



ASSOCIATION CATHOLIQUES
CANADIENNE DE LA SANTÉ

CATHOLIC HEALTH
ASSOCIATION OF CANADA

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CHAC ENCOURAGES GOVERNMENT TO TAKE TOUGHER STAND

(New Reproductive Technologies)

Ottawa — A voluntary moratorium will not be effective in protecting Canadians against the serious impacts of new reproductive technologies. What is required are strict regulations and guiding principles for how these technologies are used in Canada, says the Catholic Health Association of Canada (CHAC) in response to Health Canada's call for a voluntary moratorium on nine reproductive and genetic technologies.

“We affirm the government's recognition that some of these new reproductive technologies pose a serious threat to fundamental human values”, said Leo Steven, Chairperson of the Board of Directors. In its brief to the royal commission on new reproductive technologies, the CHAC emphasized the communal values that have been a constant part of the Canadian heritage. These include respect for human life and dignity at all stages and respect for the human values linked to biological parentage and family lineage. The CHAC encourages the government to develop an ethical framework to guide its efforts in regulating these technologies.

The CHAC fears that the call for a voluntary moratorium to stop the use of nine reproductive and genetic technologies will be ineffective in protecting Canadians against the serious social and ethical implications of these practices. “The CHAC believes that such technologies cannot ultimately be left to self-regulation by researchers and doctors. The voluntary ban leaves this new field unsupervised”, said Mr. Steven. During the royal commission's public hearings there were serious calls for a legal moratorium on any development or expansion of new reproductive facilities and programs until strict safeguards and limits on them had been put in place. There remains a need for criminal legislation to protect public health and foundational values, and for some mechanism to regulate the provision of new reproductive technologies.

In making the announcement, Health Minister Diane Marleau indicated that this voluntary moratorium is an interim measure, and that the government hopes to have a permanent management regime in place next year. “The CHAC believes the need for regulation of new reproductive technology activities is urgent and we encourage the government to act quickly.” The CHAC will be requesting a meeting with the Health Minister to discuss ways in which the Association might be of assistance in establishing a management program and an ethical framework to regulate these new technologies.

