

Newsletter #60 November 2005

Euthanasia Paper available for distribution

The Euthanasia Paper is a 12 page educational pamphlet printed in a newspaper format. Several years ago the Euthanasia Prevention Coalition distributed more than 110,000 copies of the Euthanasia Paper across Canada. This version has been re-designed and updated.

How Will You Say Goodbye...



To Someone You Love?

Canada is moving closer to legalizing assisted suicide and euthanasia.

Bill 407 Parliamentary Debate	2
Palliative Care	4
What Safeguards?	5
Murder Suicide	9
Assisted Suicide	10
Elder Abuse	11
Is It Your Duty To Die?	11
Protecting Your Life	12

The Euthanasia Paper features articles on Bill C-407, Palliative Care, Safeguards?, Elder Abuse, Disability concerns, etc.

The paper is attractively designed to encourage average Canadians to read and be affected by the articles.

Order the Euthanasia

Paper by calling: 1-877-439-3348.

- \$25 per 100 copies for orders of less than 500 copies,
 - \$22 per 100 copies for more than 500 copies,
 - \$20 per 100 copies for more than 1000 copies,
 - \$18 per 100 copies for more than 5000 copies.
- * Shipping and Handling costs are extra and will vary based on the size of the order and the location.

Effective protest of Bill C-407

The Euthanasia Prevention Coalition has now distributed more than 80,000 **parliamentary response cards**. These orders have been sent to contacts in every province.

The Euthanasia Prevention Coalition will send you the response cards when you donate \$10 for every 100 cards.

The online petition at: www.euthanasia.ca has been an incredible success. 1000 people joined the online protest in its first 4 days and 2000 people after 9 days. We hope to have 10,000 people join the online petition. Please go to the online petition and send the link to your friends.

Cotler Envisions Law Legalizing Assisted Suicide

Cotler favours look at practices in other nations

By Janice Tibbetts - National Post - November 03, 2005

Justice Minister Irwin Cotler says the issue is 'fraught with so many layers of complexity.'

Justice Minister Irwin Cotler is opening the door to a new law legalizing assisted suicide.

However, he acknowledged the government would have to proceed with care because the issue has divided Canadians.



In an interview, Mr. Cotler added his voice to a growing debate that in recent weeks has spawned petitions, speeches, letter-writing campaigns, website chatter, symposiums and pulpit denunciations following a Bloc Quebecois MP's private member's bill that called for legalization of doctor-assisted suicide (and euthanasia).

The governing Liberals oppose the Bloc bill, but Mr. Cotler said that does not mean the Criminal Code prohibition is in step with the times.

"I think we need to look at what is being done in other jurisdictions, other countries, which have started to look at that and see if we can come up with the kind of law that might enjoy a consensus," he said.

"But at this point, given the divisions that exist, given that this issue is fraught with so many layers of complexity ... I think we need to be careful as to how we proceed."

The prospect of watering down Canada's ban on assisted suicide would be a risky venture for the minority Liberal government on the brink of an election and Mr. Cotler suggested a new initiative is not going to be taken any time soon.

There are already several justice initiatives that are expected to die if a federal vote is held, as promised, this coming winter.

Cotler - Continued on Next Page

Cotler - Continued From Page 1

Mr. Cotler said a year ago he wanted to reopen the dormant debate on assisted suicide, following several high-profile criminal charges across the country. In his home town of Montreal, Marielle Houle is awaiting trial on charges of helping her son, a multiple sclerosis sufferer, take his own life a year ago.

Assisted suicide means giving people the tools to kill themselves, while euthanasia means doing it for them.

The Bloc Quebecois bill, which Parliament began debating this week, calls for legalization of doctor-assisted suicide (and euthanasia) for anyone over 18 who suffers from a terminal illness and who expresses the wish to die, twice, in writing, at least 10 days apart. The person who assists in the death would have to be a medical practitioner or be assisted by a medical practitioner.

The bill's sponsor, Francine Lalonde, said she was motivated by watching a friend suffer a slow, painful cancer death.

Mr. Cotler said the proposal is too broad and vague to garner government support. In particular, he said the bill goes too far because it is not limited to people dying of terminal illnesses. Rather, it would also include the mentally ill and those suffering from severe depression who want to end their lives.

"What it seeks to encompass legally doesn't have enough controls," Mr. Cotler said.

The prospect of legislation has sparked hope and fear among opponents and supporters of euthanasia.

A 2002 Gallup poll showed support for euthanasia has climbed steadily over the last three decades, with a clear majority now favouring it for people with incurable diseases who are in great pain, if they make a formal request in writing.

"Sometimes, to put it bluntly, people are entitled to give up," said Ruth von Fuchs, president of the Right to Die Network.

Ms. von Fuchs said she became a proponent of euthanasia after watching her mother die of lymphoma in the 1980s.

"I would have done something if the law were different," she said.

The revival of the debate comes a decade after an exhaustive Senate study recommended against relaxing a federal law that makes it a crime punishable by up to 14 years in prison to counsel or assist someone in ending his or her life.

The Supreme Court of Canada reached the same conclusion in a monumental 1993 ruling involving Sue Rodriguez, a 42-year-old British Columbia woman suffering from Lou Gehrig's disease, who killed herself in 1994.

No plans for assisted suicide law, for now

Re: Cotler Envisions Law Legalizing Assisted Suicide - Nov 3

This article and, in particular, its head-line mischaracterize my views on the issue of assisted suicide. To recognize that there is no consensus among Canadians on this difficult moral, legal and social question, to encourage discussion and debate and to be interested in how other countries deal with it does not mean that I want to table a bill legalizing assisted suicide. In fact, the government has no plans to introduce legislation on assisted suicide at this time.

If parliament were to decide that the time has come to open up this important and complex issue, then we would fully participate in that discussion to ensure that it is well-informed, that all stake-holders were thoroughly consulted and that all perspectives were fully aired.

Hon Irwin Cotler,

Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada - Ottawa

Euthanasia Prevention Coalition responds to the Hon Irwin Cotler

The Euthanasia Prevention Coalition realizes that the government has no current plan to bring forward legislation to legalize euthanasia or assisted suicide during this parliamentary session. We also recognize that the Liberal government does not wish to face another divisive issue during the upcoming election.

Nonetheless, in your document sent to Liberal members of parliament from on Bill C-407, and from your comments to the media and to the Justice committee - November 2004, your position seems clear. You wish to revisit the issue of assisted suicide with the intention of legalizing it in some form.

The Euthanasia Prevention Coalition recognizes that euthanasia and assisted suicide are a direct and material threat to the lives of people with disabilities, and other medically vulnerable, de-valued persons in our society. These people are often highly dependant on family members and medical care-givers to provide for their basic needs. Even the pressure from subtle suggestion directly threatens the lives of de-valued persons.

With the increasing incidence of elder abuse (and abuse of other vulnerable persons) in our society that these people are in need of greater protection, not assistance to commit suicide.

Alex Schadenberg - Euthanasia Prevention Coalition

Bloc's assisted suicide bill is denounced

Tory MP invokes Nazis

By Elizabeth Thompson - CanWest News Service - Ottawa
November 01, 2005

A Bloc Quebecois bill to allow assisted suicide would create a slippery slope that could lead to the kind of eugenics program that took place in Nazi Germany, Conservative MP Jason Kenney charged yesterday.

However, Montreal MP Francine Lalonde, the author of the bill, said assisted suicide is already quietly taking place in hospitals and hospices across Canada without any rules or guidelines.

"I have talked with doctors who over the years who have helped people die ... who say there are a lot."

As Canada's population ages, the subject of assisted suicide is one that won't go away, Ms. Lalonde added.

Yesterday, only a few months after finally wrapping debate on one morally divisive issue — same-sex marriage — Parliament began debate on whether to amend the Criminal Code to allow people to assist another who is terminally ill or suffering from a debilitating disease to end their life.

Under Ms. Lalonde's private member's bill, anyone seeking end their life would have to be over 18 and make two requests more than 10 days apart. The person who assists in the death would have to be a medical practitioner or be assisted by a medical practitioner. Two medical practitioners would have to confirm the diagnosis and confirmation that the death was an assisted suicide (or euthanasia) would have to be provided to the coroner.

Debate on the bill comes nearly a year after Justice Minister Irwin Cotler told the House of Commons' justice committee that the time had come to re-open debate on the thorny issue. While public opinion polls regularly show an estimated 75% of Canadians support allowing assisted suicide, there is also a strong lobby against.

Launching the debate yesterday, Ms. Lalonde said those afflicted with terminal or debilitating diseases should be entitled to death with dignity, and to choose the time and the circumstances of their own deaths if they so wish.

"Every lucid person who is confronted with an end of life that is very painful and full of suffering, that they consider is not worthy of who they are, of the life they have led, as a free person should be able to decide the conditions in which they want to die, including if they want to be helped to die," said Ms. Lalonde, who drafted the bill after watching a close friend die painfully of cancer.

However, Paul Macklin, parliamentary secretary to Mr. Cotler, said the bill is premature, flawed, too broad in scope and lacks safeguards to ensure it is not abused.

"The bill would not only apply to terminally ill patients but also to persons who suffer from severe physical or mental pain without any prospect of relief," Mr. Macklin said. "Theoretically, persons who suffer from depression could request assistance in dying and those who aid them would not be found criminally liable if the conditions of the bill were respected."

Mr. Kenney, whose Conservative party will allow a free vote on the issue, voiced even stronger opposition to Ms. Lalonde's bill, suggesting it could lead to euthanasia and worse.

"That was nowhere more evident than in Nazi Germany in the earlier part of this century, where in the 1930s, beginning on the grounds of compassionate treatment of the mentally ill and the severely infirm, euthanasia was unleashed. Passive euthanasia became active euthanasia and active euthanasia became an entire cult of eugenics. We know what kind of horror and human tragedy that resulted in."

In Holland, where euthanasia is allowed, the practice has also grown, he argued.

"Dutch doctors have gone from killing the terminally ill who asked for it to killing the chronically ill who ask for it to killing the depressed who had no physical illness who asked for it to killing newborn babies because they have birth defects, even though by definition they cannot ask for it."

New Democrat Joe Comartin personally opposes the bill, although he conceded that his party's caucus is divided on the issue.

"Yes, there is a need for a debate on the issue of dying with dignity. The problem is that this bill focuses the debate on only one area."

Bloc Quebecois MP Christiane Gagnon, whose adult daughter developed multiple sclerosis 10 years ago, supports the bill, although she hopes her daughter's disease never deteriorates to the point where she asks to die.

"It is to be hoped that I will never have to make that terrible and heart-rending decision," she said

Editor's Note:

Joe Comartin NDP MP stated that: "the problem with this bill is that it focuses the debate on only one area." He then commented that after speaking to the people at the Hospice of Windsor that he is convinced that the debate needs to be about hospice and palliative care, not euthanasia and assisted suicide.

Parliament debates Euthanasia bill on October 31.

MEDIA RELEASE *[For Immediate Release]*

Bill C-407, the private-members bill proposing to legalize euthanasia and assisted suicide is scheduled for its first hour of debate in Parliament on Monday, October 31, 2005.

EPC was established in 1999 to prepare a well-informed, broadly based, network of groups and individuals who support measures that will create an effective social barrier to euthanasia and assisted suicide.

According to Alex Schadenberg, Executive director of the Euthanasia Prevention Coalition (EPC), "Bill C-407 is a direct threat to the lives of the people with disabilities, people with chronic physical and mental pain and other vulnerable Canadians. If Parliament supports this Bill in any form it is placing the lives of vulnerable Canadians at material risk."

Schadenberg points out that Bill C-407:

- Legalizes euthanasia and assisted suicide for people suffering chronic physical and mental pain. Chronic physical and mental pain can be treated
- Does not require that a person at least try effective treatments for their chronic physical or mental pain. It states that a person qualifies for euthanasia even if they have refused to try effective treatments
- legalizes euthanasia and assisted suicide for people who "appear to be lucid" and doesn't define what appear to be lucid means.
- allows anyone to euthanize or assist the suicide of a person, so long as they are "assisted by a medical practitioner"

This bill is a serious attack on vulnerable Canadians, including people with disabilities, the chronic sufferers of physical or mental pain, the frail elderly and the poor. These people need to be protected.

Bill C-407 is a terrible piece of legislation that must be rejected by all members of parliament.

For more information on Bill C-407 contact the Euthanasia Prevention Coalition (Alex Schadenberg) at: 1-877-439-3348

29 October 2005 Canada Newswire - national distribution.

Belgium: Redefining Palliative Care and Forcing Physicians to Refer for Euthanasia

October 31, 2005 - Protection of Conscience Project

Physicians must refer patients for euthanasia and euthanasia is part of palliative care in Belgium, according to a joint statement issued by the Catholic University of Leuven, the University of Ghent and the Belgium Association for General Practitioners.

Concerned about the implications of the statement for freedom of conscience, the Protection of Conscience Project wrote to the Association in July 2004. The Association answered the first letter but failed to respond when the Project attempted to continue the discussion.

"Referral for euthanasia is contentious for many objectors," said Project Administrator, Sean Murphy. "A Belgium doctor is legally required to transfer a medical file to someone chosen by the patient. But neither Belgium's *Euthanasia Act* nor its *Patients' Rights Act* require physicians to actively facilitate the procedure, so the Association and universities appear to be over-reaching"

"Whether or not they realize it, these professors are laying the foundation for compulsory referral for all controversial procedures, including euthanasia or assisted suicide."

"Murphy said that the incorporation of euthanasia into palliative care is also problematic from the perspective of freedom of conscience.

"Many people working in palliative care entered the field with the understanding that it does not include euthanasia or assisted suicide," he observed. "It would be most unfair to incorporate the procedure into the discipline without very substantial legal safeguards to protect conscientious objectors."

The joint statement, related documents and correspondence between the Project and the Belgium Association of General Practitioners are available in English and in Dutch on the Protection of Conscience Project website.

This is an abridged version of the media release sent out by Sean Murphy at: www.consciencelaws.org

The Euthanasia Prevention Coalition is seriously financially strapped due its Stop Bill C-407 strategy. We have re-designed the Euthanasia Paper and printed 50,000 copies for distribution, we have designed an effective protest website at: including an online petition that thousand of people have joined, we have hired a french language and an english language lobbyist on temporary contracts, we have sent out hundreds of Bill C-407 information packages, and with the help of people from across Canada, we have distributed 80,000 parliamentary response cards. **Please consider donating to the Euthanasia Prevention Coalition this month. Thank You!**