



Euthanasia Prevention Coalition

NEWSLETTER

Number 108

May 2010

Bill C-384 defeated by a margin of 228 to 59

Bill C-384 was soundly defeated after more than a year of lobbying by EPC and other groups who were working with us. Lalonde introduced C-384 in May 2009 with it receiving the first hour of debate in October 2009.

Lalonde then traded-backwards 3 times in the order of precedence to delay the second hour of debate and vote on C-384.

In December 2009, Prime Minister Harper prorogued parliament which caused C-384 to revert back to requiring a first and second hour of debate.

On March 16, C-384 had its first hour of debate and on April 20 it had its second hour of debate with the second-

reading vote on Wednesday April 21.

Bill C-384 Vote Statistics:

Yes votes – 59

Bloc 43, Lib 8, NDP 5, CPC 2, Independent 1

Laurence Cannon & Josée Verner CPC voted Yes

No votes – 228

CPC 139, Lib 57, NDP 30, Bloc 2

G rard Asselin & Robert Bouchard Bloc voted No

Ken Dryden (Lib), Ujjal Dosanjh (Lib) asked to be moved from the YES to the NO. The house refused.

Assisted Suicide Push Back Seminar

Seattle Washington - June 5, 2010

The Euthanasia Prevention Coalition, True Compassion Advocates, Physicians for Compassionate Care, Compassionate Health Care Network & the Euthanasia Prevention Coalition - BC are co-hosting an educational seminar on the assisted suicide statutes in Washington, Oregon and Montana.

The Assisted Suicide Push-Back Seminar will update the participants on the status in Oregon, Washington, and Montana and discuss future directions for challenging assisted suicide.

The seminar will be at the Radisson Airport Hotel - Seattle-Tacoma.

The Assisted Suicide Seminar room rate is \$99.00 per night. Call the hotel at 206-244-6666.

Date: Saturday, June 5, 2010, Time: 9 am - 5 pm.

Cost: \$99 Regular; \$69 Students or People with disabilities.

We will also examine how Compassion & Choices is working to change healthcare options in California and throughout the United States.

We are convinced that by working together we can effectively push-back the euthanasia lobby

For those who cannot attend the Assisted Suicide Push-Back seminar, please consider making a donation of \$69 to enable a student or a person with a disability to attend.

EPC AGM and Strategy Meeting

June 19, 2010

EPC is hosting its annual general meeting and strategy meeting on Saturday, June 19, at the Best Western - Toronto Airport, 5825 Dixie Rd Mississauga.

Work with us to build a strategy to Turn the Tide on the issues of Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide in Canada. We are convinced that we can create a "Made in Canada" solution to these issues.

The strategy meeting will include presentations and open discussion forums. We will examine the direction of the parliamentary committee and learn about Elder Abuse.

The meeting will begin at 10 am and end at 4 pm. Join us for dinner afterwards.

The cost is \$50 per person which covers the cost of food and the meeting room.

Book your room for \$85 per night. Call the Best Western at: 905-670-8180 and state that you are attending the Euthanasia Prevention Coalition meeting.

Bill C-384 - Second hour of debate

The second hour of debate on Bill C-384 began with a speech by **Mauril Bélanger** (Lib, Ottawa-Vanier).



Bélanger explained that he was going to vote in favour of C-384 for several reasons. First, he wanted further debate on the issues of euthanasia and assisted suicide. Second, he wanted the definitions of euthanasia and assisted suicide to be clarified.

He then referred to the confusion that was caused by the Quebec College of Physicians who equated euthanasia with the removal of life-support, or with the use of large doses of opiates to kill pain.

Bélanger then explained that he opposed euthanasia but that he wanted the option of assisted suicide available to him, if necessary, at some point in the future.

He continued by urging parliamentary hearings on the issues and he suggested that support for C-384 would give parliament an opportunity to seek input from Canadians while creating an open debate on the topic.



The next speaker to C-384 was **Bill Siksay** (NDP, Burnaby—Douglas) Siksay began by stating that he would be voting in favour of C-384.

Siksay began by agreeing with a letter from a constituent that stated: “There are many members of our community who live with disabilities, with terminal illness, with depression, and in various stages of physical or mental decline. They suffer and must not be pressured into feeling an obligation to die because they are burdens to others. They have a right to proper and adequate treatment, pain management, and compassionate end of life care. Euthanasia and assisted

suicide, disguised as pain relief and meant to kill, have no place as optional treatment plans.”

Siksay continued by speaking about Sue Rodriguez. During the Rodriguez case, Siksay stated that he was working for Svend Robinson, the former NDP MP who was with Rodriguez when she died. He received hundreds of congratulatory phone calls when Robinson involved himself in the death of Sue Rodriguez.

Siksay also quoted Catholic theologian Daniel Maguire as saying: “...If however, you grant that it is natural for humans to deliberate about alternative possibilities and to pursue that course which commends itself to their reason, then death by choice can be discussed. It could in fact be seen as quite natural to humans whose distinctive dignity is their capacity for choice”

Siksay concluded by saying: “I am glad Parliament is finally debating this issue. I will be voting for this bill, and I hope it will proceed to committee where it can be studied in detail, where witnesses can be heard on its provisions and where improvements can be made as appropriate”



The next member of parliament to speak to Bill C-384 was **Nicole Demers** (BQ, Laval) who stated that she would be voting in favour of Bill C-384.

Demers explained that her experience as a volunteer at the Sésame AIDS hospice in the early 80’s influenced her understanding of dying.

She then spoke about her grandmother who died a few years ago in a hospital. She said her mother had been a strong lady throughout her life. She then inferred that the doctors had been giving her grandmother morphine in order to shorten her final days.

She then stated: “I think doctors would also be relieved to finally have

legislation that allows them to end people’s suffering, without facing any accusations.”

Demers concluded by stating: “They should be able to say they want to die with dignity and ask for help in that regard.”



After three MPs spoke in favour of Bill C-384, the next speaker was **Tim Uppal** (CPC, Edmonton—Sherwood Park,) who spoke against C-384.

Uppal stated: “This subject is a very difficult and sensitive one. It touches on the matter of medical ethics and the criminal law. The bill proposes that doctors be authorized to intentionally and actively terminate the life of a patient on his or her request. Under the current criminal law, such an act constitutes murder, or if the act itself, which causes death, is carried out by the patient himself or herself, it constitutes assisted suicide.

I do not support the general principle behind the bill. I do not believe doctors should be given the power to end a human life in this way. Bill C-384 offers death as a solution to pain and suffering. I do not believe that this is the right solution for Canadians.”

Uppal also stated: “Furthermore, the breadth of the proposed amendments is not limited to those who suffer from severe physical illness but also mental illness. On this point, serious concerns have been expressed by several hon. members on how the bill includes a number of vague terms that have not been defined, terms such as severe physical or mental pain, or while appearing to be lucid but left undefined.”

Uppal opposes bill C-384 but he also made it clear that he opposes euthanasia and assisted suicide in general.



The next speaker in parliament was **Michael Savage** (Lib, Dartmouth—Cole Harbour) who spoke against C-384.

Savage began his speech by saying: “I want to say at the outset that I will not be voting for this bill.

I do not support this bill and I do not support its intent.”

Savage spoke about his parents who both died from cancer. His father was able to first fight his cancer and went into remission, but a little more than a year later the cancer returned. Soon after his mother was diagnosed with cancer.

Both of his parents died at home.

He then stated: “However, I do not believe that we needed this legislation to allow my parents to have control of their death. To go to a place that they were ready to go to was a decision that they made, were comfortable making and were able to make under the laws that existed and under what they considered to be the God that they were prepared to join.”

In other words, Savage said that it is not necessary to legalize euthanasia and assisted suicide in Canada.

Savage spoke on behalf of the disability community by stating: “I also do not like this bill because a number of people I represent in my capacity as the critic for human resources, particularly in the disability community, are very concerned about this bill. They do not know exactly where it will lead.”

Savage concluded by stating: “My view comes from my personal experience and my concern for people who are concerned that this bill might impact negatively upon their lives. For those reasons, I cannot support this bill”

The next speaker in parliament was **Jim Maloway** (NDP, Elmwood—Transcona).

Maloway began his talk by stating: “Up to two or three years ago, I, too, like other members here, would have advocated for this type of bill thinking that it was a positive solution, but after

my experience, which almost mirrors that of the previous member, of having had two parents who both had cancer at the same time, I came to the conclusion that this was not the way to proceed.”



Maloway then spoke about how he shared the same concerns as his colleague Joe Comartin.

Maloway continued by speaking in favour of increasing resources for hospice/palliative care in Canada. He said: The

last thing we want is for people to feel they do not want to be a burden on their family any more and do not want to deal with pressure that they think is there. Maybe the pressure is not there, but they imagine it is. ... To me, it is a negative to be entertaining the idea that assisted suicide is an option.

He explained that he also shared the concerns of the disability community.

He concluded by stating that we need to have palliative care available to all Canadians so that the only choice they will seek is good care.



The next speaker to the bill was **Charlie Angus** (NDP, Timmins—James Bay) who opposed the bill.

Angus began with a personal story. He stated that he had spent the last three weeks with his father who is in palliative

care. He said: “I want to say on the record that the palliative care that exists in this country is second to none.”

He then stated: “It is possible to do it without taking the option of saying we have to go the assisted suicide route. I understand why people might believe that is an option, but I do not believe it is the option we should be taking as a society. To take that position and for us to vote on this in the House of Commons means more than making a statement. We have to provide the resources necessary so that our medical systems and

our families have the support they need. Otherwise we will be leaving the sick, the suffering and the dying in a situation in which they should not be left.”



The debate about Bill C-384 ended with a speech by **Francine Lalonde** (BQ, La Pointe-de-l'Île). She began her speech by stating: “palliative care and my bill on the right to die with dignity are not mutually exclusive, but

complementary.”

Lalonde then stated: “I could quote Justice Cory, who also says that section 7 of the charter gives Canadians the constitutional right to life, liberty and security of the person. This provision emphasizes the dignity inherent in human existence. Death is an integral part of life and as such is therefore entitled to the constitutional protection provided by section 7. A person should have the right to choose their own death.”

Lalonde then spoke about her own suffering. “I can tell you that when I wrote that, I did not know what unbearable pain was. Now I do and I have learned that medicine, with all its progress, can only provide help with side effects such as hallucinations or other terrible effects to the body. We have to have the right to choose. I am speaking on behalf of the vulnerable. They are the ones who need this type of legislation the most because only this type of legislation will allow them to be the people they choose to be. There are currently many places where people can die and with all the instruments available to doctors, it is possible to help people die without them having to ask.”

Lalonde concluded by asking members of parliament to vote for Bill C-384 and send it into committee.

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Parliamentary Committee on Palliative and Compassionate Care

April 21 was not only significant for the overwhelming defeat of Bill C-384 (228 to 59) but it also featured the press conference by the newly formed - Parliamentary Committee on Palliative and Compassionate Care.

The founding committee members are: Harold Albrecht (CPC, Kitchener-Conestoga); Kelly Block (CPC, Saskatoon-Rosetown-Biggar); Joe Comartin (NDP, Windsor-Tecumseh); Michelle Simson (Lib, Scarborough Southwest); Frank Valeriote (Lib, Guelph);

The Palliative and Compassionate Care Committee (PCPCC) is an ad-hoc committee whose membership is open to any legislator who shares the pressing concerns about the present levels of care available to an aging society and people with disabilities. PCPCC will pre-occupy itself with a series of challenges that include:

1. A critical nationwide shortage of expertise and material resources in the fields of palliative, hospice, and home care;
2. Suicide prevention, pain control and the implications of an ongoing mental health crisis;
3. Elder abuse and;
4. Disability issues and concerns.

The PCPCC committee held its inaugural Press Conference at 1:15 pm in the Charles Lynch Room - Centre Block.

Sun Media reporter, Christina Spencer reported on the Press Conference in an article that was published in the Toronto Sun on April 22 by stating: Spurred by a private member's bill that supported assisted suicide, five MPs

from three federal parties said Wednesday they'll band together to work on improving palliative and elder care, and will ask other MPs to join them.

The assisted suicide bill, introduced by Bloc Quebecois MP Francine Lalonde, was defeated Wednesday evening on second reading, but NDP MP Joe Comartin said politicians needed to do more than just deal with that bill.

It became quite clear that we couldn't simply oppose the bill," Comartin said. "We had to move beyond that to actually come up with specific policies that were going to address the issue of suicide."

For the five — Comartin, Tories Harold Albrecht and Kelly Block, and Liberals Michelle Simson and Frank Valeriote — that means studying palliative care, hospices, home care, suicide prevention, elder abuse and treatment of the disabled.

They said they will form a non-partisan, ad hoc parliamentary committee and invite MPs from all parties, including the Bloc Quebecois, to join.

The group plans to hold hearings, do research and compile work already done by other experts in hopes of producing recommendations by the end of the current parliamentary session.

When someone's experiencing depression, discouragement, they don't need someone coming along to offer them a so-called easy way out that is irreversible," Albrecht said.

Lalonde's bill, defeated by a vote of 228 to 59, would have allowed a medical practitioner to help someone die if they were in severe physical or mental pain or

Media Release

April 21, 2010

Bill C-384, the private members bill that would have legalized euthanasia and assisted suicide in Canada was strongly defeated by a vote of 228 to 59.

We would like to thank every member of parliament who voted against Bill C-384. We would also like to thank all of our supporters who made this victory possible. Months of work have resulted in an incredible victory. But the battle is not over.

We are working to turn the debate on this issue to a debate on how Canadians can live with dignity.

We recognize that many people have raised legitimate concerns.

It is our goal to work with members of parliament and other Canadian leaders to identify ways to:

- improve hospice/palliative care throughout Canada,
- change attitudes and improve services for people with disabilities,
- institute an effective national suicide prevention strategy,
- promote programs that identify and eliminate the scourge of elder abuse.

We must continue to build a nation that upholds the dignity of all its citizens.

We must continue to create a paradigm that protects all Canadians, including its most vulnerable.

We reject the concept that killing can be the answer to problems that are properly solved by a caring society.

Contact the Euthanasia Prevention Coalition for comment at: 1-877-439-3348 or info@epcc.ca

William Melchert-Dinkel charged in the death of Nadia Kajouji

William Melchert-Dinkel, a Minnesota nurse, has been charged by police for counseling Nadia Kajouji, who committed suicide after establishing a suicide pact with Melchert-Dinkel.

He was also charged in the death of Mark Dry Deborah Chevalier, Kajouji's mother, questioned why Canadian authorities had not charged Melchert-Dinkel and sought his extradition.

Chevalier has now started an online petition with the hope that the Ottawa police force will still bring charges against Melchert-Dinkel.