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Respect for Human Life

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MOST CANADIANS WANT ALTERNATIVES TO EMBRYO RESEARCH

A Leger poll of 1500 Canadians shows that 70% favour ethical alternatives to embryonic stem cell research. These results contradict a recent Pollara poll suggesting majority public support for such research.

The poll, commissioned by LifeCanada/VieCanada, the national educational pro-life group, asked respondents if they thought it was acceptable to use human embryos for stem cell research or if they thought it would be preferable to use other sources of stem cells which do not involve loss of life or harm.

Bill C-13, the Assisted Human Reproduction Act currently before Parliament, would allow researchers to extract stem cells from human embryos for research. Removing the stem cells destroys the embryo. The bill is in the final stages of debate in the House of Commons.

Only 21% thought it was acceptable to use embryonic stem cells. Thirty-three percent said it was not acceptable, while further 37% said it would be preferable to use other sources. Quebecers were least supportive of the destruction of embryos for research. 38% said using embryos was not acceptable.

Jakki Jeffs, president of LifeCanada, called on the federal government to rethink its position on embryonic stem cell research. "Canadians have serious misgivings about this bill and with the ethical implications of taking human lives for research purposes."

Mrs. Jeffs said that politicians and pollsters must ensure that Canadians understand what embryonic stem cell research is when measuring public opinion. "The extraction of the stem cells for research kills the developing human embryo. That is key. One can't just say this research holds promise for curing diseases. The ethical dilemma must be part of the discussion."

She said that is undoubtedly why some polls suggest there is public support for the bill. "If people just hear about the marvels that this research might produce but don't understand that human lives are destroyed in the process, then it's not a fair question."

Mrs. Jeffs pointed out that the Commons Committee that studied the issue recommended a moratorium on embryonic stem cell research and encouraged the use of the ethical alternatives already available and being used in clinical settings.

"Parliament should adopt the committee's recommendation," said Mrs. Jeffs. "Adult stem cells and cord blood have already produced successful results in humans, unlike embryonic stem cell research to date. Canadians understand there are serious ethical questions involved and their concerns should be respected."

The poll was conducted between October 6 and October 13. The maximum margin of error is 2.5%, 19 times out of 20.

For more information, call Jakki Jeffs at: 519-820-3399; Peter Ryan at 506-459-8992; Joanne Byfield at 780-939-5940.