

Legalized Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide:

What Would It Mean for You?

Over the next few months, the Canadian Parliament will discuss Bill C-384. This private member's bill seeking to legalize euthanasia and assisted suicide was introduced by MP Francine Lalonde of the Bloc Québécois.



Bill C-384 is not only for the terminally ill, it does not define "terminal illness"; a person could request euthanasia or assisted suicide right after being diagnosed and not be actively dying. Bill C-384 would also allow the killing of anyone 18 years old and over who requests it while in severe chronic mental or physical pain, or depression, **even if he or she has refused appropriate treatments.** Although medical practitioners must explain the consequences of this request and the available alternatives, they are not required to refer patients to a psychologist or palliative care specialist. So the bill would allow people to be killed even if they could have managed their pain with medication for many years.



Bill C-384 would allow people to be killed within two weeks if two "medical practitioners" confirm their condition in writing, and the person seems to understand his or her choice. The bill requires only two requests to die, more than 10 days apart, with the person merely "**appearing lucid.**"

- ➔ Bill C-384 endangers the sick, depressed, elderly, and disabled. It confirms the fears of the most vulnerable Canadians, those who may feel like a "burden" to others. Instead of protecting them, Bill C-384 opens the way to their elimination. **Many of the weakest members of society may feel pressured into a "duty to die."**
- ➔ Bill C-384 is not about compassion. **The truly compassionate act is to focus on providing the most vulnerable with proper care, effective pain control, along with social, emotional and spiritual support.** We should show special respect for the true human dignity of the suffering. We should also invest more in palliative care and in research and training in the area of pain management.
- ➔ Bill C-384 is not about "death with dignity." Dignity does not depend on health, lack of suffering, or being valued by society. **The life of every person has inherent worth and dignity that cannot be reduced or taken away by life's circumstances.**

What is euthanasia and assisted suicide?

Euthanasia is a deliberate act undertaken by one individual with the intention and result of ending the life of another to relieve that person's suffering. Assisted suicide is the act of intentionally killing oneself with the assistance of another who provides the knowledge, means or both.



It's my life. Can't I do what I want with it?

Rather than a "right to die," every person has a right to live until their natural death. We have a responsibility to love and support each other so that no one will ever feel as a burden and request euthanasia or assisted suicide.

What will happen if Bill C-384 becomes law?

We can expect a loss of trust between doctors and their patients, and between the vulnerable and the powerful in society. We can expect the sick, the disabled and the elderly to have good reason to fear going to hospitals and care-giving institutions.

We can expect people to be killed because they chose to die while depressed or temporarily in intense pain, instead of receiving proper medical attention.

We can expect a slippery slope like in the Netherlands where the legalization of euthanasia and assisted suicide has resulted in many abuses by doctors. In 2005, 550 Dutch citizens were killed by doctors without their consent (Netherlands Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport, 2007 *Evaluation of the Euthanasia Act*).

How can we stop Bill C-384?

- ❶ **Know the issues!** Understand the arguments, and know the responses!
- ❷ **Get involved!** Write to or visit your MP, write to newspapers, and call radio shows. Join initiatives organized by organizations favorable to life.
- ❸ **Mobilize others!**

For more information, please request our brochures, "Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide: Urgent Questions!" and "Living, Suffering and Dying... What For?"

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COLF is co-sponsored by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Supreme Council of the Knights of Columbus. It promotes respect for human life and dignity and the essential role of the family.

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