

Well educated, white grade A eggs for sale

Attractive, Caucasian females sought out for ova donations

BY KRISHNA LALBIHARIE

WINNIPEG (CUP) — An increasing number of reproductive clinics and infertile couples have been soliciting young Caucasian women in elite universities for the sale of human ova, prompting concerns about selective breeding and medical risks.

Some critics — including students, health professionals, biotechnologists and ethicists — are alarmed by the commercialization of gamete donation among young women and the preference for Caucasian donors. Many also worry about the invasiveness of egg retrieval procedures.

"They have turned [universities] into... meat market[s]," said Patricia Baird, a medical geneticist at the University of British Columbia.

Baird, who in 1993 chaired the Canadian Royal Commission on New Reproductive Technologies, says couples and fertility clinics are focusing advertisement efforts on universities because they exhibit a higher percentage of young, intelligent women than other sectors within society.

Baird says ova donation is worrisome because procedures for the harvesting of eggs incur potential medical risks. Donors must undergo a series of hormonal injections, and retrieval of ova from ovaries is often painful and extremely intrusive.

"There's a real difference between sperm and egg collection—young guys are ejaculating all the time anyway," Baird recently told *the Globe and Mail*. "Handing over your eggs is not a trivial procedure. It's one thing to take these risks because you want a child. It's quite another thing to do it for money."

The sale of ova is prohibited

in most countries. In response to the Royal Commission, the Canadian government developed legislation in 1996 to ban the sale, purchase or exchange of ova, sperm and gametes. But the legislation remains tabled in the House of Commons.

Fertility-related organizations admit many egg donors are young, white university-age women. The Infertility Awareness Association of Canada and the American Center for Surrogate Parenting and Egg Donation admit the majority of their candidates for egg donation are Caucasian women between the ages of 21 and 35, with a minimum of 13 years of formal education.

The fact most candidates are white, industry insiders say, doesn't mean fertility clinics don't want donors who aren't Caucasian. Commercial operators of egg donation are "simply responding to market demands," said a representative of the Infertility Awareness Association of Canada. Often, that market demand is communicated through ads in university newspapers. Student newspapers at the University of Toronto and York University in Canada, and Princeton and Harvard University in the U.S., are some of the ones that have run ads petitioning egg donors.

"You're going to get a better grade of person [at a university]," said one Toronto woman who advertised in the York University student newspaper, *the excalibur*. "I didn't want to get some addict off the street," she told *the Globe and*

Mail.

The editor of the paper that ran her ad says the ad was allowed because it didn't contravene the paper's guidelines prohibiting content that is racist, sexist, homophobic or genocidal in nature.

"We consider the student newspaper a vehicle for public debate," said Derek Chezzi, editor-in-chief of *the excalibur*. "This is an institution for higher learning, after all."

But while there may not be specific policies prohibiting non-Caucasian women from donating their ova, advertisements seem to want "upper-class, rich, white couples that are looking to have the perfect child," says Ruth Williams, co-ordinator of the University of Manitoba's women's centre.

Some ads for egg donors read like personal ads.

"My sister has completed her Ph.D. in Pharmacology... my brother holds a Ph.D. in Genetics... I have a B.A. in Music Engineering and Communications with a GPA of 3.25... couples please email me," reads the Website of one woman, a student at the University of Colorado. The woman uses her Website to advertise to prospective couples and fertility companies.

"[My education] has cost me a great deal of money and it isn't done yet. Egg donation would help me with my school expenses," she says.

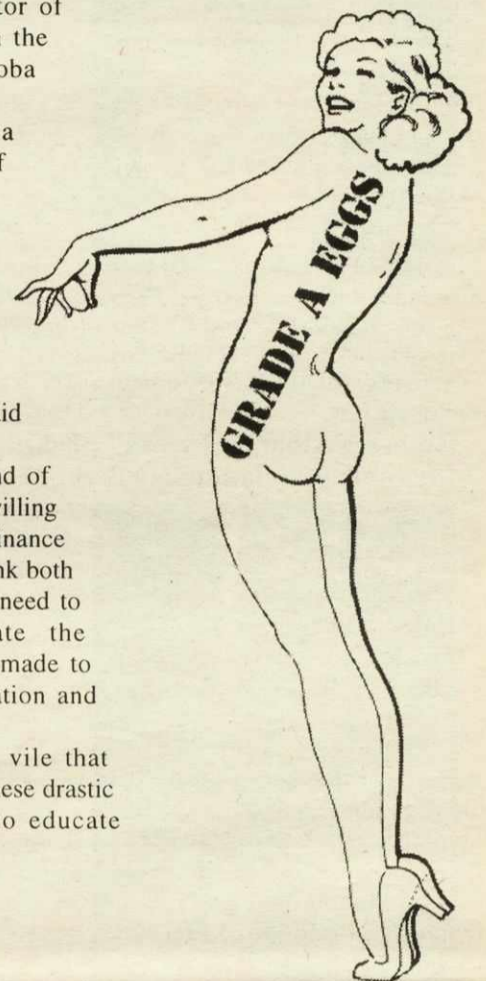
But having to harvest one's eggs as a means of financing higher

education is unacceptable, says Kelly Friesen, director of public relations with the University of Manitoba Student Union.

"As a representative of student interest, I'm horrified to think that some students would be put into such dire straits that a reasonable option to them is the selling of their ova," said Friesen.

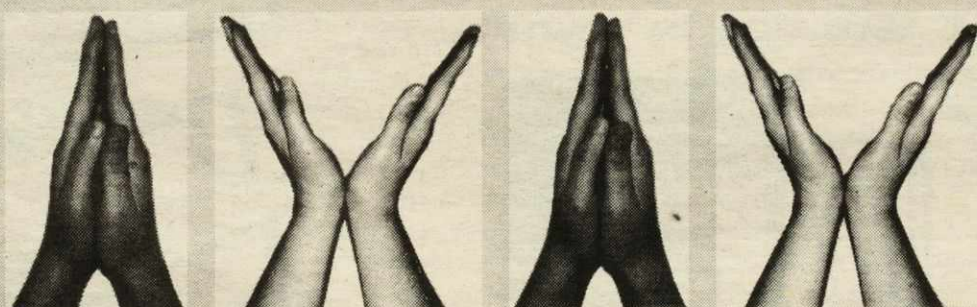
"If that's the kind of move that women are willing to make in order to finance [their education], I think both levels of government need to seriously re-evaluate the commitment they've made to post-secondary education and enhance it," she said.

"It's absolutely vile that women have to take these drastic measures in order to educate themselves."



"There's a real difference between sperm and egg collection - young guys are ejaculating all the time anyway"

The International Sign for Talking out of your Ass

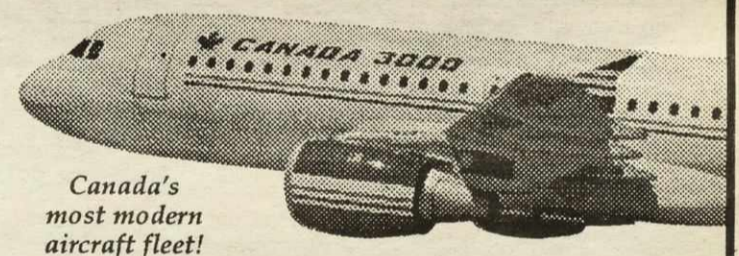


photos by Katie Teed

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FLIGHT SCHEDULE - HALIFAX DEPARTURES

OCTOBER 1998

TO	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT	SUN
VANCOUVER	18:45	16:10	18:45	13:55	10:35 ⁸	—	—
EDMONTON	—	16:10	—	—	10:35	—	—
CALGARY	18:45	—	18:45	13:55	—	—	—
TORONTO	15:35	14:35	11:45 ⁸	12:40 ⁴ 15:40 ⁶	10:20 ¹¹ 11:30 ⁴ 12:30 ² 23:35 ⁶	10:35 ⁵	—
ST. JOHN'S	—	19:55	—	18:35	—	—	—

¹Begins October 12 ⁴Ends October 11 ⁵Ends October 25 ⁶Week of October 5 only ⁸Week of October 26 only

AIRPORT STANDBY FARES: Are subject to available seats prior to departure. Passengers may register 2 1/2 hours prior to the scheduled departure of flight. Fares are subject to change without notice. Travel on any specific flight is not guaranteed. Payment (Cash or Credit Card only) must be made on departure. One way travel only. Schedule subject to change without notice.

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