Policy Department
College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario
80 College Street
Toronto, ON M5G 2E2

To: The Members of the Consultation Committee

I have read that the College is planning to revise the policy on Professional Obligations and Human Rights and that a number of physicians are concerned that the revised policy will force them to act against their conscience or beliefs. I am writing this letter in support of these physicians.

It has been my experience that in any organization, policies should be set by consensus and mutual agreement and that accommodation should be made for minority groups and for special cases and circumstances. Policies that fail to do this can lead to discord, antagonism, avoidance and evasion.

My understanding is that the problem centers around lines 156, 157 in the draft policy.

"Where physicians are unwilling to provide certain elements of care due to their moral or religious beliefs, an effective referral to another health care provider must be provided to the patient."

The last part of this sentence is too strong. It should be softened to

"...a referral to another health care provider may be provided to the patient."

A less coercive phrasing should not be objectionable to those physicians who wish to refer patients and at the same time should satisfy those physicians whose conscience or beliefs may not allow them to do so.