

## May-June 2007

The current academic year is drawing to a close but controversies on life issues abound. In the United States a significant breakthrough occurred on April 18, 2007 when the United States Supreme Court upheld as constitutional states' laws banning the extremely cruel practice of partial birth abortion. The debate on "global warming" continues to heat up as the issue takes on a greater sense of urgency and various groups wade in with their own views and agendas. In Canada, the annual March for Life held in Ottawa had its largest turnout ever, with more than half the marchers being young people, but no coverage of the event appeared on any major broadcasting network. Newspapers highlight Canada's economic well-being, immigration numbers, threats to pensions as the population ages. The *National Post* ran a front page story on the "A" word on May 5 and it drew a surprisingly large number of letters to the editor and emails for several weeks after. Premier Dalton McGuinty of Ontario criticized Pope Benedict XVI for mentioning excommunication in connection to Catholic politicians who support abortion. In the same Ontario Legislative Assembly there are competing bills designed to increase the rate of organ and tissue donations. Each of these developments offer opportunities for discussion of current events and media reports dealing with life issues.

It should not surprise that the issue of abortion colours and impacts on so many areas of social, economic, and political life in modern societies. First some questions: Why is abortion considered by many as a taboo topic in 'polite' company? Why is there some progress in enacting legislation limiting the practice in the United States, but seemingly no progress whatsoever in Canada? Is Canada in danger of disappearing? Why did the *National Post* story on abortion stand out? Why are the most extreme environmentalists seemingly anti-life, anti-people? Is the premier of Ontario correct to take offense at the Pope's "interference" in secular matters? These are challenging questions on contentious issues. This particular edition of the curriculum supplement addresses several of these developments. Others will be covered in future editions commencing in September.

These issues and the questions should not be ignored. Genuine efforts must be made to understand our own society and how it might be made better and more just for everyone.

### Part A

#### Partial Birth Abortion Ban

A momentous decision was rendered by the United States Supreme Court when it came down 5 to 4 in favour of upholding the constitutionality of various state laws that were intended to ban a particularly gruesome practice of abortion. The following article from the May edition of *The*

*Interim* summarizes and analyzes the significance of the American court decision.

#### In major decision, U.S. Supreme Court upholds ban on partial-birth abortions

Paul Tuns  
Editor, *The Interim*

... In the 1990s, then-president Bill Clinton twice vetoed a federal ban on partial-birth abortion, a procedure in which a live child is mostly delivered except for his head, the skull is crushed or cut open and the brains suctioned out. The practice is so heinous and unnecessary – 300 to 3,000 such abortions occur out of more than one million surgical abortions annually – that twice, about a third of pro-abortion senators voted to ban the procedure. Some states considered the issue, including Nebraska, but in 2000, the Supreme Court overturned the law, saying the legislation did not have a sufficient exception to protect the life or health of the mother. In 2003, Congress passed the *Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act* and President George W. Bush signed it into law. However, the restriction never took effect, because state courts in California, Nebraska and New York prevented its implementation.

In the meantime, the composition of the Supreme Court changed. In 2006, Associate Justice Sandra Day O'Connor and Chief Justice William Rehnquist retired. Since joining the court in 1982, O'Connor had supported *Roe v. Wade* and voted against any restriction on abortion. Rehnquist opposed *Roe* and consistently found pro-life legislation constitutional. Their replacements were Chief Justice John Roberts and Associate Justice Samuel Alito, both thought to be (at least) inclined toward pro-life jurisprudence.



US Supreme Justice Anthony Kennedy

On April 18, the court ruled 5-4 that partial-birth abortions can be banned. Justice Anthony Kennedy wrote the majority decision, which said that the act's opponents had "not demonstrated that the act would be unconstitutional in a large fraction of relevant cases." The decision was

tightly worded and silent about *Roe*. Justices Antonin Scalia and Clarence Thomas wrote a concurrent decision that supported the ban, but also spoke against *Roe*.

In his opinion, Kennedy (who was joined by Roberts and Alito), wrote, “The act proscribes a method of abortion in which a fetus is killed just inches before completion of the birth process ... Congress determined that the abortion methods it proscribed had a ‘disturbing similarity to the killing of a newborn infant.’” The majority ruled that the federal government could ban the partial-birth abortion procedure.

Two aspects of the Kennedy opinion are noteworthy. The first is that Kennedy said the PBA ban was “facially” constitutional and that the lawsuits challenging the law should never have been allowed in court anyway. He said that “if an abortion ban is claimed to harm a woman’s right to abortion,” it could be litigated through an as-applied claim on an individual woman-by-woman basis.

Kennedy also noted the brutality of the partial-birth abortion procedure, quoting extensively from medical staff testimony. Quoting Dr. Martin Haskell, Kennedy described the method of “intact dilation and extraction” (the medical name for PBAs): “The surgeon forces the scissors into the base of the skull or into the foramen magnum. Having safely entered the skull, he spreads the scissors to enlarge the opening. The surgeon removes the scissors and introduces a suction catheter into this hole and evacuates the skull contents.”

He also quotes a nurse who witnessed one such abortion: “The baby’s little fingers were clasp[ing] and unclasp[ing] and his little feet were kick[ing]. Then the doctor stuck the scissors in the back of his head and the baby’s arms jerked out, like a startled reaction, like a flinch, like a baby does when he thinks he’s going to fall.”

G. Tracy Mehan III, an adjunct professor at George Mason University School of Law, wrote in the *American Spectator Online* that Kennedy “deserves credit for an excruciating, factual, and grueling statement of the underlying facts of the case; specifically, the horror which is abortion and partial-birth abortion.” In doing so, Mehan says, Kennedy is “scrupulous in setting out the complete record documenting the existential realities of partial-birth abortion.” In her dissent, Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg rebuked the majority, saying that the decision was “alarming,” because it “refuses to take seriously” Supreme Court precedent on abortion restrictions.

The *New York Sun*’s Joseph Goldstein noted it was the first time the Supreme Court “upheld a ban on a specific abortion procedure.” Michael J. New, an assistant professor at the University of Alabama, wrote on *National Review*

*Online* that until the current decision (*Gonzalez v. Carhart*) the “judiciary has been a consistent thorn in the side of the pro-life movement.” That may change. As the *New York Sun* reported, the decision “will require groups such as Planned Parenthood, which brought the case, to rethink its litigation strategy.”

More important, the tilt of the Supreme Court to the pro-life side on this one issue is a vindication of a quarter-century’s worth of work by the grassroots pro-life movement. New outlined how pro-life activists have fought for incremental restrictions and suggested that the combination of laws restricting abortion and the public debate over them have played a role in the decreasing number of surgical abortions in the U.S. Furthermore, New said that in recognizing an all-encompassing ban on abortion was not a viable pro-life strategy, many pro-lifers looked for ways to curtail the abortion licence and

focused on changing the Supreme Court. After 25 years of such political activism, the first major victory has occurred. Some pro-lifers hope this is the just the beginning, with the *Gonzalez* decision getting the ball rolling.

The *Washington Post* editorialized that: “With the departure of Justice Sandra Day O’Connor and the arrival of Chief Justice John G. Roberts Jr. and Justice Samuel A. Alito Jr., this is clearly a different court, one far more willing to uphold abortion restrictions and to give great weight to ‘moral concerns.’ It is still short of the necessary votes to overturn *Roe*.”



Jim Hughes, national president of Campaign Life Coalition in Canada, applauded the U.S. Supreme Court and noted that the pro-life justices appointed by George W. Bush will be the president’s greatest pro-life legacy.

**Pro-life leaders such as Jim Hughes, national president of Campaign Life Coalition and American Life League president Judie Brown applaud the US Supreme court ruling banning partial birth abortions.**

abortion restrictions are constitutionally permissible.

But some pro-lifers didn’t find the decision very significant. American Life League president Judie Brown said, “The decision rendered today simply outlaws most of a particular type of abortion; it does not limit when an abortion can be done, nor does it limit abortions by other methods

up through the moment of birth.”

Others noted with some concern that neither Roberts nor Alito agreed with Thomas’s concurrent opinion that while the decision respects court precedents on abortion, “My view is that the court’s abortion jurisprudence ... has no basis in the Constitution.”

Still, it is a victory for those who fought to ban most PBAs. “The Supreme Court’s decision is an affirmation of the progress we have made over the past six years in protecting human dignity and upholding the sanctity of life,” President Bush said in a statement. “We will continue to work for the day when every child is welcomed in life and protected in law.”

### Questions

1. What is meant by “partial birth abortion”?
2. How rare is it? Why did it draw such attention in the United States?
3. Why did pro-abortion organizations like Planned Parenthood Federation nonetheless oppose even this restriction on abortion?
4. What set of circumstances lined up fortuitously for the pro-life side in obtaining the favourable judgement after the Clinton presidency?
5. On what grounds did the majority opinion uphold the specific partial birth abortion ban?
6. Was there any additional significance to Justice Kennedy’s written explanation of the majority decision?
7. What concern was voiced in the dissenting opinion of Justice Ruth Ginsberg?
8. How did various pro-life groups and leaders greet the decision?
9. Why was pro-life leader Judie Brown not overwhelmed by the decision?
10. What if any impact does the U.S court decision have on the Canadian scene?
11. Are there good prospects in Canada for fanning a public debate on abortion?

## Part B

It seems that Canada’s population crisis is beginning to get noticed by the media, even if the necessary dots are not fully connected by the writers as to the real causes underlying this pending demographic disaster. Here are two recent articles addressing the issue of Canada’s population challenge and what needs to be or can be done about it.

### Is Canada disappearing?

**If demography is destiny, this country is in trouble**

Commentary by Paul Tuns, Editor, *The Interim*

In March, Statistics Canada released a report on Canada’s population that provided a very sobering picture. Well, it

would be sobering, if Canadians woke up to the reality that we are not having enough children and that in doing so, we risk radically changing this nation.

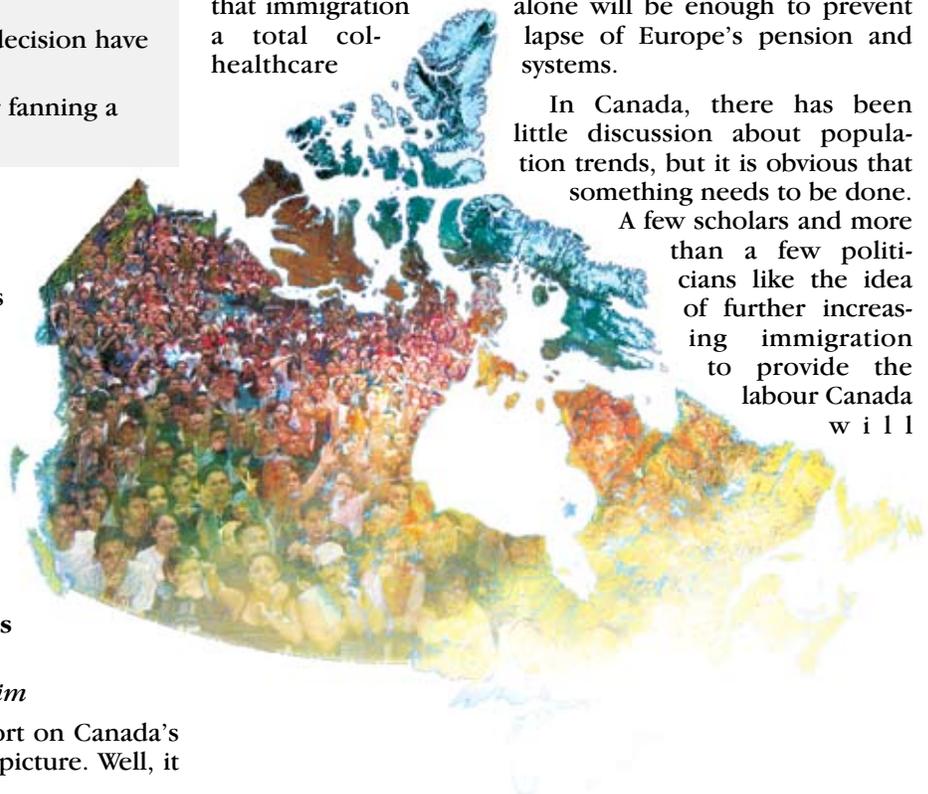
StatsCan did find that between 2001 and 2006, Canada was the fastest growing G8 nation, adding 1.6 million people during that time to bring the total population to 31,612,897. The 5.4 per cent growth rate over five years was fuelled mostly by immigration. Canada’s below-replacement fertility rate of 1.48 would result in a net decline in population if it were not for the combination of high levels of immigration and people living longer lives. Furthermore, StatsCan estimates that by 2030, all of Canada’s population growth will be a result of immigration, as the number of deaths is expected to exceed the number of births. Says Hubert Denis, a StatsCan population analyst: “Immigration will be the only factor of demographic growth.”

In recent decades, Canada’s fertility rate (the average number of child births per woman) has fallen and the number of elderly has increased. Canada’s fertility rates are more in line with the dying cultures of Europe and East Asia than with our neighbour to the south. Canada’s fertility rate (1.48) is well-below the U.S. rate of 2.11. Replacement rate – the rate at which a population holds steady before immigration is accounted for – is 2.1. The U.S. is the only industrialized Western nation with a significant population to have a fertility rate near the replacement level.

A 2005 StatsCan report estimated that over the next decade or so, the Canadian fertility rate will fall between 1.3 and 1.7. In France, the fertility rate is 1.9. In Austria, it’s 1.7. Germany, Italy and Spain all have fertility rates of 1.2-1.3 and Japan and South Korea’s are 1.2 and 1.1 respectively. Japan began experiencing depopulation in 2006 and Russia has seen its population decline in recent years. European nations are importing massive numbers of (largely unwanted) immigrants to maintain a tax base for their generous welfare states, while at the same time making small reforms to save costs in the near term. Few economists believe that immigration alone will be enough to prevent a total collapse of Europe’s pension and healthcare systems.

In Canada, there has been little discussion about population trends, but it is obvious that something needs to be done.

A few scholars and more than a few politicians like the idea of further increasing immigration to provide the labour Canada  
w i l l

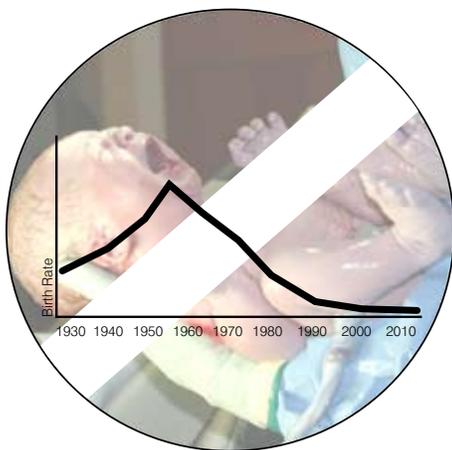


need as baby boomers begin retiring. The cohort that was born between 1947 and 1966 makes up 31 per cent of Canada's population and healthcare economists and actuaries worry about the effect of such large numbers of seniors on the public healthcare system and Canada's public pension plans.

But immigration does not seem to be a long-term solution. As Statistics Canada found in 2003, recent waves of immigrants are poorer and remain in low-income levels longer than previous generations of immigrants. The economic benefits of immigration seem to be declining and may not offer a stable and productive supply of labour or a sufficient tax base over time. A C.D. Howe Institute background paper released last year, "No Elixir of Youth: Immigration Cannot Keep Canada Young," said that immigration is not the answer to the issues related to Canada's demographic shift. Yvan Guillemette and William Robson, authors of the paper, said that increasing immigration numbers from about 250,000 a year now to 320,000 immigrants annually would only "mitigate the imminent slowing down and reversal in labour-force growth," because new immigrants will have to be of working age and not young enough to alter Canada's age composition. They also raised concerns about the ability to absorb the larger number of immigrants.

Rather than tinkering with immigration rates, Guillemette and Robson suggest increasing the retirement age and scaling back public pensions.

What is notable is that the C.D. Howe Institute paper did not explore ways to increase fertility rates. Ultimately, the problem is not immigration or aging or the cost of its social programs. The problem is that Canadians are not having enough children.



In its 2005 report, StatsCan found that much of the decrease in fertility rates was the result of women 24-29, as well as those who were university-educated or had high-paying jobs, eschewing having babies. The reasons for that are complex and multi-fold. Feminism, the breakdown of family life and increased secularism are all

factors, but on top of the list must be abortion and contraception. With the easy availability of birth control and more than three million abortions since 1969, it is not difficult to see why Canada's fertility rate is falling and failing to reproduce sufficient numbers to, at the very least, maintain the population.

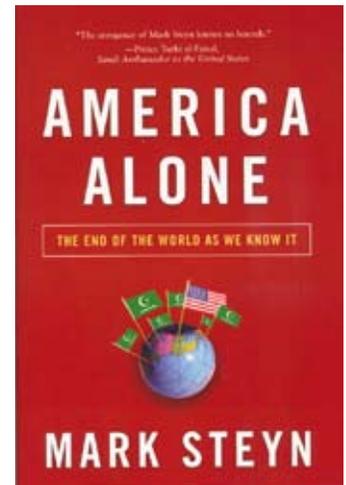
It is estimated that by 2015, there will be more people over 65 than there will be children under 15. Within 15 years, the number of deaths may exceed the number of births. At that point, without immigration, Canada will begin to depopulate.

How to reverse the course? As we note on page 2 of this paper, the Conservative government is re-prioritizing families in the budget to make life a little easier for those

with children. But do couples really complete a cost-benefit analysis to determine whether or not they can afford kids? Perhaps not with a pen and paper or on a spreadsheet on the computer. It is unlikely a couple will decide to have a second child just because the government is handing out \$100 a month to families with kids under six. Fidgeting with the tax code is not enough.

Many countries are looking at ways to increase child-births. France offers benefits for families that have a second child and even more generous benefits for families that have a third. Russia will pay women approximately \$9,000 to have a child. Many European countries are extending parental leave and Singapore is paying for fertility treatments.

In his book *America Alone: The End of the World as We Know It*, author and columnist Mark Steyn suggests some creative, but practical, ways in which Canada and Europe can arrest the fertility rate decline. He says it is time to "embrace serious uber-natalism" and proposes massive structural changes in the tax system and society. Steyn says taxable income should be divided by the number of people in the house. If an unmarried man with no children makes \$50,000, he should be taxed on all \$50,000. If, however, a married man with four dependents (a stay-at-home wife and three children) makes \$50,000, his income should be divided by five; only \$10,000 of his income would be taxable. That, says Steyn, "makes a family affordable."



Another thing that makes families "unaffordable" are high housing prices. Steyn notes that "acre for acre, America is the cheapest developed country in which to buy a big home with plenty of space for plenty of kids." Steyn says one of the reasons Canada's fertility rate is so European is that Canada's population is more concentrated due to geography and other factors, forcing more home-buyers to compete for smaller parcels of land. Steyn's point is borne out in the March StatsCan report, which found increasing urbanization: 80 per cent of Canadians live in cities. Most of that growth is in Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal (immigration) and Calgary (interprovincial migration). A few years ago, when my wife and I were looking to move our family from downtown Toronto to the north end of town, we were taken to a new three-bedroom 'starter' home. The price tag: \$695,000. No wonder urbanites have small families; many are forced to limit family size to one or two or consider moving to a new city.

Steyn also finds "deferred adulthood" to be a culprit in falling fertility rates. "We enter adolescence much earlier and leave it much later," he says. One corrective would be to "redirect the system to telescope education into a much shorter period." A more vigorous public education system could redirect people from post-secondary educations, thus encouraging people to begin work and start families earlier in life. As couples wait to have children, they decide they should not or find out they cannot have two or three children.

As Steyn's proposals suggest, tackling falling fertility will require bold and creative public policy. The damage done by nearly 50 years of anti-life and anti-family ideology cannot be corrected with mere economic incentives. It will probably also require a psychological shift and religious re-awakening.

With or without immigration, the Canada we know is disappearing. Without a growing population to support the aging population, Canada faces a choice: curtailing the pensions and healthcare many Canadians have come to expect or punatively high tax rates (which might encourage workers to leave the country). None of this is sustainable, especially the selfish mindset infecting the baby boomer generation and the (few) children they did in fact have, which led them away from having children to more material pursuits. The Canada we knew is disappearing. Is there a rabbit in the public policy and ideology hats that can make it reappear? As Steyn says in his book, the issue is ultimately about the will to do what is necessary.

### Questions

1. Is Canada about to experience a demographic crash? What evidence is there?
2. What is meant by the "fertility rate" of a country?
3. How is Canada like Europe with respect to fertility rates?
4. What is the panacea for the problem in both Europe and Canada?
5. Assess the different solutions that various thinkers and groups are advocating for the population problem?
6. Why are Canadians not having enough children?
7. List some of the economic, social and educational fallout of this population decline? (for a particularly foreboding picture see Rudyard Griffiths' article Look at Florida to see what the future holds for us, *Toronto Star*, May 6, 2007. [www.thestar.com/article/210635](http://www.thestar.com/article/210635))
8. List some of the economic incentives being proposed in different countries. Are these working to reverse the trend?
9. What "creative" public policies does Mark Steyn propose?
10. What difficult choice may be facing Canada within the next 10-15 years?
11. What does Tuns mean by "The Canada we knew is disappearing"?
12. How does abortion impact on this discussion?
13. Research the welfare statism of European nations and their dependence on increased immigration to fix their pension, labour and health care problems.

For more extensive coverage of this fertility/population decline problem plaguing most nations of Europe, Canada, and most of Asia consult the articles listed below. Of particular interest is the *Maclean's* article. But once again the author studiously avoids making any explanatory connection with contraception and abortion.

## ***Maclean's* Cover Story Warns Canada's Low Birth Rate Leading to Demographic Crisis**

**By Gudrun Schultz and Steve Jalsevac**

**TORONTO, Canada, May 23, 2007 (LifeSiteNews.com)**

With a birth rate of just 1.5 children per woman – an all-time low – Canadian society is already beginning to feel the impact of a withering population, wrote *Maclean's* journalist. A healthy replacement birth rate is 2.1 children per women.

"Across the country, women on average aren't having their first child until the age of 31," George wrote. "Elementary schools and daycare facilities, without enough kids to fill the nap mats, are closing for business."

"Ontario's Ministry of Education predicts that, by 2010, total elementary and secondary school enrolment will drop by nearly 100,000 students from 2002 numbers."

The lack of skilled workers – and workforce members at any skill level – is expected to reach a shortfall of 1.2 million by 2020. With most of the industrialized world facing the same shortage, the massive increase in immigration necessary to counter the population loss will be hard to come by, said Carleton University professor Linda Duxbury.

"The numbers that we're talking about are phenomenal," Duxbury said. "Half a million to two-thirds of a million per year." Canada currently averages about 240,000 new immigrants annually.

Among the reasons cited in the article for the reduction in births are the financial costs of raising a child, the career blow professional women face when they embark on motherhood, and the problem of infertility among women attempting to begin a family towards the end of their fertile years.

As well, the author acknowledges a growing disinterest in taking on the demands and sacrifices of parenthood in a society that values autonomy and control.

"In a hyper-individualistic, ultra-commodified culture like ours, motherhood, for better and worse, is less a fact of life than just another lifestyle choice."

As with most similar reports published in recent years, some key, but politically incorrect, issues affecting birthrates are not covered in the *Maclean's* article.

There is no mention of the dramatic collapse in the rate of religious belief and practice in Canada. Studies have repeatedly indicated a clear link between the degree of a lived traditional religious life of a nation's people and their willingness to have and raise more children.

Statistics Canada reported last August that in 2004 Canadian Muslim women, with a birth rate of 2.41 children per woman, were the only religion with a replacement birth rate. Hindus rated second at 2.0. Buddhists, Orthodox Christians and non-believers had the lowest birth rates, while the previously high birth rate of Protestants and Roman Catholics has plummeted to 1.57 children. Not coincidentally, Canadian Christians are among the most liberal and dissident in the world.

While birth control was briefly mentioned as a possible contributing factor, abortion was skimmed over with an off-hand comment referring to France's consideration of "paying women not to go ahead with abortions," as a method of addressing the birth rate deficit.

Although largely ignored by population demographers as a factor in plunging birth rates, an estimated 46 million abortions take place annually on a global scale, with a majority occurring in the developed or developing world. In Russia, where the falling birth rate has contributed to an annual population loss of 700,000 people, the abortion rate is one of the highest in the world. Conservative estimates show that 60 percent of all pregnancies end in abortion.

In Canada, the latest statistics available show an abortion rate of more than 103,700 abortions performed annually.

Read full Maclean's coverage:

[http://www.macleans.ca/article.jsp?content=20070528\\_105313\\_1...](http://www.macleans.ca/article.jsp?content=20070528_105313_1...)

Low Birth Rate is Russia's Biggest Problem Says President Putin

<http://www.lifesite.net/1dn/2006/may/06051003.html>

Study Shows More Immigration Won't Fix Demographic Implosion in Canada

<http://www.lifesite.net/1dn/2006/sep/06092706.html>

German Birthrate Hits Bottom: Lowest in Europe

<http://www.lifesite.net/1dn/2006/mar/06031711.html>

Canada's Birth Rate Declines, Again: StatsCan

<http://www.lifesite.net/1dn/2006/aug/06080303.html>

South Korea: Lowest Birthrate in the World

<http://www.lifesite.net/1dn/2006/aug/06082802.html>

Look at Florida to see what the future holds for us  
Rudyard Griffiths, *Toronto Star*, May 6, 2007.

<http://www.thestar.com/article/210635>

## Part C

### Church vs State

Individuals who present themselves for public office face moral challenges when engaged in law making or law enforcement. Dual claims are made on their consciences. They are torn between loyalty to "Caesar" and loyalty to God. Recently, Pope Benedict was visiting Brazil and aboard his airplane he was asked by reporters if he supported the action of the Mexican bishops in excommunicating the Mexico City legislators who voted in April to legalize abortion. "Yes," said Pope Benedict, adding: "This excommunication was not something arbitrary, but is foreseen by the Code [of Canon Law]." Then on the following day a Vatican spokesman elaborated, pointing out that "It is simply part of Church law that the killing of an innocent baby is incompatible with going to Communion."

The question of excommunication and receiving of communion in the Catholic church has been around for

decades and it continues to present a problem when dealing with life issues like abortion, embryonic stem cell research, same-sex marriage, etc. Catholic politicians have taken positions contrary to the teachings of their Catholic faith. A case in point is right here in Canada. All prime ministers since 1968 have been Catholic with the exception of Kim Campbell and Stephen Harper, and abortion has been legalized and marriage has been radically redefined, in opposition to Catholic church teaching. The two following articles illustrate this conflict in a contemporary context.

### Premier pops off on Pope

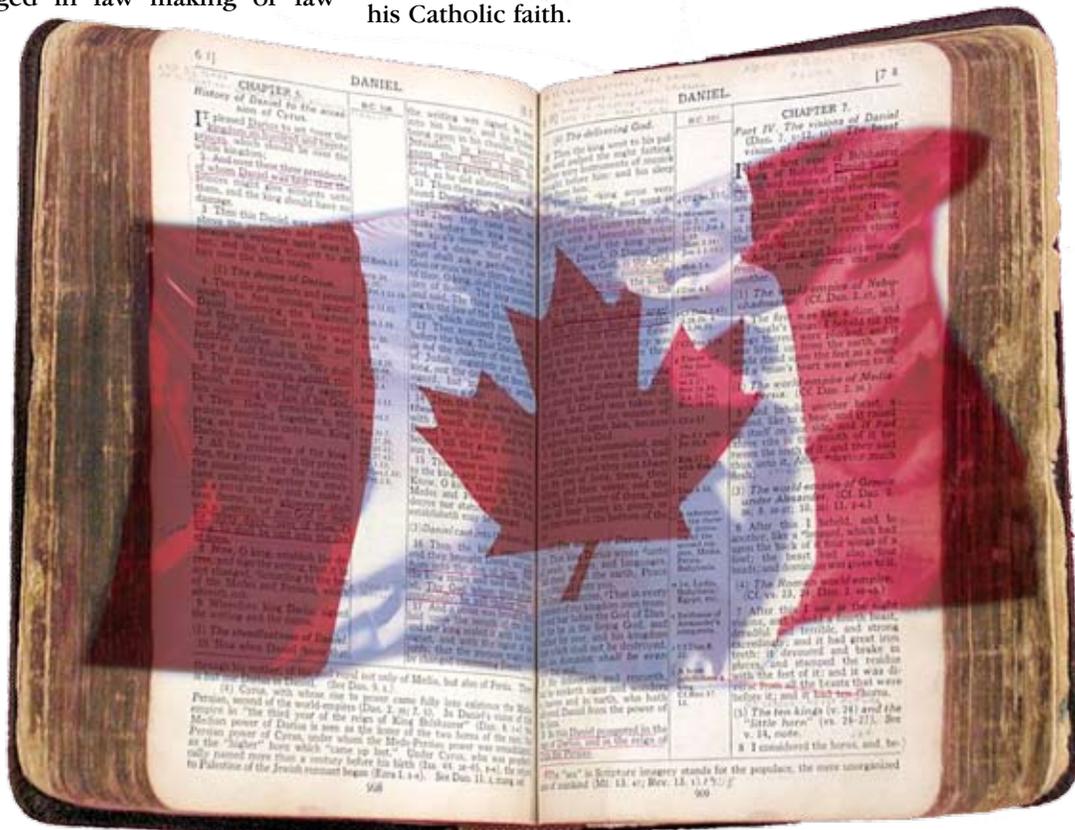
Christina Blizzard, *Toronto Sun*, May 16, 2007

Premier Dalton McGuinty handed Pope Benedict a kid glove rebuke yesterday. Polite, dignified – diplomatic even. But make no mistake, McGuinty made it quite clear that he is not pleased with the Pope's recent dictate that politicians who are practising Catholics and also pro-choice on abortion should be excommunicated.....



In a speech in Brazil, the Pope said he's certain the bishops will reinforce "the promotion of respect for life from the moment of conception until natural death as an integral requirement of human nature." .....

McGuinty often talks proudly about growing up as one of 10 children in a big Catholic family. He jokes that while other kids got a new puppy for Christmas, he got a new brother or sister. His wife, Terri, is a kindergarten teacher in the Catholic school board. In short, it would be hard to find a more devout family. But McGuinty was quite adamant yesterday in pointing out that in his role as premier he represents all Ontarians, not just those who share his Catholic faith.



“I have a different constituency than does the Pope,” McGuinty said when asked in a scrum about the Pope’s statement last week. “I am responsible for representing all kinds of people from all kinds of different backgrounds, different faiths, different cultures, different traditions,” he said.



Absolutely. And in a multi-faith, multicultural province such as this, the very notion that a politician should have to check with the Vatican before making a pronouncement is scary.

And the Pope’s threat – and that’s just what it is – means that Catholics in this country would have to excuse themselves from public life. While we don’t have the same separation of church and state that there is in the U.S. Constitution, it is a fairly well established tradition here that the church does not meddle in the politics of the nation. Well, it doesn’t meddle much.

It is, frankly, shocking, the Pope would make such a provocative statement in this day and age.

What place does a medieval organization like the Vatican have in a modern multicultural society? What the Pope is actually proposing is that politicians be elected along religious rather than political lines. And that’s pure poppycock.

A Catholic politician may not personally support abortion for themselves or their family. But you can’t impose that view on public policy, which affects people of all faiths.

What’s next? Will the Pope also excommunicate Catholic politicians in jurisdictions that allow gay marriage?

“The Pope, his purview is the church. My purview is Ontario and there is one particular aspect of myself that is in common with the Pope – I happen to be Catholic, but I have other responsibilities as well,” McGuinty told a scrum before a caucus meeting yesterday.

“I think it is pretty clear that there are very few political leaders who would allow themselves and their actions to be formed exclusively by the dictates of the Church.”

Them’s fightin’ words. Well, not fightin’ perhaps. But certainly punchy. And good for McGuinty for making himself crystal clear on this issue.....

Frankly, I don’t see this as an issue of abortion, pro-choice or pro-life. This is an issue of not-so-subtle bullying by a foreign head of state in the affairs of another country. Do you want your laws dictated by a duly elected Parliament in Queen’s Park or Ottawa? Or do you want them formulated by a bunch of unelected old men in Rome?

McGuinty took a brave stand on this. No matter what you think about abortion, we should all stand behind him.

**The full article by Christina Blizzard can be found at [http://www.torontosun.com/News/Columnists/Blizzard\\_Christina/2007/05/16/4183920.html](http://www.torontosun.com/News/Columnists/Blizzard_Christina/2007/05/16/4183920.html)**

## Truth or Consequences

**Carl A. Anderson**  
*Columbia Magazine,*  
May 2007

Each of us must make a deliberate, conscious decision to choose Christ and his teachings.

Recently, I had the honor of addressing a meeting of the Pontifical Academy for Life at the Vatican on the importance of conscience in promoting the right to life. After my remarks, the academy itself was privileged to be received in audience by Pope Benedict XVI. The Holy Father spoke of the necessity of a properly formed Christian conscience – a conscience, he said, that was “based on the solid foundation of truth” so that it may “distinguish good from evil.” The pope emphasized the necessity of having an “upright” conscience – one that “is determined to follow its dictates without contradictions, without betrayal and without compromises.”



Pope Benedict also quoted the Second Vatican Council, saying that “Pastors...should recognize and promote the dignity and responsibility of the laity” (*Lumen Gentium*, 37), especially in matters affecting the family such as the right to life and the dignity of marriage. He added, “When the value of human life is at stake” the “harmony” between pastors and the “committed laity” becomes “singularly important.” Too often today, so-called “pro-choice Catholics” repudiate this “harmony.” They champion the rights of conscience against the teaching of the Church.

To quote the title of a book by a good Catholic friend of mine and brother Knight, they have “the right to be wrong.” We all have the option of saying “no” to the Gospel of Life. God gives us free will. But no one should be under any illusion that rejecting such a fundamental moral law – in this case that it is wrong to intentionally kill an innocent human being – does not bring with it consequences. No one should be under any illusion that rejecting such a fundamental moral law can be the result of a properly formed Catholic conscience.

The right of conscience is not simply a matter of sincere belief or firm conviction. If that were true, then Hitler and his gang of murderers could argue their way into heaven with the claim that they thought what they were doing was right. If that were true, then heaven could be filled with such evil men, since, as the poet Yeats reminds us: “the worst are full of passionate intensity.”

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says that “man has the right to act in conscience,” but it adds a critical detail, that “conscience must be informed and moral judgment enlightened” (1782, 1783). Pope John Paul II made a point of saying that it is up to each of us to make a deliberate, conscious decision to “choose Christ.” As Catholics, we do not choose Christ in a vacuum. We choose Christ in a community that has a tradition, a history and a memory. We choose Christ as he presents himself to us. He is the bridegroom

who loves his bride the Church, who has given his life for her and who guides and protects her still today. We choose Christ who has given us a pope and bishops to protect that tradition, that history and that memory.

In choosing Christ in this way, we defend this tradition, we contribute to this history and we preserve this memory. And we do one thing more: We make possible an informed and upright conscience enlightened by the mind of Christ.

<http://www.kofc.org/un/publications/columbia/detail.cfm?id=371079>

### Questions

1. Define “excommunication” with respect to Catholic Church teaching.
2. Under what circumstances can a person be excommunicated? (check with Canon law # 1323-1324 and articles # 2270-2275 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church. The latter will be found at [www.priestsforlife.org/magisterium/catechismonabortion.htm#note78](http://www.priestsforlife.org/magisterium/catechismonabortion.htm#note78))
3. What is the main point of Blizzard’s article?
4. For what does she praise Premier McGuinty?
5. What reason does McGuinty offer for taking offense at the pope’s statement regarding Catholic politicians?

6. What does Blizzard find “scary”?
7. Should there be the kind of separation of church and state that Blizzard holds out as ideal?
8. Does Blizzard have sympathy for the role of the pope and the Catholic Church?
9. Did the pope interfere in the politics of Canada as Blizzard claims?
10. Does the pope have freedom to speak his mind on matters of public morals no matter where in the world?
11. Does a religious group not free to conduct its internal affairs in light of its own beliefs? Can it not discipline its members?
12. What is conscience?
13. How is conscience formed? What is a properly formed Christian conscience?
14. According to the view of Carl Anderson how should a practicing Catholic respond to the pope’s moral guidance and teaching?
15. What might be the practical flak that bishops would face if they were to excommunicate pro-abortion politicians?

## Yahoo Forum for Teachers

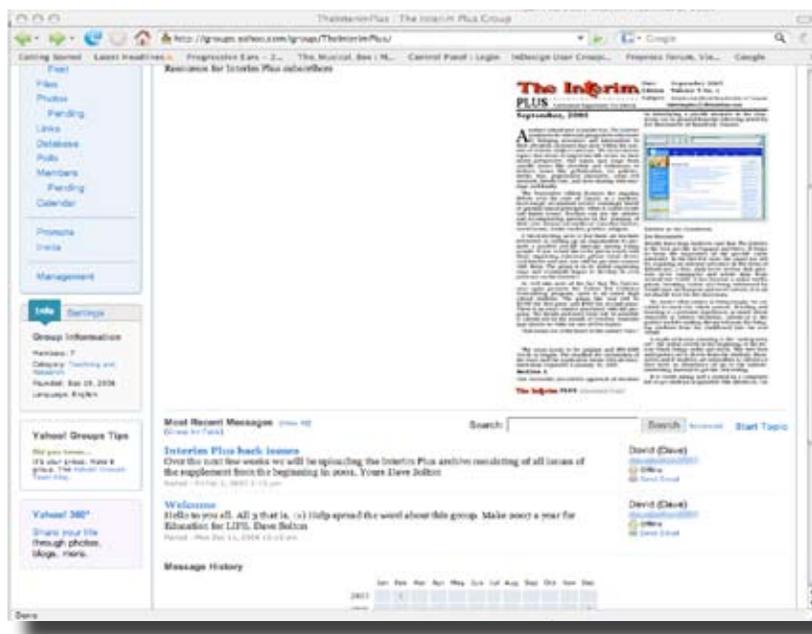
Lastly, we bring to teachers’ attention the formation of a yahoo group to serve as a forum for pro-life educators to exchange ideas, views, and communicate their thoughts and teaching strategies on key life issues of the day. You are encouraged to join the group and make your own contributions. This is one simple way to expand the culture of life.

The address is:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/TheInterimPlus/>

Please tell friends and colleagues about this new link for communicating with like minded educators. There is so much to be done and so few to do it, especially when the few do not realize how numerous they actually are because they are not in contact with one another. Nominate friends and fellow teachers. Send this call out to them.

Also, if you have a resource to share we will gladly post it for others to access.



### How to join The Interim Plus via the group page:

1. Locate the group (<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/TheInterimPlus/>).
2. Click on the Join This Group button on front (home) page, as seen above.
3. If you are not signed in, you will be asked to enter your Yahoo! ID. If you do not have a Yahoo! ID, you can register by clicking on the Sign Up link.
4. Set your membership preferences. When you join, you can choose a profile you would like to display to the group, select the email address at which you would like to receive group messages, choose how you receive group messages, and more.