



Media Release

For Immediate Release

January 9, 2007

“Ashley Treatment” Dehumanizes and Objectifies People with Disabilities

The Saskatchewan Association for Community Living (SACL) condemns the use of surgical mutilation and hormone treatment to asexualize and suspend the growth of people with intellectual disabilities. The recently reported “Ashley Treatment” dehumanizes and objectifies people with disabilities, reinforcing the myth that people with disabilities are not fully human or are eternal children. This opens the door for people with intellectual disabilities to experience inhumane, barbaric and arbitrary medical interventions.

Judy McLaughlin, President of SACL is shocked and saddened that Ashley X’s interventions have been condoned in the medical community and promoted as a breakthrough: “In the past, people with intellectual disabilities were castrated, sterilized, had all of their teeth removed, and underwent lobotomies, experimental medical procedures and drug trials, and all of these things were justified for the convenience of caregivers and research. Today, we recognize these actions as mutilation and abuse and they are legally prohibited. How is it possible that we are moving backwards and denying someone their adulthood and gender? What else will be done in the name of convenience?”

“I found myself speechless when I heard about this case,” says Faith Bodnar, Executive Director of SACL. “I could not conceive of a parent making this decision or how they could mutilate their child without their parenting capacity being called into question. This unconscionable action is a grim reminder of the pressures and lack of support faced by so many families who struggle to meet the needs of family members. It is appalling and unethical that doctors have so devalued and delegitimized Ashley’s life that they will sacrifice her gender identity and dignity, limit her adult life and create long-term health issues such as osteoporosis by stripping her body of oestrogen. The justification that she cannot understand dignity or sexuality and that this will make her less of a victim to sexual predators is false, since it will only make her a target for a different type of sexual predator. Rights and dignity are not dependent on our IQ or our physical capacity. We need to take a step back and look at the grave injustice done to a little girl.”

For more information contact:

Faith Bodnar, Executive Director of SACL at (306) 955-3344 or (306) 222-3326 in Regina

Saskatchewan Association for Community Living: Mission Statement

Through advocacy, education and community-building, we work to create a world where all people with intellectual disabilities are full citizens.

Helping communities to welcome people with intellectual disabilities