

Urgent Concerns for Catholic physicians, healthcare workers and facilities

Legalizing Euthanasia/Assisted Suicide

On June 17, 2016, euthanasia/assisted suicide became legal in Canada.

Members of the Coalition for HealthCARE and Conscience oppose any law legalizing assisted suicide as we see it leading down a dark path, which devalues the dignity that is present in every human life. Our government has now created a legal framework that allows someone to kill themselves or have others arrange or provide a lethal injection.

We remain deeply concerned about the vulnerable and those struggling with mental health issues, especially those who feel isolated and alone. Only 30% of Canadians have access to quality palliative (end of life) care. Canadians should be given options that ensure the effective medical control of pain and, more importantly, loving accompaniment as they approach their final days.

As of October 2016, we have already seen 374 Canadians die by lethal injection this year.

Why are doctors and health care workers concerned about this legislation?

Despite protections in the federal law, the Ontario College of Physicians and Surgeons requires physicians to provide an "effective referral" for euthanasia. Doctors and their faith communities consider this to be cooperation in evil and are prepared to leave the practice of medicine rather than act against their moral convictions. In addition, public groups are trying to force faith based health care facilities to allow this procedure to be performed on their premises. Globally, no foreign jurisdiction that has legalized euthanasia/assisted suicide forces health care workers, hospitals, nursing homes or hospices to act against their conscience or mission and values. Provinces across Canada have found a way to offer this protection yet Ontario will not budge.

Thousands of doctors do not support euthanasia/assisted suicide. They will not abandon their patients but simply ask that they not be forced to help facilitate their death. We need your help to ensure these health care workers and faith based facilities are protected.

What does the Catholic Church teach?

Life is a precious gift, to be cherished from the moment of conception to natural death. The Church fully supports the right people clearly have to accept, to refuse and/or discontinue the use of life-sustaining treatment and to allow death to occur.

Who We Are

The Coalition for HealthCARE and Conscience is a group of faith-based and professional organizations, including 110 health care facilities (with almost 18,000 care beds and 60,000 staff) and more than 5,000 physicians across Canada, who are deeply concerned about physician-assisted suicide, euthanasia and related legislation (Bill C-14). Members of the Coalition include: Catholic Organization for Life and Family, Canadian Physicians for Life, Christian Medical and Dental Society, Canadian Catholic Bioethics Institute, Canadian Federation of Catholic Physicians' Societies, Archdiocese of Vancouver, Archdiocese of Toronto, the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada and the Salvation Army.

TAKE ACTION TODAY!

1 LEARN MORE ABOUT THE ISSUE

Go to www.CanadiansforConscience.ca and find out what the legalization of physician-assisted suicide means for the vulnerable, health care workers and institutions.

2 CONTACT THE ONTARIO GOVERNMENT

Visit www.CanadiansforConscience.ca and use the tools there to write your elected member of provincial parliament. You may also send a letter by post (no postage required) or email. See reverse for a sample to guide you.

3 TALK TO YOUR FAMILY AND FRIENDS

It's not easy to have a difficult conversation about death and dying. Share your letter or this publication with your family and or friends to help raise awareness.

“Euthanasia and assisted suicide are serious threats to families worldwide.”

Pope Francis, April 2016

Please contact your Member of Provincial Parliament to urge them to:

① Provide protection for doctors, health care workers and health care facilities who oppose euthanasia on moral grounds, ensuring that they do not have to provide or refer for euthanasia/assisted suicide.

② Ensure that Ontario provides the same protection to health care workers and facilities available in other Canadian provinces and jurisdictions worldwide that have legalized euthanasia/assisted suicide.

Please address your letter to your local Member of Provincial Parliament (MPP). You can find contact information for your MPP by visiting www.bit.ly/findlocalmpp

You are also asked to cc the Minister of Health:

Hon. Dr. Eric Hoskins
Minister of Health and
Long-Term Care
10th Floor, Hepburn Block
80 Grosvenor St.
Toronto, ON M7A 2C4
ehoskins.mpp@liberal.ola.org

****No postage is required when sending mail to elected officials.***

Sample Letter to Legislators

Feel free to use this sample letter but personalize wherever possible.

Dear Member of Provincial Parliament

As a constituent, I am writing to you recognizing that Bill C-14 (federal legislation) has now passed; however, doctors and health care providers in Ontario are still being placed in an impossible situation.

Despite language in Bill C-14 that suggests no health care professional should be compelled to provide or assist in providing these procedures, the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario (CPSO) has adopted a protocol that requires an “effective referral” for what is now being called “Medical Aid in Dying”.

It is extremely important for elected officials in Ontario to understand the position the “effective referral” requirement puts doctors in this province.

Objecting physicians are not able to participate in euthanasia for reasons of conscience, ethics, religious convictions or the Hippocratic Oath. Many are members of religious traditions that consider referral of any kind as forms of participation in euthanasia.

The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms protects Canadian citizens against being forced by the state to do things against their conscience or religious convictions. There are ways to respect patient decision making while also respecting the rights of caregivers not to get involved. No foreign jurisdiction that allows euthanasia requires physicians to refer or requires faith based facilities to allow this practice on their premises. Other provinces across Canada have adopted protocols that respect the right of health care professionals and facilities to follow their consciences.

Objecting caregivers and facilities are motivated by their concern for the well-being of the patient. I would like to go to one of these doctors and if they are forced out of Canadian health care, I will not have this option. It also threatens their ability to practice medicine in our province.

I would ask you to make every effort to raise this issue with your colleagues and the CPSO as soon as possible.

Thank you,

cc. Dr. Eric Hoskins, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care