



CONFÉRENCE DES ÉVÊQUES CATHOLIQUES DU CANADA
CANADIAN CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

10 March 2017

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau
Prime Minister of Canada
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON
K1A 0A6

Prime Minister,

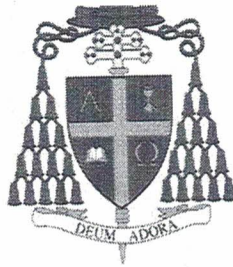
On 8 March 2017 the Government of Canada announced \$650 million over three years for “sexual and reproductive health and rights”. According to a backgrounder provided to the media, a major part of the funding will be toward removing “judicial and legal barriers to the fulfilment of sexual and reproductive health and rights”. As cited by the *Globe and Mail* on 9 March 2017, a federal official has confirmed “these barriers include the anti-abortion laws in many countries.”

Such a policy is a reprehensible example of Western cultural imperialism and an attempt to impose misplaced but so-called Canadian “values” on other nations and people. It exploits women when they are most in need of care and support, and tragically subverts true prenatal health care. It negates our country’s laudable efforts to welcome refugees and offer protection to the world’s homeless, when the youngest of human lives will instead be exterminated and the most vulnerable of human beings discarded as unwanted human tissue.

Your policy and vision, contrary to the fundamental ethic of protecting the most vulnerable and assisting the weakest, are in conflict with the principles instinctively shared by the majority of the world’s population and consistently upheld by the Catholic Church: to defend and protect human life from conception to natural death.

On behalf of all the bishops of Canada I thank you for your consideration and I remain

(Most Rev.) Douglas Crosby, OMI
Bishop of Hamilton
President of the Canadian Conference
of Catholic Bishops



The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau
Prime Minister of Canada
House of Commons, Ottawa

March 10, 2017

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau,

I am writing to express my deep concern and disappointment at your government's decision to provide \$650 million to support "sexual and reproductive health programs" globally. While it is commendable and necessary to foster initiatives that further the rights of women and young girls worldwide, your public comments suggest that unless a woman has access to abortion or contraception, she is not empowered or able to realize her full potential.

I simply remind you and your colleagues that we have no rights at all unless we are afforded the right to life. That decision was made for you and for each one of us by a woman, determined and committed to bring a new life into this world.

It is praiseworthy to offer international aid; it is arrogant for powerful, wealthy nations to dictate what priorities developing countries should embrace. Pope Francis has cautioned the rich and powerful West against the danger of "ideological colonization," in which such countries and organizations offer funding to help further a particular social agenda. Do we empower women by making sex selective abortions more accessible? Money spent on promoting abortion and contraception could be spent on vaccinating millions of women and girls against malaria or other diseases. \$650 million could help build a lot of schools or universities, pathways to knowledge for future female leaders of our world.

Our country could learn from a number of inspiring examples of outreach and care that support women worldwide. Very often these programs are offered by faith-based, non-governmental organizations, which are usually the first to arrive and the last to leave any area of crisis or need. They understand the reality of the local situation, and respect the dignity of the people who live there.

Canada is blessed with prosperity and a wealth of resources. Surely we can do better than imposing a distorted vision of the empowerment of women on the people of countries that deserve our support to respond effectively to the challenge of their most pressing needs.

I would welcome the opportunity to speak with you regarding this critically important issue.

Sincerely yours,

† Thomas Card. Collins

Thomas Cardinal Collins
Archbishop of Toronto