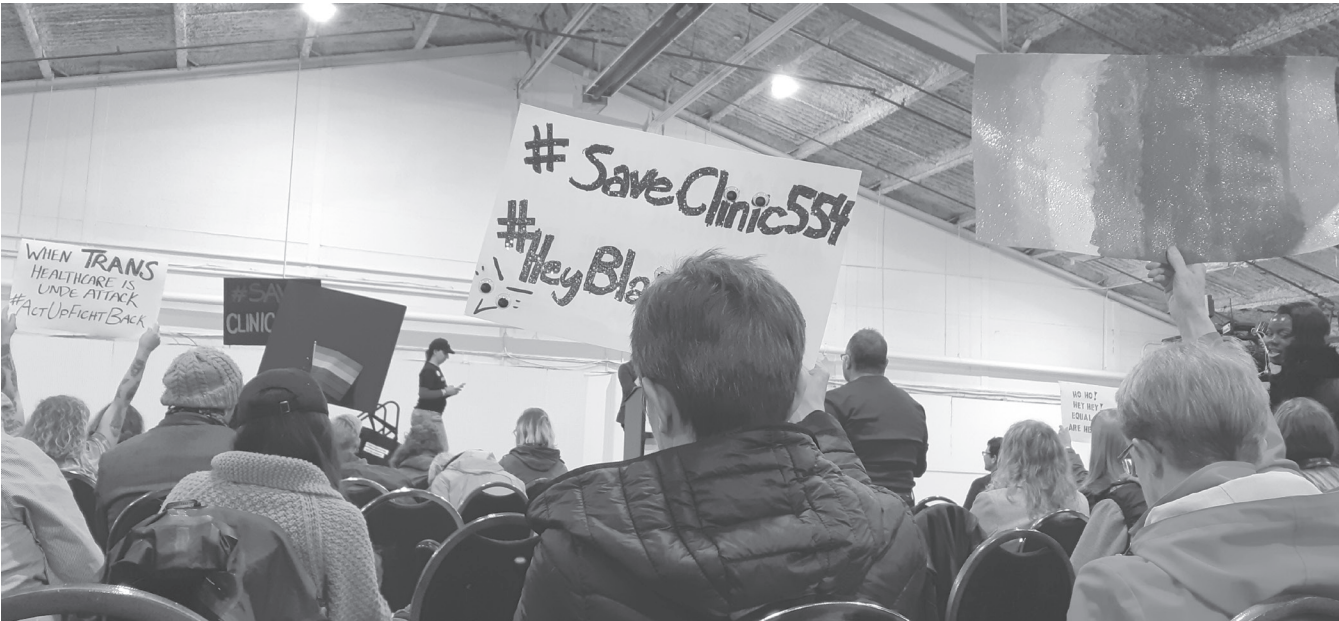


# The Brief

Vol. 11 No. 3 | A publication of the NB Media Co-op | November 2019 | nbmediacoop.org

## Support for Clinic 554 reaches national level

By SUSAN O'DONNELL



**Supporters of Clinic 554 filled the FREX on Oct. 23 to hear from people who have benefited from Clinic 554 at a town hall meeting organized by Reproductive Justice NB.** Photo by Tracy Glynn.

Supporters of Clinic 554 in Fredericton are pressing elected officials to follow through with their promises of support. Clinic 554 made national news more than once during the last weeks of the federal election period when leaders of the federal Liberal, NDP and Green parties made promises to support the Clinic following the election.

Reproductive Justice NB hosted a town hall meeting on Oct. 23 to raise awareness about closure of the Clinic and the impact it will have on the community. The previous day, the national group Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada issued a media release stating that the first act of new Liberal government must be to save Clinic 554.

Dr. Adrian Edgar, Medical Director of Clinic 554, announced on Oct. 10 that the clinic is facing closure. Clinic 554, a family practice clinic, provides a full range of primary care and specialized health services to nearly 3,000 patients, including abortions, cervical cancer screenings, gender-affirming care for transgender patients, and treatments for survivors of sexual assault. Clinic 554 also provides pre- and post-natal care to people without family doctors and opiate agonist therapy for people with addictions. Its closure will mean one less family doctor in New Brunswick, leaving a massive hole in the medical treatments available in the community and the entire province. The impact of closure will force Clinic 554 patients to once again join the long waiting list for a doctor.

Efforts to have abortion services at the clinic covered by Medicare have consistently been ignored by the province under both PC and Liberal governments. Medicare-funded abortion services are offered in only two hospitals in Moncton and one in Bathurst. Abortions at Clinic 554 include specialized services unavailable in the three NB hospitals. The decision by successive provincial governments to refuse funding abortions at Clinic 554 puts NB in contravention with the federal Canada Health Act, which defines Medicare, that includes abortion services.

Most recently, Global News reported that at the the Horizon Health Network board meeting on Oct. 24, a motion from John McGarry the board chair stated that “Horizon’s board will advocate to the government of New Brunswick for payment to physicians to provide abortion services in a quality and safe environment outside of hospitals.”

In response, the group Save Clinic 554 stated they “applaud the commitment made at the Board of Directors meeting that Horizon Health will be advocating to the New Brunswick government to make changes to facilitate access to abortion in the community setting.”

Given the lack of provincial support for its abortion services,

Clinic 554 has been under financial strain since it opened in 2014 under its new banner, replacing the former Morgentaler Clinic. Speaking to the media at a rally in Fredericton on Oct. 11 to support Clinic 554 from impending closure, Green Party of Canada leader Elizabeth May and federal Green Party candidate (and recently elected MP) for Fredericton Jenica Atwin stated that the closure of the Clinic would be devastating for the most marginalized populations in the province.

Restricting access to abortion is a core right-wing strategy to control women by taking away their reproductive choices. Abortion access is clearly a political issue: according to a 2016 report by the Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada, since 1987, MPs in Ottawa have introduced into Parliament at least 46 anti-choice private member bills and motions. The goals range from criminalizing abortion, to including fetuses as persons with rights under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, to redefining “human being” to include fetuses under the Criminal Code.

Provincially, MLA Megan Mitton (Green Party, Memramcook-Tantramar) is the strongest voice in the New Brunswick Legislature for reproductive rights and abortion access. Mitton and other Green Party MLAs have consistently advocated in the Legislature for equitable health services for everyone across New Brunswick.

At least four Progressive Conservative MLAs have demonstrated publicly against reproductive choice. The NB news outlet Acadie Nouvelle reported that the “pro-life” anti-choice rally held in Fredericton on October 10 was attended by three NB government ministers: Trevor Holder (PC, Portland-Simonds), Jeff Carr (New Maryland-Sunbury), and Bill Oliver (PC, Kings Centre) as well as their colleague MLA Bruce Northrup (PC, Sussex-Fundy-St. Martins).

Aside from right-wing politicians, who are the primary advocates for restricting reproductive choice across Canada and in New Brunswick? The Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada’s report identified 180 “Crisis Pregnancy Centres” in Canada. Many are fake medical clinics offering free ultrasounds as a way to bring in women for “counselling.” Their “counselling” focuses on the supposed harms of abortion. In fact, an abortion has a much lower risk of adverse health effects than carrying an unwanted fetus to term.

One of these fake clinics is in Fredericton, located on Brunswick St. right beside Clinic 554. The Women’s Care Centre is also the home of the “New Brunswick Right to Life Association Inc.”, the primary anti-choice organization in the province and a registered charity. The organization’s purpose is to advocate to remove abortion as a viable choice for an unwanted pregnancy. In 2018 it had three full-time and one

## Aging population as an excuse for a neoliberal agenda

By JOAN MCFARLAND

Economists do not always agree, and over the course of my 48 years of teaching economics at St. Thomas University, I have seen a rising tide of neoliberal thinking in the field. Unfortunately, in his August 21 *Daily Gleaner* column “How to Address New Brunswick’s Aging Population,” University of New Brunswick professor Herb Emery contributes to the idea that New Brunswickers have no choice except to adopt an agenda that puts the priority on private sector investment and increased resource exploitation.

Emery refers to “population aging” in New Brunswick as a “big problem” which is creating a “fiscal tunnel” in terms of its financing challenges. The message is that it is because of the number of seniors in our midst, their very existence through increased longevity, that we should give away the store to private investors – in effect large corporations both in and outside New Brunswick by being “business friendly” and exploiting our natural resources to the extent of environmentally degrading our province.

We all know that an “aging population” is brought about not only by having more seniors but also by such factors as lower birth rates and youth out-migration as well as low immigration and retention. Nevertheless, the term “aging population” is thought of and understood by the general public as the increased numbers of seniors, who are too easily scapegoated as the cause of the province’s fiscal problems.

Other economists and politicians would argue that the rest of Canada should help in the form of increased health transfers since New Brunswick has one of the highest elderly-to-working population ratios in Canada. Moreover, many taxpayers in other provinces have their roots in New Brunswick, where they and their families benefited from health and education services that have always attempted to meet Canadian standards, as required under Section 36 of the Constitution. Some of those taxpayers plan to retire to New Brunswick and expect the province to maintain quality services.

Emery’s basic solution to the province’s fiscal issues, as in all his columns, is the growth of the provincial GDP with increases in labour productivity through private sector investment. An even better solution, he mentions, would be for New Brunswick to further exploit its natural resources as Saskatchewan has done. Emery starts out, and indeed spends almost half his column, looking at immigration as a solution to New Brunswick’s problems. Immigration is a solution advanced by other economists and politicians and one not normally part of a neoliberal agenda. However,



**Joan McFarland (left), an economist and long-time advocate for pay equity, opposes the neoliberal economic policies being promoted in New Brunswick.** Photo by Tracy Glynn.



# Support for Clinic 554

part-time persons employed to do this work.

In 2018, the most recent year it filed reports to the Canada Revenue Agency, the organization listed \$553,717 in total revenue, of which \$411,317 was gifts for which the charity issued tax receipts. It had more than \$180K in cash or short-term investments in the bank. Not listed in their accounts was the gift from the province of a 100% rebate on property taxes for the building they own. Their new building, replacing one destroyed by fire several years ago, is on property listed as one of the “gifts” from their donors. The gift, as a charitable donation, could be used by the property donor as a tax write-off.

An article published in the Canadian Journal of Political Science noted how the anti-choice rhetoric has evolved to changing cultural values more than changing legislation. Anti-choice discourse is “explicitly framed as ‘pro-woman’; largely avoids appealing to religious grounds; and relies on a new ‘abortion-harms-women’ argument that has supplanted and transformed traditional fetal personhood arguments.” Indeed, the Oct. 10 rally in Fredericton supported by the anti-choice group, and attended by the four PC MLAs, featured two women speakers who shared “personal stories of abortion and healing.”

One notable feature of the NB Right to Life Association is the prominence of women in the organization structure – in their 2018 documents filed with the CRA all their key positions are held by women. Heather Hughes is the executive director. Elizabeth Crouchman is the president of the board of directors, Georgina Jones is the vice-president, and Joyce Stairs is the secretary. Three other women are also directors: Diane Maillard, Doris Ashfield, and Anne Hooper. The male directors are Gerald Laskey, Winston Farley, Murray Hayes, and Brian Phillips.

According to a study by Andrea Dworkin, right-wing women have a vested interest in opposing abortion. They believe that women’s subjugation to men is a fixed, immovable reality and that the institution of religious heterosexual marriage will protect women since a wife is supposed to be cherished and respected. It follows therefore that since their ability to reproduce is their primary value, they must increase the societal value of reproduction and oppose other reproductive options, particularly abortion. Their male counterparts in the anti-choice movement can remain in the background while contributing financially and politically to the movement’s activities.

Dworkin’s analysis suggests that the struggle for reproductive justice in New Brunswick will continue to be waged on many fronts, including activist protests and letter-writing campaigns to provincial and federal representatives to change laws and policies as well as increasing the number of women and others in positions of power who will challenge oppressive societal norms of gender. The goal of the struggle will be for everyone to view marriage and reproduction as choices rather than their only viable options.

*Susan O’Donnell, a member of the editorial board of the NB Media Co-op, is a researcher and adjunct professor of Sociology at the University of New Brunswick.*

## Tertulias

A tertulia is a philosophy cafe where participants talk about big thinkers and ideas. They combined words with music, poetry and other art forms. Come early and order delicious pizza or treats made with seasonal local produce and beverages. Tertulias are held every other Wednesday at 7:00pm at Milda’s Cafe, 732 Charlotte St., in Fredericton. Upcoming tertulias: Matt Dinan on Søren Kierkegaard on Nov. 13 and Raluca Bejan on Slavoj Žižek on Dec. 4.

## Support The Brief

Independent journalism by the NB Media Co-op

### Join

Become a member of your local media co-op. Memberships are \$30/year.

### Donate

The NB Media Co-op is supported with donations from individuals, labour unions and social justice groups. Donate today and help us grow.

Memberships and donations can be paid online at nbmediacoop.org or by sending a cheque made out to the NB Media Co-op at the address below.

### Volunteer

- ☐ Research, write, edit, factcheck stories
- ☐ Distribute The Brief
- ☐ Organize special events
- ☐ Sign up for monthly email alerts.

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

### NB Media Co-op

180 St. John St., Fredericton, NB E3B 4A9

Email: info@nbmediacoop.org, Website: nbmediacoop.org

 NB Media Co-op

 @nbmediacoop

# New Brunswick is jailing immigrants. It’s time to stop

By TRACY GLYNN



Tracy Glynn (right) presenting a letter of concerns regarding Canada’s immigration policies to Fredericton MP Matt DeCoursey on April 4, 2017. DeCoursey was defeated in the 2019 federal election.

“At least Canada does not jail our immigrants like they do in the United States,” responded a student to my lecture on the migrant crisis at the University of New Brunswick last year. The student could be forgiven for believing that is true, given the media’s lack of coverage of the matter, but Canada is indeed jailing immigrants. New Brunswick is jailing immigrants.

Canada is not at all morally superior to the United States when it comes to how the country treats migrants and asylum seekers.

Since the year 2000, at least 15 people have died in the custody of the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA). Canada, along with the US, the UK and Australia, disgracefully practices indefinite immigrant detention.

Migrants and refugee claimants in Canada sometimes end up in maximum-security jails, serving sentences that vary in length from 48 hours to weeks, months and even years, such as in the case of Ebrahim Toure who spent five-and-a-half years in detention in Lindsay, Ontario. Before his release, Toure, a stateless person with all the vulnerabilities that lack of citizenship rights entail, endured 69 hearings before Canada’s Immigration and Refugee Board.

But, at least Canada does not detain children like they do in the U.S.? Sadly, Canada does detain child migrants. In 2017-18, the CBSA reported that they had detained 151 minors. Of those detainees, 144 had been accompanied by a parent or guardian, seven had not.

Detention is not a humane way to treat people in need of a soft place to land. We know that detention harms physical and mental health. Rather than throwing migrants fleeing war and other kinds of hardship in detention, we should be providing them with adequate housing, health care and community supports as they await decisions on their applications to stay in Canada.

On October 3, Canadians across the country participated in the Day of Action Against Canada’s Detention of Immigrants. In Halifax, people delivered a box of letters calling for an end to immigrant detention to Liberal MP Andy Fillmore.

In Fredericton, similar letters have already been delivered by No One Is Illegal Fredericton to Liberal MP Matt DeCoursey who also serves as Canada’s Parliamentary Secretary of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship.

DeCoursey has yet to respond to demands to end immigration detention, not surprising given that the governing Liberals have supported more immigration

detention.

Were we not told that the Trudeau Liberals would be kinder to immigrants and refugees than the Harper Conservatives? More detention centres is a cruel way to respond to immigrants and refugees entering Canada. In 2016, the Trudeau government invested \$138 million in new immigrant detention facilities.

Migrants are currently being detained in immigration holding centres near Toronto, Laval and Vancouver as well as in provincial jails. As reported by the Canadian Press on July 7, 2019 and according to the CBSA, 6,609 people were detained in Canada’s immigration holding centres from 2017 to 2018, up from 4,248 in the previous year. Another 1,831 migrants were detained in provincial jails in that time period, an increase from 971 in the previous year.

Just last month, I learned that the women’s prison in my hometown of Miramichi was detaining an asylum seeker, a woman I had met in Fredericton. The 39-year-old nurse was struggling to stay in Canada with her son after fleeing family violence in Brazil. A group of caring people in Fredericton organized around the mother and son to make sure they had food and assistance filling out their applications to stay in Canada on compassionate grounds.

We were shocked when our friend was abruptly taken from Grace House, a Fredericton women’s shelter, by CBSA agents and brought to the Miramichi Women’s Correctional Facility before being moved to the Laval Immigration Detention Centre then removed from Canada with her son.

While my friend was being detained in Miramichi, I tried to visit her but no one was answering the phone on the day that visitor appointments were to be made. A correctional officer belatedly returned my call to tell me that they were short-staffed on the day when I should have been able to make an appointment.

I now realized why the visitors’ parking lot of the detention centre was empty on that Sunday morning when I tried, but failed, to visit my friend without an appointment. I thought about all the women being detained there and how short staffing was making it impossible for detainees to receive visitors on a Sunday, a day when many of us spend time with our loved ones.

It’s time to end Canada’s traumatizing and criminalizing practice of detaining migrants who are simply seeking a home.

*Tracy Glynn is a migrant justice activist on unceded Wolastoqey territory.*

## Aging population as an excuse

Emery suggests not only that the numbers required would be daunting - 40,000 more workers or, including families, 100,000 immigrants over the next 10 years - but also that such immigration wouldn’t happen without growth in the economy and expansion of demand. Immigrants simply would not come and stay. In other words, according to Emery, immigration could only be a secondary part of the solution. We are back to the neoliberal solution of private investment with increased labour productivity to grow the economy.

Focusing on the growth imperative in a time of climate crisis, choosing private investment over public investment, and exploiting natural resources in unsustainable ways are all part of neoliberal policy. Emery’s dismissal of the raising of taxes, presumably as not “business friendly” (brought up in his other columns), is also part of the same agenda. Using an aging population as an excuse, Emery is trying to tell New Brunswickers, much as Margaret Thatcher had done, that “There is No Alternative.” He needs to be challenged.

*Joan McFarland is a retired professor of economics at St. Thomas University and a member of the New Brunswick Coalition for Pay Equity.*