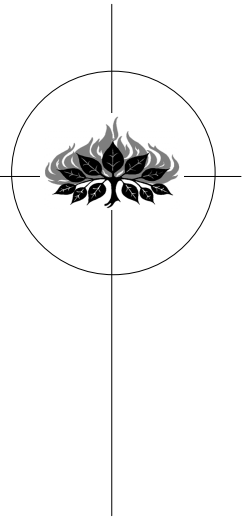


The Presbyterian Church in Canada L'Église presbytérienne au Canada



MODERATOR OF THE 139TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY
The Rev. Dr. David W.K. Sutherland, B.Comm., M.Div., Th.M., D.Min.

Monday, July 15, 2013

The Hon. Peter MacKay,
Minister of Justice and Attorney-General of Canada,
House of Commons,
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6

Dear Minister MacKay,

I bring you greetings on behalf of the 139th General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Canada which met in Toronto May 31 to June 3, 2013.

General Assembly received a report on Genetic Privacy. I am writing to you regarding matters raised in this report.

The mapping of the first human genome was an extraordinary scientific accomplishment and was a major breakthrough in science's quest to better understand the genetic basis for major diseases. This breakthrough may lead to new genetically based treatments and possibly cures for many major diseases. The cost of mapping the first human genome was in the range of \$ 3 billion. Today, the cost for full genome sequencing is about \$ 4,000. The cost continues to drop.

The computer and the internet have radically changed how information is produced, sourced, retrieved and disseminated. The Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada has recently stated that genetic privacy is one of its top priorities.

Federal privacy legislation was in place sometime before the first human genome was mapped. As more and more genetic information is stored in bio-banks or placed on the web, is the current federal privacy legislation adequate to protecting an individual's genetic privacy? Is there a need to develop specific legal safeguards to protect Canadians' genetic privacy?

There is no specific legislation in Canada prohibiting genetic discrimination. Are the relevant sections in the Human Rights Act (1985) adequate to prohibiting genetic discrimination or is there a need to introduce legislation tailored to new developments such as the mapping of the human genome?

I look forward to hearing from you. Rest assured of our continuing prayers as you assume the duties of your new appointment.

Yours sincerely,

The Rev. Dr. David Sutherland,
Moderator,
139th General Assembly,
The Presbyterian Church in Canada

Cc: Ms. Francoise Boivin, Justice Critic, NDP; The Hon. Irwin Cotler, Justice & Human Rights Critic, Liberal Party of Canada; Ms. Maria Mourani, Justice Critic, Bloc Quebecois; Ms. Elizabeth May, Leader, Green Party of Canada

Clerks of Assembly: The Rev. Stephen Kendall, The Rev. Donald Muir, The Rev. Dr. Tony Plomp