

Don't commercialize women's bodies

Re: "Let's change laws that stop some from becoming parents" (Opinion, March 9)

While Anthony Housefather raises an important issue about access to reproductive technologies for single-parent, infertile and same-sex couples, his singular focus on access is troubling.

Housefather explains that the prohibition on payments to egg donors, sperm donors and surrogates in the 2004 Assisted Human Reproduction Act has meant that many Canadians have only two choices: "to go abroad to become parents," or to accept that they will never have children.

We object to reproductive capitalism and to the conditions that encourage the commercialization of women's bodies. We believe that many agree with us, as Canadians generally believe that we should not pay people for their body parts. Think, for example, about blood donation for transfusion and organ donation for transplantation.

If we look to our neighbours to the south, we can see the consequences of normalizing payment for egg donation and surrogacy. In the United States, women with high grade-point averages or varsity athletes command higher

prices for their eggs than "lesser" female specimens. Placing a monetary value on women's eggs and reproductive capacity treats women like objects instead of subjects, and reinforces harmful characterizations of some bodies as more valuable than others.

We are also concerned that in focusing on the desires of those who want to have a child, we fail to consider the real-life experiences of women who participate in egg donation and surrogacy. What many want more than money is research to get good information about any long-term risks. They also want better counselling, independent legal advice and good follow-up care to be readily available.

Housefather argues that paying women will make egg donation and surrogacy more accessible. But accessible for whom? Ultimately, he is championing an expensive and ethically problematic solution to the challenges experienced by those who can afford to buy eggs and surrogacy services on the open market so that they can have the child they desire.

Our elected representatives should not be complaining about limited access to women's bodies. They should be looking for ways to promote and protect the interests of women who choose

to participate in assisted reproduction.

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Fear-mongering isn't productive

Re: "Pipeline spill scenario creates chills" (Montreal Gazette, March 11)

What about the possibility of a large airplane taking off from our airport and crashing into populated Place Ville Marie or a large high school? Or of an oil truck exploding in our Louis-Hippolyte LaFontaine Tunnel? Or of an ignited gas leak in the home next to yours? Or of a serial killer living in your condo complex? Or of an earthquake destroying major parts of our city? Can anyone be absolutely certain that none of these events cannot possibly occur? I think not.

Such possibilities amount to fear mongering and do not add anything positive to any discussion.

May we all have a beautiful and safe day today.

Robert Marcogliese, Montreal

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