

November 16, 2020

Martin Shields, M.P. (Bow River)
Room 546, Confederation Building
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6

Dear Mr. Shields,

On behalf of the membership of the Catholic Women's League (CWL), Council #61, Strathmore, Alberta, I urge you to reject Bill C-7, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (medical assistance in dying). Euthanasia, and its expansion under this ill-considered bill, denies the sacredness of every human life, promotes killing as a solution to human suffering, regards certain individuals as burdensome to the economy, makes no provision for the conscience and religious rights of health care workers, and destroys the caring mission of medicine.

The Catholic Women's League strongly opposes Bill C-7 for effectively eliminating many of the remaining safeguards protecting vulnerable people from being killed by medical professionals:

- (1) It removes the legal requirement that a person's natural death must be "reasonably foreseeable" to qualify for death by lethal injection. Therefore, those with disabilities and/or chronic illness whose distress is deemed intolerable, *regardless* of extant effective treatments and interventions to relieve these conditions, would qualify for euthanasia after a ninety-day waiting period.
- (2) It waives the ten-day waiting period for those judged "terminally ill." Thus, a person making an erratic decision on a bad day may request and receive a lethal injection within the same day.
- (3) It opens the way for a future court decision to strike down the ninety-day waiting period for individuals whose natural death is "not reasonably foreseeable" on the basis of this (the ninety-day provision) demonstrating an *inequality* in the law. This would move Canada closer to death on demand.
- (4) It fails to define psychological suffering in a way that *excludes* euthanasia for mental illness.
- (5) It reduces the number of independent witnesses to MAID in those judged "terminally ill" from two to one.
- (6) It permits a doctor or nurse practitioner to lethally inject a person incapable of consenting, if that person was previously approved for assisted death.
- (7) It omits provisions protecting the conscience and religious rights (Section 2, Canada Charter of Rights and Freedoms for health care professionals refusing to participate in euthanasia.

(8) It disregards the legislated requirement of Bill C-14 (the 2016 bill legalizing euthanasia in Canada) for a five-year review of the current law on euthanasia and a report on the state of palliative care in Canada.

How paradoxical that the same government encouraging a national Covid-19 lockdown to save the lives of the elderly and physically infirm (whose deaths as of today number 10,953) simultaneously pushes to expand euthanasia, which has taken the lives of 19,000 such citizens since 2016, and promises to increase the death count even more if Bill C-7 becomes law. The ultimate reason for the latter is that the government deems euthanasia cheaper than palliative care.

Bill C-7 is not essentially about choice or autonomy, but rather about saving money by killing people at the most vulnerable time of their lives. Since assisted dying became legal in 2016, Canada's health care costs decreased \$86.9 million. Provincial health budgets would save \$149 million next year largely from declines in spending on end-of-life care (Dangerfield, *Global News*, 20/10/20). There is no political will to improve palliative care as evidenced by the government's failed promise to invest \$3 billion dollars in long term care, which includes palliative care (Wagantall, Hansard of the Speech, 22/10/20).

The Catholic Women's League urges the government to reject euthanasia and its expansion through Bill C-7, and to keep its promise to support palliative and hospice care for those whose loneliness, isolation, poverty, loss of dignity, and/or lack of adequate health and social services drive them to terminate their lives. Every human life is sacred, worthy of care, and deserving of hope.

Sincerely,

Emily M. Rochford
President
Catholic Women's League, Council #61
Sacred Heart Parish
23 Strathmore Lakes Way
Strathmore, Alberta T1P 1L7