

May 17, 2019

Hon. Wanda Elaine Thomas Bernard, Senator
Chair, Senate Standing Committee on Human Rights
Senate of Canada
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

Dear Senator:

Thank you for your request for a written submission for the current study on the reports of forced/coerced sterilization of Indigenous women in Canada. We would also welcome the opportunity to appear before the committee during its second phase in the Fall of 2019.

The Canadian Medical Association (CMA) is concerned about these reports as the act of sterilization without informed patient consent goes against the fundamental principles of medical ethics. Since 1868, CMA has produced a Code of Ethics for Canada's doctors which guides physicians in their day-to-day practice and represents not only what is expected of them as physicians by the profession, but also by society as a whole. The act of sterilization without informed patient consent would directly contravene numerous sections of the CMA's Code of Ethics, notably that physicians ought to:

- Consider first the well-being of the patient; always act to benefit the patient and promote the good of the patient.
- Communicate information accurately and honestly with the patient in a manner that the patient understands.
- Never participate in or support practices that violate basic human rights.


The CMA recently spent two years of extensive consultation to revise the code and the

latest version outlines specific commitments to reconciliation with Indigenous people as part of the responsibilities of physicians to society – including collaborative and respectful relationships with Indigenous patients and communities.

The CMA is committed to participating in reconciliation and I can assure you that we are putting in place an extensive dissemination plan for the new Code of Ethics. As well, the CMA supports Senator Boyer's call for a national study of this matter.

In closing, as mentioned in our meetings with the Ministers of Health and Indigenous Services last December, we would appreciate the opportunity to engage with the proposed FPT working group of senior officials to develop measures to improve cultural safety in health care in Canada. Thank you again and we look forward to hearing about the next steps in this important issue.

Sincerely,



F. Gigi Osler, BScMed, MD, FRCSC
President