

REPRODUCTIVE CARE STATEMENT

In early February 2016, CAM published a Position Statement on Reproductive Health Care. This statement was written in response to a motion from CAM members at an Annual General Meeting.

Be it resolved that: The Canadian Association of Midwives adopt a position stating that: Reproductive health care is an integral part of maternal health; this includes contraception, family planning and access to legal, safe abortion care as a fundamental right of women regardless of where they live.

After the motion was passed unanimously, the CAM Board of Directors struck a working group to develop the position statement. The working group, chaired by Zuzana Betkova, was made up of Johanna Geraci, Tanya Montazian, Lisa Morgan, Lisa Nussey, Simon Rosenberg, and Edan Thomas. Like all CAM position statements, the statement underwent a members' consultation in the fall of 2015 before being finalized and approved by the Board of Directors.

Read the statement online at:

<http://www.canadianmidwives.org/90-news/CAM-Publishes-Reproductive-Health-Care-Position-Statement.html>

We spoke with Edan Thomas, one of the midwives who brought the motion forward and a working group member on what this motion means to her.

CAM: Tells us a little bit about your motivation to bring this motion to the CAM membership:

Edan: In 2011, my practice brought a similar motion to the Association of Ontario Midwives AGM as well as the CAM AGM. Our practice has a long history of supporting reproductive rights and being activists on feminist issues. In 2010, the government under Stephen Harper, while touting Canada's leadership in global maternal and newborn health, was also in the process of passing bills that made it impossible for Canada to provide international development funds to organizations that were providing access to abortion and other reproductive services, such as Planned Parenthood working in Africa. At my practice, we felt strongly that midwifery organizations had to be able to take a stand on this.

CAM: What have you learned about the process of putting a motion forward?

Edan: Perhaps obvious, but it is very important to be aware of the deadlines for submitting resolutions, as it is within CAM's



EDAN THOMAS

is a midwife with the Midwives Collective of Toronto. She studied midwifery at the Ryerson MEP, and has been working with the Midwives Collective since 1999. Edan has a long history as a reproductive rights activist, stretching back to the Ontario Coalition for Abortion Clinics prior to the legalization of abortion and also including working for equal access to reproductive technologies.

bylaws that resolutions be submitted to the membership in advance of the AGM. It is also critical when bringing a motion to the floor for the membership to discuss, that it is clear in the motion what you want CAM to do. In other words, it is one thing to ask CAM to 'work' on an issue and it is another to specifically request that the organization develop a Position Statement.

CAM: What do you feel are the major impacts and benefits of this statement?

Edan: I think that the more organizations that are involved with any aspect of reproductive care, such as CAM, have statements on reproductive rights, the more impact we can have when these issues come up. When the government is making laws and looking at issues of reproductive care, it is important that CAM can quickly take a stance and publicize their stance through the media. When Harper was limiting access to reproductive health care in Canada's global development funding, other groups were able to quickly make statements to the media, but because we did not have a position statement, our hands were tied. Similarly, as debates are happening at both federal and provincial levels on access to reproductive technologies, we now will have a statement that can help us take a stand on these debates. It might just be adding CAM's name to a long list of other organizations, but I feel that there is power in being able to do this. We will be able, at key moments, to explicitly say the things that may sometimes go without saying or be unsaid.

Do you have other ideas in mind for statements CAM should develop?

Edan: Last year, myself and others brought forward a motion at the AOM AGM on gender inclusivity which was passed and led to the AOM putting resources into gender inclusive language for all their literature. Currently, I am working with a few colleagues to put together a motion for the next AOM AGM that talks about midwives with disabilities, how our organization can support them and ensure that they are able to practice without discrimination.