



Canadian  
Association for  
Community Living

Association canadienne  
pour l'intégration  
communautaire

Kinsmen Building  
York University  
4700 Keele Street  
Toronto, Ontario  
Canada, M3J 1P3  
Tel: (416) 661-9611  
Fax: (416) 661-5701  
TDD: (416) 661-2023

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## **Hormone Treatment Dehumanizing**

**January 5, 2007 (ON)** – Throughout history people with disabilities have been vulnerable to de-valuing and dehumanizing treatment. It appears that in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century this vulnerability remains. The Canadian Association for Community Living (CACL) is appalled with the precedent being set by the “Ashley Treatment,” a collection of medical interventions including hysterectomy, breast bud removal and the intentional use of hormone treatment to attenuate growth and development into adulthood.

The medical and ethical acceptance of this treatment should send alarm bells ringing:

- There is a problem – when a family is unable to find the supports they need to care for the family member they love;
- There is a problem – when communities do not recognize people with disabilities as full persons deserving of equal treatment and respect
- There is a problem – when ethics review at a hospital approves a course of treatment that will deny a young girl her adulthood.

This case marks a dangerous trend and a new low in the medical and ethical treatment of people with disabilities. It is tacit approval that people with disabilities, particularly those with significant disabilities, are not to be recognized as human in the same way others are. It is explicit approval that the bodies and lives of people with disabilities can be manipulated at others' will.

We believe this is a profoundly misguided, unethical decision on the part of all those involved.

The President of CACL, Ms Zuhy Sayeed, is deeply offended by the message this decision sends to communities: “As a mother, I know that caring for a child with a disability is not always easy – parenting never is. I also know that I would never try to change the developmental path of my child with a disability or any of my children. It worries me that this decision lets society off the hook. Instead of placing the responsibility on communities to provide the supports that families needs, this treatment suggests that the person with a disability should be bio-medically altered in ‘the best interests’ of individuals and families. We must challenge such failed and dangerous logic.”

CACL Executive Vice President, Michael Bach, echoed those concerns: “CACL rejects the notion that it is acceptable to dehumanize a young girl. CACL believes all people should be seen as persons first, which requires equal respect and dignity. When we begin to believe that different standards can be used in how we treat people we set ourselves on a slippery slope. The ethics of this decision and the implications of this decision must be questioned and rejected.”

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CACL is a family-based national federation of 420 local associations and 13 provincial/territorial associations for community living that advocate for the human rights and equal citizenship of people with intellectual disabilities.

For more information please contact:

Zuhy Sayeed (780-871-1979) or Michael Bach (416-209-7942)

