

The Catholic Women's League of Canada
Position Paper in response to the Federal Government's document
New Reproductive & Genetic Technologies: Setting Boundaries, Enhancing Health

The Catholic Women's League of Canada commends the Government of Canada on its initiative to regulate new reproductive and genetic technologies (NRGT). We further commend the government on the establishment of the Royal Commission on New Reproductive Technologies whose recommendations resulted in the document, *New Reproductive & Genetic Technologies: Setting Boundaries, Enhancing Health*.

NRGT primarily affect women. The Catholic Women's League of Canada represents over 100,000 Canadian women and has been in existence for over 76 years. Throughout our history, we have worked on health issues which affect women, families and the most vulnerable in our society. We therefore request representation on the proposed regulatory agency whose major function would be to develop standards to issue licenses to permit medical research and practice in reproductive technologies.

We concur that certain practices connected with NRGT are unacceptable and violate principles of respect for human life and dignity. The prohibitions contained in the interim moratorium and the first stage legislation are reflective of Canadian views.

We support the inclusion of these five additional practices as an important element of proposed legislation since they reflect prohibitions which were not part of the interim moratorium:

- a) transfer of embryos between human and other species
- b) use of human sperm, eggs or embryos for assisted human reproductive procedures or medical research without informed donor consent
- c) research on human embryos later than 14 days after conception
- d) creation of embryos for research purposes only
- e) offer to pay/provide for prohibited services

The Catholic Women's League of Canada believes that personhood begins at conception. We call for a ban on the marketing of fetal tissue and on all zygote/embryo research. The willingness to prohibit certain techniques is a clear indication that we, as a society, respect human dignity. There is a need to define ethical principles and parameters. Techniques which are controversial from an ethical perspective must not be withdrawn from legislation if pressure begins to arise.

Our areas of concern are:

- genetic research and counselling as related to therapeutic interventions
- human suffering resulting from infertility
- adequate funding for education
- clear terms of reference for the regulatory agency
- regulatory guidelines and prohibitions
- evaluation
- establishment of a comprehensive data bank

The Catholic Women's League of Canada acknowledges this important work, supports the legislative proposals in the document and requests representation on the proposed regulatory agency.

Accepted by motion at the national executive meeting of
The Catholic Women's League of Canada, October 26, 1996.