



# The Catholic Women's League of Canada

## MEMO

**DATE:** March 26, 2020

**FROM:** Betty Colaneri, national chairperson of legislation

**TO:** Parish chairpersons of legislation

**CC:** Parish presidents, diocesan presidents, provincial presidents and life members (on request)

In the winter 2020 issue of *The Canadian League* magazine, I referred to bills falling victim to the dissolution effect following an election. If a bill is brought back, the process must start over again. One such issue of grave concern has returned with the new number of Bill C-7, an *Act to amend the Criminal Code (medical assistance in dying)*, sponsored by the federal minister of justice. As of February 24<sup>th</sup>, the bill passed its first reading and seems to have gained momentum to continue. Confusion with this bill lies within the terminology. Pain medication, resources and procedures may be used to assist those that are dying; however, medical assistance in dying (MAiD) gives the opportunity of a lethal injection to those who are not dying. The argument keeps surfacing from family members who do not wish to see a loved one suffer, which certainly is not the intent of any of us. However, if this legislation passes, it will open the door to a series of other problems.

Ramifications have already begun in British Columbia, where the provincial minister of health has terminated the contract with the Delta Hospice Society as of February 24, 2021. The hospice refuses to partake in MAiD at the Irene Thomas Hospice in Ladner. The Delta Hospice Society was initially ordered to begin practicing euthanasia by February 3<sup>rd</sup> or lose its funding. How many other facilities are being coerced? Read more about this on the Euthanasia Prevention Coalition website, [epcc.ca](http://epcc.ca).

On February 25<sup>th</sup>, His Eminence Cardinal Thomas Collins, Archbishop of Toronto, issued a statement regarding the introduction of Bill C-7. Cardinal Collins stated, "Canada is embracing 'death on demand' in its healthcare laws" and urged a strong denunciation of the proposed changes to the MAiD laws. He wrote a column in a recent issue of *The Toronto Star* to express his concerns and clarify what is being proposed. "Bill C-7, which would remove safeguards and expand eligibility criteria for MAiD."

Cardinal Collins also stated, “Under this legislation, any serious incurable illness, disease, or disability would render a person eligible for euthanasia.” Bill C-7 would remove the 10-day waiting period between approval for an assisted death and receiving the injection for those whose death is “reasonably foreseeable.” In reading Cardinal Collins’ article, I was unaware that “Canada has cast aside restrictions at a far quicker pace than any other jurisdiction in the world that has legalized euthanasia.” MAiD first became law in 2016, and the Federal government promised at that time to do a thorough review prior to introducing new legislation, which did not happen. Bill C-7 was introduced in response to a Quebec Superior Court decision in September 2019, “which found that the ‘reasonably foreseeable death’ stipulation was a violation of human rights.” The federal government did not wish to appeal that decision.

There is a severe lack of available palliative care services; however, medically assisted deaths are widely available, guaranteed and fully-funded under the law. Cardinal Collins stated it beautifully when he said, “The sick, elderly, and disabled, ‘need assisted living, not assisted death.’ They should never be seen as a burden to our society.” It is imperative for Canadians to “foster a culture of care and love for one another” and strive to accompany friends, family “and even strangers... recognizing the inherent dignity of every person.”

Urge members to read the statement issued by His Eminence Cardinal Thomas Collins and use it as the perfect reference to clarify this issue and where we stand.