



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