

Urgent Concerns for Christian 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 it devalues the dignity that is present in every human life. This new legal framework allows someone to request assistance to kill themselves, by a prescription for a lethal substance or administration of a lethal injection by a doctor or nurse practitioner.

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, 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 or assisted suicide. Doctors and their faith communities consider this to be participation in killing their patients and are prepared to leave the practice of medicine rather than act against their moral convictions. In addition, it is unclear whether faith based nursing homes and long term care facilities will be required to allow these procedures 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.

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 health care workers and faith-based facilities are protected.

What does our Christian faith teach us?

Life is a precious gift, to be cherished from the moment of conception to natural death. We recognize the right to refuse and/or discontinue the use of life-sustaining treatment and to allow death to occur naturally. Refusing treatment is fundamentally different than intentionally ending someone's life.

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!

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.

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 or email. See reverse for a sample to guide you.

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

“The Christian belief that life is a gift from God and has inherent worth and dignity regardless of someone’s abilities or capacities leads us to promote and protect it.”

Bruce Clemenger, President, The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada

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

1. Provide conscience 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 level of conscience protection to health care workers and facilities that is 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 send a copy to 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

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 because doctors and health care providers in Ontario are being placed in an impossible situation by the current policy of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario.

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 doctors are placed in by the “effective referral” requirement 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 to be a form of participation in euthanasia.

The Canadian *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* protects Canadian citizens against being forced by the state to act against their conscience or religious convictions. There are ways to respect patient decision-making while also respecting the rights of caregivers to not participate against their deeply held beliefs.

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. Will the same provisions be provided in Ontario?

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. This policy 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