

Euthanasia, (so-called) mercy killing, and Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD)

Background Information

On 24 February 2020, Canada's federal government introduced Bill C-7, claiming it was in response to the Quebec Superior Court decision striking down the requirement in the euthanasia law that a person's "natural death must be reasonably foreseeable" to die by MAiD. Due to the COVID-19 crisis and then the prorogation of parliament, Bill C-7 was re-introduced on 5 October 2020.

If Bill C-7 was limited to the court mandated changes, one would understand the need for this legislation. Bill C-7 expands Canada's euthanasia law far beyond Justice Baudouin's Sept. 2019 court decision, a decision that should have been appealed by the government.

It is also concerning that Bill C-14, the bill that legalized euthanasia in Canada, legislated that a Review of the law be done. Bill C-14 stated:

10 (1) At the start of the fifth year after the day on which this Act receives royal assent, the provisions enacted by this Act are to be referred to the committee of the Senate, of the House of Commons or of both Houses of Parliament that may be designated or established for the purpose of reviewing the provisions.

(2) The committee to which the provisions are referred is to review them and the state of palliative care in Canada and submit a report to the House or Houses of Parliament of which

it is a committee, including a statement setting out any changes to the provisions that the committee recommends.

Bill C-14 was passed on June 17, 2016, therefore the review the law was to begin on June 17, 2020. The fact that the government prorogued parliament on August 18 does not negate the fact that the legislated review has not begun and yet Bill C-7 significantly expands euthanasia in Canada without reviewing the current law.

It is inconceivable that parliament pass Bill C-7 without first fulfilling its legislative requirement to first review the law. The purpose for the review is to examine the euthanasia law, not to simply review further expansions to the law, such as euthanasia for mental illness, euthanasia for children and advanced requests for euthanasia.

*The fact that the government, through Bill C-7, is expanding Canada's euthanasia law beyond the parameters of the Quebec court decision without first reviewing the law, as legislated, is simply wrong. **Bill C-7 must be defeated.***

If the government wants to exclude euthanasia for mental illness, Bill C-7 would need to define psychological suffering in a manner that excludes euthanasia for mental illness. Bill C-7 permits anyone who believes that their physical or psychological suffering is intolerable to qualify for death by lethal injection, even if effective medical treatments for their condition exists, only requiring a 90-day waiting period¹.

In September 2019, Justice Baudouin, struck down the requirement in Canada's euthanasia law that a person's natural death be reasonably foreseeable and the court gave the federal government six months to amend the law based on the Truchon court decision. The government did not appeal the decision. On February 24, the federal government introduced Bill C-7 in response to the Quebec Superior Court decision striking

¹ <http://alexschadenberg.blogspot.com/2020/10/the-canadian-government-is-expanding.html>

down the requirement in the law that a person's "natural death must be reasonably foreseeable" before qualifying for death by lethal injection. Due to the COVID-19 crisis and the prorogation of parliament, Bill C-7 was re-introduced on 5 Oct. 2020.

What changes does Bill C-7 make to the law?

1. Bill C-7 removes the requirement in the law that a person's natural death must be reasonably foreseeable to qualify for death by lethal injection. Therefore, people who are not terminally ill can die by euthanasia. The Quebec court decision only required this amendment to the law, but Bill C-7 went further.

2. Bill C-7 permits a doctor or nurse practitioner to lethally inject a person who is incapable of consenting, if that person was previously approved for assisted death. This contravenes the Supreme Court of Canada Carter decision which stated that only competent people could die by euthanasia.

3. Bill C-7 waives the ten-day waiting period when a person is deemed to be "terminally ill." A person could request death by euthanasia on a "bad day" and die the same day. Studies prove that the "will to live" fluctuates.

4. Bill C-7 creates a two-track law. A person who is deemed to be terminally ill would have no waiting period while a person who is not terminally ill will have a 90-day waiting period before being killed by lethal injection.

If Bill C-7 is passed, a future court decision will strike down the 90 day waiting period for people whose natural death is not reasonably foreseeable as it would be argued that this provision represents an inequality in the law.

5. Bill C-7 falsely claims to prevent euthanasia for people with mental illness. The euthanasia law permits MAiD for people who are physically or psychologically suffering that is intolerable to the person and that cannot be relieved in a way that the person considers acceptable." However, mental illness, which is not defined in the law, is considered a form of psychological suffering.

Bill C-7 permits anyone who believes that their physical or psychological suffering to be intolerable to qualify for death by lethal injection, even if effective medical treatments for their condition exists, with a 90-day waiting period.

The Canadian government must reject Bill C-7 and begin the promised 5-year review of the euthanasia law with an open view to what is actually happening rather than continuing to expand euthanasia, making Canada the most permissive euthanasia regime in the world.

Bill C-7 must not permit MAiD when a person has become incompetent, even if the person was previously approved.

Bill C-7 must include protection for healthcare professionals religious and conscience rights.

Bill C-7 must not eliminate the 10-day waiting period.

Bill C-7 must define “psychological suffering” to prevent euthanasia for mental illness alone.

Bill C-7 must define the phrase, natural death is reasonably foreseeable².

Contact our Member of Parliament and say that you oppose Bill C-7. A model letter is prepared (enclosed) for you to type or handwrite or modify as you wish. Please ensure respect for our MP, and, should you choose to inform that you are a parishioner here, ensure that your expressions are worthy of our Parliament, our parish, our parishioners, and our Lord.

“This day I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live” (Deut. 30:19)

Further resources:

Canadian Hospice Palliative Care Association and Canadian Society of Palliative Care Physicians (Joint Position + References):

² <https://alexschadenberg.blogspot.com/2020/10/epc-stop-bill-c-7-from-expanding.html>

<https://www.chpca.ca/news/chpca-and-cspcp-joint-call-to-action/>

Government of Canada Annual Report on MAiD:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/medical-assistance-dying-annual-report-2019.html>

National Review (W.J. Smith, Jan 2020):

<https://www.nationalreview.com/2020/01/euthanasia-canada-government-pressures-hospice-to-kill/>

Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops:

https://www.cccb.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/CCCB_response_to_Bill_C-7_-_EN.pdf

https://www.cccb.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/MAID_Religious-Leaders-in-Canada-oppose-Bill-C-7_EN_FINAL.pdf

Catholic Register:

<https://www.catholicregister.org/item/32252-maid-nothing-less-than-murder-faith-leaders>



Date

Dear Miss Khalid,

I hope this letter finds you well and staying safe amid this ongoing pandemic. I write as a constituent to express my *deep concern / strong reservations* at the government's rush to expand assisted suicide and euthanasia (so-called 'medical assistance in dying'). I object in the strongest possible terms to having our government participate in the active taking of the lives of our fellow citizens, even those who wish to end theirs. State sanctioned killing – against the wishes of many Canadians – makes us all participants in the taking of human life, which is always to be honoured and treasured, not cut short, especially as a cost saving measure for our governments.

The ongoing pandemic has demonstrated the woeful neglect of our seniors' homes and hospitals (for which all levels of government share responsibility). Our seniors and sick, especially the frail and suffering, need quality, compassionate and affirming care. Much has been promised by different governments in regard to the provision of quality palliative care for those who seek it, yet precious little has been done. Should we not offer life-giving care rather than death, at least as an option? We need a government that will make options available for life, love, pain management, in addition to housing and healthcare services, for those who may be most likely to feel – because of a lack of love and a lack of realistic options – that they are better off dead... or that their country would be better off with them dead.

I would also respectfully insist that any legislation specifically make provision for healthcare workers who, for reasons of religion, conscience or respectful objection, do not wish to participate in, or refer patients for, euthanasia. Freedom of both conscience and religion are guaranteed in our Charter of Rights and Freedoms, indeed they are the first freedom so recognized: "the right to declare religious beliefs openly and without fear of hindrance or reprisal". Those who serve us in the healthcare profession must not be compelled to choose between their respective conscience / religion, and the forced killing of Canadians.

I am grateful for your reading my letter, and for all you do to represent us in Parliament. *Know that I feel strongly about this, to the point that a potential future vote for you depends on how you represent us on this issue.*

With every good wish, I am

Yours sincerely,

Signature

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