NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER
Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (http://ncronline.org)

Debate continues on Canadian motion to define when life begins

Isabella R. Moyer | Sep. 20, 2012 NCR Today

As a new session of Parliament opens in Canada, debate will continue on Motion 312 [1]. The motion, proposed by conservative Member of Parliament Stephen Woodworth, calls for the House of Commons to form a special committee to study the question of when human life begins. Article 223 (1) of the Criminal Code of Canada states, "A child becomes a human being within the meaning of this Act when it has completely proceeded, in a living state, from the body of its mother."

An article [2] in *The Catholic Register* further explains Woodworth's position:

> Woodworth said Motion 312 "has much more important consequences than the abortion issue." At stake is whether Canada has lost a consensus that the dignity and worth of every human being must be recognized, that rights are inalienable rather than granted by the government, that rights cannot be taken away through laws that deny basic human rights to a class of people by dehumanizing them and that laws must be honest, he said.

On Sept. 18, the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops released a statement [3] in support of Motion 312, inviting "all members of the Parliament of Canada to take into full account the sacredness of the unborn child and each human life." Also, about 60 high-profile groups and individuals have signed [4] The Declaration of Support for Parliamentary Study of Canada's Legal Definition of "Human Being."

Woodworth doesn't expect [5] Motion 312 to pass. There is little support from his own party, and Prime Minister Stephen Harper has gone on record stating he does not want to reopen the abortion debate and will not vote for the motion.

The second and final hour of debate will take place Friday with a vote scheduled for Wednesday.

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Links:
[1] http://www.parl.gc.ca/HousePublications/Publication.aspx?Language=E&DocId=5437818
[2] http://www.catholicregister.org/news/canada/item/15091-mp-woodworth-makes-final-pitch-on-motion-312
[3] http://www.cccb.ca/site/eng/media-room/statements-a-letters/3411-cccb-statement-regarding-motion-312
[4] http://prairiemessenger.ca/09_19_2012/CCNmotion_09_19_12.html
[5] http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/story/2012/09/17/pol-debate-definition-human-life-woodworth.html