

UPDATED: 'Unplanned' ministry will encourage Canadian abortion workers to leave industry

Prominent U.S. pro-life activist and speaker Abby Johnson is planning to open a Canadian chapter of her ministry which helps and encourages abortion clinic workers to leave that industry.

The announcement comes a little over a week before the July 12 Canadian release of *Unplanned*, the controversial movie based on the life of Johnson, a former Planned Parenthood clinic worker.

"We are moving forward to start draining abortion facilities and hospitals in Canada of your abortion workers, and getting them on the path to healing and getting them into a relationship with Christ," Johnson said during a July 2 webinar with supporters.



Abby Johnson

"People were really excited to have the film there," Johnson said. "I think people in Canada ... their pro-life voices are absolutely being silenced. Bringing *Unplanned* to Canada was sort of a way for them to feel like they're getting their power back. They're getting their voice back."

"They're going to be able to tell people 'Look, this is what the abortion industry is about.'"

After leaving Planned Parenthood, Johnson founded And Then There Were None, a ministry designed to help abortion clinic workers to transition out of the industry. To date, it has assisted over 430 workers in leaving the industry.

Johnson said the paperwork has been filed to start a Canadian chapter. No other details are available.

Unplanned, the movie based on Johnson's life, will be released nationally on July 12. It premiered in the U.S. at the end of March, and producers say the film has defied box-office expectations.

As of July 7, the Unplanned Canada website shows the movie will be screened at: Cineplex South Common (July 12-18), Carnival Cinemas in Red Deer (July 12-18), as well as the Jewel Theatre in Stettler (July 20-21) and independent theatres in Lethbridge (July 12-18), Barrhead (July 13 and July 15), Lloydminster (July 12-18) and Leduc (July 12-18).

In Saskatchewan, *Unplanned* will be shown at Cineplex Cinemas Normanview (July 12-18) and Cineplex Scotiabank Theatre in Saskatoon July 12-18. Check your local listing for showtimes.

In Canada, the movie has been controversial since an estimated 2,800 people attended the largest public screening to date on May 14 at the Edmonton Expo Centre, hosted by Harvest Ministries International. *Unplanned* has had to overcome a lack of theatre promotion and distribution, a boycott threat, and media skepticism.



The largest public screening of Unplanned was held May 14 at the Edmonton

The film has received a 14A rating in Alberta – with a disturbing content warning – and is slated to appear on Landmark Cinema screens and in roughly 50 Cineplex and independent theatres, according to organizers of a grassroots campaign to get Unplanned into Canadian cinemas.

Johnson encourages everyone – regardless of their views on abortion – to watch.

“It’s not just for pro-lifers, it’s for anyone. Because abortion isn’t just a religious issue. It’s not just an issue for conservatives. This is a human rights violation,” Johnson said.

“You can walk out of the theatre and say ‘I saw what I saw and I’m OK with it’. You can walk out and still be pro-choice, but at least go and know what you support. Being an uneducated supporter is being a poor supporter of your movement.”

Since 1988, Canada has had no law prohibiting abortion at any stage of pregnancy. Access to abortion varies by province. In Alberta, 12,706 abortions were reported, of the 94,030 reported abortions across Canada in 2017, according to the Canadian Institute for Health Information. In the last decade, the highest number reported in any year was 108,844, in 2011.



Ruth Shaw

Pro-life advocate Ruth Shaw encourages young Canadians in particular to see the film.

“Our country has really bought into very strong language about choice and

abortion,” said Shaw, the executive director of the National Campus Life Network.

“They just have these automatic thoughts and ideas about abortion that go largely unchallenged. I wanted to see young people challenged on abortion through this movie, and I think they need to be.”

Supporters anticipate there may be demonstrations outside the movie theatres, but they welcome that.

“Let’s not back down. If you see a crowd outside of a theatre, all the more the reason to go,” said Faytene Grasseschi, a pro-life advocate and television host in Ontario.

“Pretty soon people are going to wake up and say ‘Wow these pro-lifers aren’t what I thought they were. They actually care’. They actually do have a brain. They actually do want to walk into this conversation with eyes wide open. They’re not just sitting here trying to fling rosaries at women and clamp down on their rights.”

The producers of *Unplanned* said that since the Canadian release was given the go-ahead, there has been a surge of new interest in screenings from around the world.