

Declaration of Hope

A Letter to all Canadian Parliamentarians

We believe that legalizing euthanasia and/or assisted suicide is bad public policy and should be rejected by every Canadian legislature.

To legalize euthanasia and/or assisted suicide would enable one citizen to directly and intentionally cause the death of another citizen or be involved with causing that death. Canada must not allow its citizens to be involved with causing the death of other Canadian citizens. We understand that the most tragic cases will dominate the public discussion, but the issues must be considered based on how it will affect society as a whole.

Euthanasia and assisted suicide are not socially acceptable responses to terminal or incurable illness or chronic conditions. Changing the law may result in some people feeling pressured and thereby consider themselves or their loved ones as 'better-off-dead'. Some people will feel obliged to justify why they want to continue treatment. For many, including attending physicians, euthanasia and assisted suicide would become the unspoken, but ever present, question resulting in a subtle, negative change to the doctor-patient relationship. Will this result in a "duty to die"?

Euthanasia and assisted suicide pose a threat to the equality of persons. The lives of some in our community will be considered — "not worth living". Among those at greatest risk are the elderly, the lonely, those living with disability, those experiencing chronic illness and those with limited access to good medical care. Maintaining the current laws protects all Canadians equally.

Older Canadians are not a problem to be rid of — they're a generation to be honored and cared for. Elder Abuse has become a significant problem in Canada. We cannot ignore the possibility that dependent elderly people may be coerced into euthanasia or assisted suicide. We cannot put older Canadians at risk by creating new paths to elder abuse.

Canada must not place the lives of citizens at risk. Legislators need to apply the precautionary principle: the higher the risk — the higher the burden of proof on those proposing legislation. The risk of abuse cannot be eliminated.

Legalizing euthanasia and/or assisted suicide is a recipe for abuse. So-called 'safeguards' are an illusion because they are unable to prevent the potential for coercion and abuse.

All Canadians should have access to quality pain control — no matter where we live. Pain control and palliative medicine should be given a higher priority in medical training so that every Canadian can benefit.

Being involved in one's health care plan and making informed choices are vitally important to a patient's sense of well being. Euthanasia and assisted suicide would weaken the autonomy of patients, reducing their choices about their care and symptom management. Euthanasia and assisted suicide could be increasingly adopted as the easier option to the exclusion of genuine patient centred care.

We respectfully ask you in every instance, to firmly oppose euthanasia and assisted suicide legislation.