

Abortion clinic safe access zones ‘needed’ in light of protests

By AdvocateDaily.com Staff



Legislation that proposes to establish safe access zones around Ontario abortion clinics is a positive step that, if passed, would result in violators facing a summary conviction, Toronto civil litigator [Sarah O'Connor](#) tells [The Lawyer's Daily](#).

As the article notes, [Bill 163](#), Protecting a Woman's Right to Access Abortion Services Act, 2017, was introduced on Oct. 4. The bill aims to protect the safety of women and health-care providers by establishing safe access zones around clinics and medical facilities that offer abortion services, as well as around the homes of clinic staff and doctors.

Safe access zones are designated spaces where abortion-related protests or intimidation tactics used to try and interfere with a person's right to access health services is prohibited, says [The Lawyer's Daily](#). Quebec, British Columbia, and Newfoundland and Labrador have had safe access zone laws in place for the past several decades.

O'Connor, principal of [O'Connor Richardson Professional Corporation](#), tells [The Lawyer's Daily](#) that protesters in Ottawa were reported to be spitting on women who were trying to access the Morgentaler Clinic. Actions such as these, she says, are the reason why safe access zones are needed.

"I don't think it affects the right to protest. They still have that right. They just can't do it at the doors of the clinic or the hospital. Nothing is silencing them. They'll [protesters] have their signs and they can still chant whatever they want," she says.

Ontario Liberals rejected the opposition's Oct. 5 request to fast-track the bill, which O'Connor says is "interesting."

"They [the Liberals] wanted input, but that to me doesn't make sense. If you're doing it to protect the women and all the parties are supporting it, then why do you need to have more input?" she says.

The bill has passed its first reading and requires royal assent to become law.