

*Letter to the Editor*

July 28, 2008

### **Hats off to Morgentaler**

Henry Morgentaler is one of the greatest social reformers in Canadian history and it's fitting he has been awarded the Order of Canada. Dr. Morgentaler is a champion for women's reproductive rights.

Before Dr. Morgentaler came along, Canadian women had extremely limited access to abortion. When faced with an unwanted or dangerous pregnancy, they had to sit through a tribunal of three doctors who decided whether or not to grant an abortion. This put the medical procedure out of reach for many women. In non-urban communities, women often had no access at all to safe abortions.

That meant women had to risk their health and lives by getting "back alley" abortions or they had to carry the fetus to term, thereby changing the course of their lives forever.

For women to achieve equality, we must have control over our own bodies, including whether or not we want to remain pregnant. Dr. Morgentaler understands that. Despite threats, violence and imprisonment, he gave women the gift of choice—a right some would like taken away.

Thanks to his dedication and courage, in 1988, the Supreme Court of Canada struck down the three-doctor panel requirement. Since that time, women have had the ability to decide on their own if they will remain pregnant or not.

Congratulations, Dr. Morgentaler. Throughout your distinguished career, you have epitomized the motto of the Order of Canada *DESIDERANTES MELIOREM PATRIAM* (They desire a better country). Equality seeking women and men desire a fair and just country where "every woman is a willing mother and every child a wanted child" and you have brought us closer to the day when this will be a reality.

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