



**Statement from Cardinal Thomas Collins, Archbishop of Toronto
re Introduction of Bill C-7
(An Act to amend the Criminal Code (medical assistance in dying))**

The federal government has introduced new legislation expanding the eligibility criteria for euthanasia. The inaccurate term, medical assistance in dying (MAiD), is currently used to describe what this law would allow, but this process is more accurately called euthanasia or assisted suicide. Pain medication and other resources and procedures can be used effectively to medically assist people who are dying, but that is not what MAiD means. It means giving a lethal injection to people who are not dying, so that they will die.

Those who oppose euthanasia expressed concern in 2016, when it was first legalized, that once the state legally provided death for some, it would only be a matter of time before the criteria for that would be expanded. This was dismissed as a slippery slope argument; we were told that “safeguards” would protect the most vulnerable. Now, less than four years later, we are far down the slope, and the criteria for euthanasia have been radically expanded.

There is no longer a requirement that the person receiving euthanasia be terminally ill. Under this legislation, any serious incurable illness, disease, or disability would render one eligible for euthanasia. Additionally, without any further study or direction from the courts, the new legislation would legalize euthanasia where consent is obtained by an advance directive. This is a new chapter of death on demand. Canada has cast aside restrictions at a far quicker pace than any other jurisdiction in the world that has legalized euthanasia.

As our legislators and country consider the legislation presented this week in Parliament, we should be mindful of the following:

- In 2016, the government indicated that before any new legislation would be introduced, there would be a thorough five-year review of the impact of euthanasia in Canada – no such review has taken place. Yet the government moves forward without such critical analysis, even though it is reported that since 2016 at least 13,000 people have died from lethal injection.
- Where is the political will to push forward on palliative care for all Canadians? Only 30 per cent of Canadians have access to quality palliative care even though we know that pain and loneliness are among the biggest fears of those who are suffering. Palliative care can address these issues. If all Canadians had access to quality palliative care, fewer would seek lethal injection. Instead of developing an overall culture of care, we are rushing towards death on demand. The same



doctors who are trying to care for their patients will now be called on to endorse euthanasia for them.

- Under the proposed legislation, disabled Canadians with no terminal illness will now be eligible for lethal injection. People with disabilities already face substantial challenges relating to employment, housing, appropriate medical care and support. Their lives matter. They should never be seen as a burden to our society. We should be alarmed that those who have struggled for decades to be treated with equality may well be pressured, whether from family, friends or even their own health care professionals, to “ease their burden” and end their lives. These people need assisted living, not assisted death.

I invite all Canadians concerned about this legislation to contact their Member of Parliament to voice their concerns. We should also take time to be truly present to those who may feel that they are on the margins in our community. Those who feel that their life no longer has value must be assured by all of us that this is absolutely not the case – there is dignity within each human life, not just when we are young, healthy and able, but even more so, when we are fragile and vulnerable.

It is up to every Canadian to foster a culture of care and love for one another. The answer is not assisted death in its many forms; it is accompanying our family, our friends and even strangers to assist them in life, recognizing the inherent dignity of every person.

Cardinal Thomas Collins
Archbishop of Toronto
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