



Statement from Cardinal Thomas Collins concerning introduction of federal euthanasia/assisted suicide legislation

On April 14, 2016, the federal government introduced legislation that, if passed, will amend the criminal code to make euthanasia/assisted suicide legal in Canada.

At a time when our priority should be fostering a culture of love, and enhancing resources for those suffering and facing death, assisted suicide leads us down a dark path. At first sight it may seem an attractive option, a quick and merciful escape from the suffering that can be experienced in life, but fuller reflection reveals its grim implications, not only for the individual but for our society, and especially for those who are most vulnerable. Such fuller reflection is sorely needed now. Just days ago, Pope Francis stated, “Care and concern for the final stages of life is all the more necessary today, when contemporary society attempts to remove every trace of death and dying...Euthanasia and assisted suicide are serious threats to families worldwide.”

In the coming days I, along with others who share deep concerns about assisted suicide, will study the proposed legislation carefully and continue to advocate for the most vulnerable among us. I thank the thousands of Canadians, of many faiths or no faith at all, who have reached out to elected representatives, respectfully expressing their concerns regarding the unsettling recommendations included in the parliamentary joint committee report.

I would encourage all those who are troubled by the prospect of assisted suicide to continue to dialogue with their members of parliament, both at the federal and provincial level to:

- Prioritize effective palliative care for all, and support for those experiencing chronic suffering of any kind. We must especially offer love and compassionate assistance to those who are tempted to suicide.
- Protect health care workers across Canada who oppose participating in euthanasia/assisted suicide, either by doing it personally or by arranging for it to be done (that is, referring for these procedures.) Their conscience rights are protected under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and those rights must be respected in practice. In protecting them, we protect those they serve.
- Protect health care institutions, hospices and long-term care facilities whose mission, vision, and values commit them each day to heal, not to hasten death. In a cold world of euthanasia, havens of hope are all the more needed.

A discussion about death is never an easy one. Yet now, more than ever, Canadians across the country need to be fully informed and mindful of the implications of this legislation.

In a familiar Catholic prayer we meditate on the two key moments of life: now, and the hour of our death. In these days ahead, may that reflection guide us as in a spirit of love, mercy and compassion, we journey with all those who are suffering.

† Thomas Card. Collins

Thomas Cardinal Collins
Archbishop of Toronto
April 14, 2016

Tell Legislators How You Feel

Those who are concerned about this legislation are encouraged to visit CanadiansforConscience.ca and join the Coalition for HealthCARE and Conscience. The coalition represents more than 110 healthcare facilities (with almost 18,000 care beds and 60,000 staff) and more than 5,000 physicians across Canada. You can use this website to write directly to key elected representatives at the federal and provincial levels, respectfully expressing your concerns.