

Pro-Abortion Canada Decides Not to Fund Abortions Abroad

Canada will refrain from funding abortions abroad as it promotes maternal and children's health in poor countries because the issue is too divisive and could undermine a broader push to save lives, Prime Minister Stephen Harper said on Friday.

The Conservative leader has resolutely resisted any attempt to restrict abortions in Canada, where the procedure is legal, but he has acquiesced to demands from within his caucus not to promote abortion in other countries.

Speaking at the end of a summit he organized in Toronto on the health of mothers and children, Harper said the world community was mobilized to make rapid progress in reducing mortality rates of mothers and their babies and he did not want to get sidetracked by abortion.

"We all know very well how divisive that issue is, not just in Canada—I can assure you it's equally divisive around the world ... We're obviously not going to embark on something that's going to cause widespread division," Harper told reporters.

"And we're acting on a vote in Parliament on this matter that was very clear," he said.

On Thursday, Harper announced C\$3.5 billion (\$3.2 billion) in aid for maternal and children's health for 2015-20, bumped up from the C\$ billion allocated for 2010-15.

"The government of Canada ... can't do everything, and we've chosen to focus most of our funding in the areas where we think we can be most effective and are most effective," he said.

Harper pointed to Tanzania, one of the recipients of Canadian aid, where the mortality rate of children under five has dropped to 54 out of 1,000 from 81 out of 1,000 in 2010, when Ottawa launched a push on maternal and children's health.

Canada has had no legal restrictions on abortion since 1988, when the Supreme Court struck down the country's abortion law.

After a couple of early attempts to enact a replacement law, a few Conservative backbenchers have tried unsuccessfully to address various aspects of it.

The issue returned to the fore this month with remarks by opposition Liberal leader Justin Trudeau, son of former Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, who declared that any new Liberal candidates for Parliament would have to be pro-choice.

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