

Makers of *Unplanned* movie 'in negotiations' toward Cineplex screening deal

After much debate and controversy, *Unplanned* may soon be hitting theatres across Canada.

Co-director Cary Solomon says the filmmakers are currently negotiating to bring the pro-life project to movie theatres in 10 to 20 Canadian cities. A deal may be announced as early as next week.

"This all emanated out of the pro-lifers who came out of Canada, so I think you should be really proud of yourselves," Solomon said during a May 24th news conference. "All of this heroic stuff that you're doing in Canada is being seen by the rest of the world. I think in the final analysis it may be Canada that will get the credit for ending this abortion nightmare."

Unplanned is based on the moving memoir of Abby Johnson, a former Planned Parenthood clinic director who has since become an international speaker and pro-life advocate.

Along with a boycott campaign, a recent Edmonton screening of *Unplanned* – which packed a 3,000-seat hall at the Edmonton Expo Centre – played a major role in instigating the negotiations.

"On the May 14th screening there were some influencers in the room, and the next morning conversations were already happening," said Faytene Grasseschi, a pro-life advocate and television host based in Ontario. "We decided to really capitalize on the momentum coming out of Edmonton and launch a Canada-wide plan to reinforce that Canadians want this film."

That plan became the "Canada Wants *Unplanned*" boycott. The online campaign encouraged people to let Cineplex Entertainment know they would be boycotting their local theatre until *Unplanned* was brought to the theatre chain. Cineplex owns 80 per cent of the theatres in Canada.

Within two days of the boycott launch, Solomon said they were in touch with a third party to initiate a deal with Cineplex.

Currently, *Unplanned* can only be shown in Canada through privately sponsored screenings. However, if a contract is signed with Cineplex, there would be no private screenings offered during the theatrical run.

To date over 5,000 people have signed onto the boycott campaign.

Cineplex maintains that it has not picked up the film because it does not have a distributor, but Grasseschi doubts the chain is at the mercy of distributors.

“A distributor has not picked it up – some don’t want to touch it or they couldn’t do it – but Cineplex is not powerless in this industry,” she said. “As a business that owns 80 per cent of the theatres in this country, these are good businesspeople. They know this is profitable film, and if there was a strong will within the Cineplex executives, they could probably do it with a phone call.”

Solomon says the film has received a lot of resistance and censorship in the United States, where television networks have refused to show ads promoting it. Despite that, *Unplanned* is making a major impact wherever it’s shown.

“There is a side of this issue that doesn’t want anyone to see the movie, and what I say to that side is ‘What are you scared of people seeing?’” said the director. “We are having staggering effects here in America. One to two abortion workers are leaving the abortion industry each day; we have thousands of women who have had abortions reach out and say that after seeing this movie, they finally feel free.”

If the film receives a wide release, Solomon expects it will have similar effects on the abortion debate in Canada.

“We’ve been arguing with the left for years, but this movie has transcended the arguments to make people realize what is right and wrong,” he said. “If we don’t fight this fight, children will not have a chance for life. It really comes down to that.”

Grasseschi and Solomon encourage people to continue to participate in the Canada Wants *Unplanned* boycott until a deal is struck with Cineplex.