



The Catholic Women's League of Canada Position Paper

TITLE: Abortion

POSITION STATEMENT

The Catholic Women's League of Canada, in accordance with Catholic church teachings, respects human life from conception to natural death. As such, any procedures that cause the intentional killing of unborn human beings at any stage of development are gravely wrong.

- The League commits to advocating for a society where all human life is respected and protected through government legislation and community services that support pregnant women and families, such as those living in poverty, experiencing violence and living in adverse situations.

BACKGROUND

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states, "Human life must be respected and protected absolutely from the moment of conception. From the first moment of his existence, a human being must be recognized as having the rights of a person – among which is the inviolable right of every innocent being to life.... These human rights depend neither on single individuals nor on parents; nor do they represent a concession made by society and the state; they belong to human nature and are inherent in the person by virtue of the creative act from which the person took his origin" (2270-2273).

If a mother's life is threatened, medical interventions that would preserve the mother's life may endanger the unborn child's life. This would not be considered as an abortion only if the consideration for the intervention is "of high value, like life, is at stake, and that it is not possible to postpone it until after the birth of the child, or to use any other effective remedy" (Congregation).

In 1988, the Supreme Court of Canada found that there was not an inherent right to abortion but that the *Criminal Code* provision on abortion violated a woman's right to "life, liberty and security of the person" guaranteed under Section 7 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. As a result, Canada is the only country in the world with no federal abortion legislation, and abortions may be performed at any time throughout pregnancy (Dunsmuir; Shaw).

The Canadian Institute of Health Information (CIHI) reported more than 87,485 abortions in Canada in 2021. Exact numbers are difficult to determine as only hospitals are required to report, and many medical abortions are now available in primary care centres (Canadian). It is unknown how the change in regulation by Health Canada of the self-administered abortion medication, Mifegymiso (mifepristone/misoprostol), contributes to the current number of abortions as it is not reported separately in Canadian statistics (Induced).

In addition to risks of physical complications, abortion carries potential harm to women, fathers and families. Women deciding to have an abortion include those suffering poverty and violence (Gendron; Sajadi-Ernazarova). Pope Francis states, "It is troubling to see how simple and convenient it has become for some to deny the existence of a human life as a solution to problems that can and must be solved for both the mother and her unborn child" (Mares).

SUPPORTIVE ACTIONS

- Advocate for federal and provincial legislation to regulate abortion and protect the lives of the unborn.
- Support community and special interest groups that advocate for and provide services that work towards ending abortion. Participate in activities and prayers that bring attention to the need to protect unborn children, such as March for Life and 40 Days for Life.
- Support local, provincial and national organizations that provide alternatives and support for pregnant women and families.
- Advocate for and take action to eliminate poverty, family violence and marginalization.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

Canadian Institute for Health Information. “Induced Abortions in Canada.” *CIHI*, 23 Mar. 2023. www.cihi.ca/en/induced-abortion-in-canada.

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Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. “Clarification on Procured Abortion.” *Liberty Institute for Faith & Ethics*, 11 July 2009, liberty4life.org/files.wordpress.com/2019/02/clarification-on-procured-abortion.pdf.

Dunsmuir, Mollie. “Abortion: Constitutional and Legal Developments.” *Government of Canada Publications*, publications.gc.ca/Collection-R/LoPBdP/CIR/8910-e.htm.

Gendron, Lionel. “The State Has a Legitimate Interest in Protecting the Unborn: Statement on the 30th Anniversary of the Morgentaler Decision.” *Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops*, 27 Jan. 2018, www.cccb.ca/letter/the-state-has-a-legitimate-interest-in-protecting-the-unborn-statement-on-the-30th-anniversary-of-the-morgentaler-decision/.

Mares, Courtney. “Pope Francis’ 8 Strongest Statements against Abortion.” *Catholic News Agency*, 4 Oct. 2021, www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/249172/pope-francis-abortion-statements.

Sajadi-Ernazarova, Karima R., and Christopher L. Martinez. “Abortion Complications.” *National Center for Biotechnology Information*. Jan. 2023, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK430793/.

Shaw, Dorothy, and Wendy Norman. “When There Are No Abortion Laws: A Case Study of Canada.” *Best Practice & Research Clinical Obstetrics & Gynaecology*, 25 May 2019, www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1521693419300550.

Vatican. “Catechism of the Catholic Church: Respect for Human Life.” *The Holy See*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 4 Nov. 2003, www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_P7Z.HTM.

STATUS

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