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INFORMATION SESSION
Friday, February 19, 7:00 - 8:00 p.m.
International Centre - 400 Hub Mall
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Abortion clinics at UBC?

by Deanne Fisher
VANCOUVER (CUP) — Women at the University of British Columbia could soon have access to on-campus abortion services as a result of the Supreme Court's January 28 ruling that decriminalized non-therapeutic abortions.

"We could seriously consider doing our own (abortions at UBC) if free-standing clinics are legalized," said Percival Smith, director of Student Health Services.

"The ideal would be that a student could have an abortion at UBC. That's my personal opinion and not the opinion of the university," Smith said.

The 50 to 60 students per year requesting abortions through the health service have been referred to Vancouver General or Shaughnessy hospitals.

An abortion services was considered in 1980, Smith said, but "we were told no" by the hospital administration.

Smith said he doesn't expect any

changes in the next three months. "There would be a period of time required for training ourselves," he said.

A coalition of pro-choice groups said it supports the establishment of abortion services at UBC.

"I don't think women from UBC should have to go to (Vancouver General) or Shaughnessy. UBC is a community in itself. You should be able to get (care in your community)," said Pat Brighouse, spokesperson for Concerned Citizens for Choice on Abortion.

Lynn Percival, spokesperson for UBC Health Sciences and Shaughnessy Hospitals, said it was too soon to say whether the health services can get abortion facilities.

"At this point there's so much uncertainty we're not sure of any of the answers," she said.

Darlene Marzari, New Democrat MLA for Point Grey, said she would support abortion services at UBC.

"I'm in support of good health

services for women — safe and financially accessible services," Marzari said.

Both Marzari and Brighouse said the services should be free.

"(Students) are part of the most vulnerable group in terms of income," said Brighouse. "Doctors should be funded by the province not by women who can't afford to pay."

But B.C.'s Medical Services Plan will not cover abortions not deemed medically necessary by a hospital therapeutic abortion committee.

"For the time being we are asking hospitals to set up a structure to determine whether a procedure is medically required," said B.C. Health Minister Peter Dueck.

"Someone's going to have to challenge (Dueck's) policies," Marzari said. "The personal and religious views of a small minority and the personal views of an individual minister cannot be inflicted on public trust and the public's right to medical treatment."



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Special thanks:

Correction

In the February 3 issue of the Gateway it was incorrectly reported that the usage of the Housing Registry amounted to 45,000 students. The correct number is 4,500. Also, there is only one staff member at the Housing Registry remaining from last year, not three.

The Gateway apologizes for any inconvenience this error caused.

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