



1700 DEMONSTRATE IN SPRINGTIME MARCH

By Georges Buscemi

Nearly 2000 people converged on the Quebec Capital on a brilliant spring Saturday afternoon to March against a government plan to legalise euthanasia in the province. Called the “Springtime March,” the event attracted euthanasia opponents from all corners of the province to protest the Parti Québécois government’s proposal to allow “medical aid in dying” –the direct and intentional killing of a patient—under certain conditions. At the beginning of the year, junior minister Veronique Hivon indicated that she would table a bill to legalize the deadly practise before the province’s parliament adjourned for the summer.

The “Springtime Marchers” assembled on the historic Plains of Abraham, where they heard speeches delivered by an array of Quebec

euthanasia opponents, including Amy Hasbrouck of Not Dead Yet, an organisation defending the rights of people with disabilities, and Dr. Patrick Vinay, former dean of medicine at the University of Montreal and palliative care expert. Also present were Dr. Catherine Ferrier representing Physicians Alliance for Total Refusal of Euthanasia, Linda Couture of Living with Dignity, Hugh Scher of the Euthanasia Prevention Coalition and Louis-André Richard, a philosophy professor, bioethics expert and spokesperson for the Quebec Rally against Euthanasia.

The Marchers then processed through Quebec City via the Grande Allée chanting slogans such as “killing is not care” and arrived before the Quebec National Assem-

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NEW SOUTH WALES PARLIAMENT SOUNDLY DEFEATS EUTHANASIA BILL

HOPE and Alex Schadenberg influence debate

By Paul Russell, HOPE Australia

On Thursday, May 23 the *Rights of the Terminally Ill Bill 2013* sponsored by The Hon Cate Faehrmann MLC was defeated in the NSW Upper House by a margin of 23 to 13. There were effectively 5 abstentions and one non-vote due to a vacancy.

In her closing speech and in the media following the bill’s defeat, Ms Faehrmann said that she expects the same bill to be introduced into the NSW Lower House sometime soon. Given the resounding numbers against the bill in this vote, one wonders how the lower house will view debate on a bill that clearly would not pass muster even if successful in the lower chamber.

There were some significant contributions in speeches both for and against the bill. This remains a highly emotional issue as evidenced in a number of speeches. It would be a callous person indeed who would not be moved by the difficult personal stories raised on both sides.

Reading the Hansard of this and other recent debates it would be impossible to conclude that our parliaments had not engaged with the issue in a meaningful way.

A number of politicians referred to the recent Australia 21 report

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CANADIAN STUDY PROVES THAT THE “SUICIDE CONTAGION” EFFECT EXISTS

by Alex Schadenberg

A study published in the Canadian Medical Association Journal in the May 21, 2013 issue provides strong evidence that exposure to suicide leads to a “suicide contagion” effect. Authors Sonja A. Swanson (Harvard School of Public Health) and Ian Coleman (University of Ottawa School of Public Health) assessed the association between exposure to suicide and suicidal thoughts or attempts among young people. The study *Association between exposure to suicide and suicidality outcomes in youth* was based on a cross-sectional and prospective two year follow-up study done between 1998 and 2007. The study examined the responses from 8766 children aged 12 - 17 years. Among many other questions that had been asked, the researchers focused on four.

1. Did the student know whether anyone in their school had died by suicide (schoolmate’s suicide)?
2. Did the student personally know someone who died by suicide (personally known suicide)?
3. Had the student seriously considered attempting suicide in the past year? If yes, they were asked:
4. How many suicide attempts did you make in the past year?

The study assessed whether personally knowing a peer decedent increased the risk of suicidality outcomes relative to a lesser-known peer decedent. The study found that exposure to suicide alone had the greatest effect; personally knowing someone who died by suicide presented a marginally greater risk of suicidal ideation or attempted suicide in relation to exposure to suicide alone.

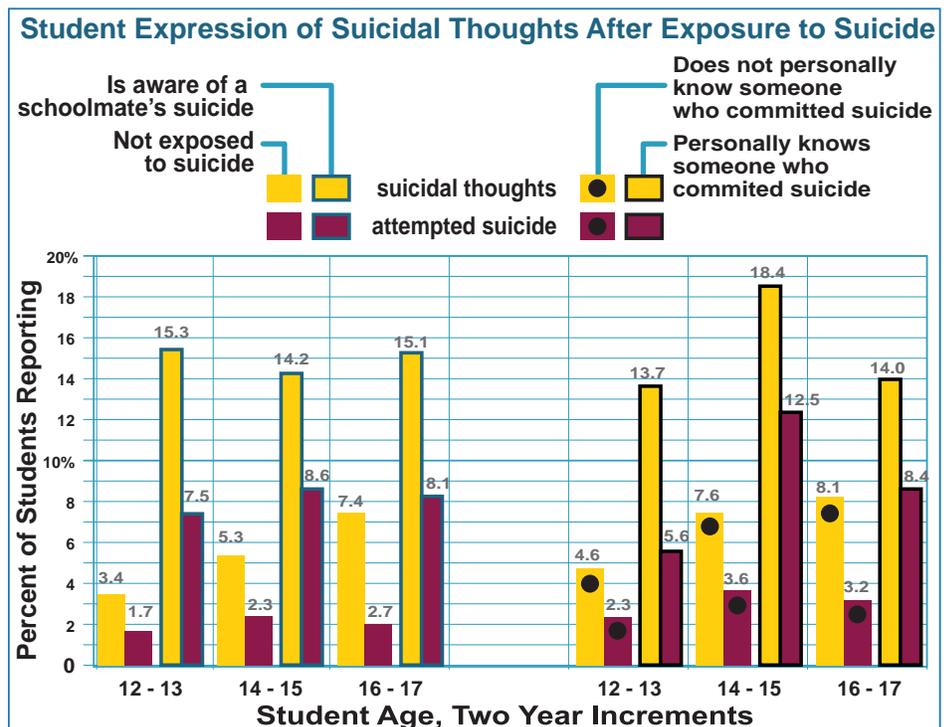
The authors stated “We found that exposure to suicide predicts suicidality. This is true for all age groups, although exposure to suicide increased the risk most dramatically in the youngest age group, when the baseline suicidality was relatively low. ... Exposure was consistently associated with attempts and to a lesser degree ideation; some of these associations were still significant 2 years later.”

Exposure to suicide is not uncommon. The study indicated that 9% of the 16-17 age group reported that a schoolmate had died by suicide in the past year and 15% reported that a schoolmate had died by suicide more than a year earlier.

Since personally knowing the student provided only a marginally greater risk, the study emphasized the importance of suicide prevention strategies being implemented within a whole school, rather than focusing on the friends of the person who died by suicide.

This study did not examine the effect of exposure to media reports of a suicide death. Considering the fact that exposure to a suicide death when the person is a similar age and part of the same commu-

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nity is related to a significant increased risk for suicidal ideation and suicide attempts; it is likely that the ways that media report suicide deaths may also increase the risk for suicidal ideation and suicide attempts, especially when the person who dies by suicide is a similar age. The World Health Organization published a set of guidelines to prevent suicide. One of the best practices is requiring the media to offer links to suicide prevention resources when reporting about suicide.

The Euthanasia Prevention Coalition (EPC) is concerned that when people are exposed to assisted suicide, they may experience increased suicidal thoughts and actions. EPC urges researchers to do a study on the relationship between the normalization of assisted suicide, and the possible increase upon the rate of unassisted suicide.

There is already evidence that in Oregon, where assisted suicide has been legal since 1998, the unassisted suicide rate has been steadily climbing. The unassisted suicide rate in Oregon is now 49% higher than the national average.

NEWS FROM AROUND THE GLOBE

UK

Lord Falconer, who organized the “Commission on Assisted Dying” that produced the one-sided report (the *Falconer* report) recently introduced a bill in to the UK parliament to legalize “Oregon Style” assisted suicide.

Dr Peter Saunders, the campaign director for the Care Not Killing Alliance in the UK stated: “We should not be fooled by this ploy and the situation in Oregon is already ringing loud alarm bells.”

Dr Saunders pointed out that very recent statistics show that the number of assisted suicide prescriptions and deaths increased once again in Oregon in 2012, and has now reached an all-time high. The Oregon assisted suicide deaths increased 30% in four years:

2009	2010	2011	2012
59	65	71	77

At the same time, the number of prescriptions for assisted suicide increased 21%

2009	2010	2011	2012
95	97	114	115

Overall assisted suicides have gone from 16 in 1998 to 77 in 2012, an overall increase of 381%. Saunders stated: “A major factor fuelling this increase is suicide contagion. This is particularly dangerous when assisted suicides

are backed by celebrities as they are here and given high media profile as they are frequently by the BBC. The Oregon numbers may not seem large but... Oregon has a very small population relative to the UK.” He also pointed out that the figures may well be an underestimate as they are based on physicians’ self-reporting.

VERMONT

True Dignity Vermont has launched an abuse hotline in response to the recently-passed bill that will allow Vermont physicians to prescribe lethal drugs to terminally ill patients.

As a citizen-led, grassroots initiative, True Dignity Vermont worked alongside other organizations to vigorously oppose the legalization of prescription death in Vermont. That effort failed with the passage of an amended bill on May 13, but leaders say they will press forward to work to protect vulnerable Vermonters who will be at risk as a result of what they call “dangerous, poorly conceived legislation.”

Individuals who suspect patients of being unduly influenced to request or ingest lethal drugs, or of being given such drugs against their will, can report such concerns by phone or internet:

1-855-787-5455

ReportAbuse@TrueDignityVt.org

<http://truedignityvt.org/>

MONTANA

The 2013 legislative session in Montana saw a bill to legalize “Oregon style” assisted suicide defeated in the Senate Judiciary Committee. Another bill to clarify the legal protections from assisted suicide was passed in the Montana House, only to be defeated in the Montana Senate, leaving the issue of assisted suicide within the same state of confusion.

In 2009, the *Baxter* court decision created a confusing situation in Montana, whereby assisted suicide remained illegal, civil protections for doctors who assist a suicide were not removed, but a limited “defense of consent” was created for doctors who were prosecuted for assisting a suicide.

In December 2012, the Montanans Against Assisted Suicide launched a legal challenge to the Board of Medical Examiners’ policy on assisted suicide in Montana. A judge in Helena has agreed to hear the arguments in this case, which may overturn the confusing *Baxter* decision in Montana.

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bly where speakers once again rallied the crowd. The crowd seemed especially appreciative of a speech by Hugh Scher of the Euthanasia Prevention Coalition, who affirmed that “dangerous lessons” ought to be learned from the legalisation of euthanasia in Holland and Belgium and that “each of us is at risk” when life becomes devalued.

Organised by the Quebec Rally Against Euthanasia – an ad hoc group headed by Dr. Claude Morin, an emergency-room doctor in Quebec City – the March was firmly backed by the province’s Catholic bishops.

At the close of the event Dr. Claude Morin stated that he hoped that the day’s message would make it to the ears of the PQ government, but that in the event that the bill would nonetheless be tabled, he invited the assembled crowd to return for a second protest.

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that recommended change to the current law. Some also quoted the Royal Society of Canada report, all claiming in various ways that the laws in The Netherlands and Belgium operate well and without risk.

To the contrary, The Hon David Clarke MLC quoted studies referenced in Alex Schadenberg’s book: *Exposing Vulnerable People to Euthanasia & Assisted Suicide*:

“The truth is that the euthanasia laws of the Netherlands and Belgium contain a whole string of safeguards which, it was promised, would ensure against abuse of their new euthanasia laws, but this is not what has happened in practice. The so-called safeguards have been abused, evaded and ignored. They have been ineffectual; they have been a total failure. The result has been that many people, a significant percentage, have been euthanased without proper and informed consent. Particularly among the elderly, there is a fear that should they be admitted to hospital or nursing care facilities, where they risk the prospect of being euthanized without their consent.”

The Hon Greg Donnelly MLC referred directly to Alex Schadenberg’s book and HOPE’s intervention:

*“In answer to people who wonder why I and others so strongly oppose the proposed legislation, in relation to what we see are fundamental flaws in euthanasia/assisted suicide legislation and our challenging of some of the things that proponents for the legislation claim are not true—such as the slippery slope arguments—I draw their attention to a book entitled: **Exposing Vulnerable People to Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide**, written by Alex Schadenberg. The book has been provided to most members in this House, and probably in the other place as well, as part of the provision of information by the organisation Hope: Preventing Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide, and I thank that organisation for circulating the book.”*

The Euthanasia Prevention Coalition thanked Paul Russell and HOPE Australia for their role in soundly defeating the euthanasia bill in New South Wales Australia.



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in the world
is to have hope

Euthanasia Symposium

2013

November 8 - 9
Renaissance Marriott Hotel
Toronto

Featuring **Dr. Kevin Fitzpatrick** EPC Europe • **Paul Russell** HOPE Australia • **Amy Hasbrouck** – Not Dead Yet • **Dr. David Richmond** Euthanasia Debate New Zealand • **Linda Couture** Living with Dignity Quebec and many more.
Save November 8/9 on your calendar.