



The Catholic Women's League of Canada

MEMO

DATE: October 9, 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 midst of an unexpected pandemic, the prime minister prorogued parliament for the first time during his term. He stated, “As much as this pandemic is an unexpected challenge, it is also an unprecedented opportunity. This is our chance to build a more resilient Canada, a Canada that is healthier and safer, greener and more competitive, a Canada that is more welcoming and more fair. This is our moment to change the future for the better. We can’t afford to miss it, because this window of opportunity won’t be open for long”.

Legislature is prorogued by the governor general, based on the advice of the prime minister. According to the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, Third Edition, 2017, “Prorogation of a session brings to an end all proceedings before Parliament. With certain exceptions, unfinished business ‘dies’ on the *Order Paper* and must be started anew in a subsequent session.” This means that all legislative work stops, but it does not affect legislation that has already been passed.

Members of parliament were released from their parliamentary duties until September 23rd. The prime minister and members of parliament retain their positions, rights and privileges during prorogation. The elected government also remains in power even though the House of Commons and Senate are shut down. Proroguing parliament is not the same as dissolving parliament, which happens before a federal election.

Historically, prorogation has been used as a tool of political convenience that minority governments have used as a “political reset button” amid scandal or to avoid defeat on a confidence vote. An example of this would be the committee looking into the federal government and the WE Charity controversy. Since the committee was not allowed to sit during prorogation, the investigation into the scandal was paused.

The good thing about proroguing parliament is that Bill C-7, *An Act to amend the Criminal Code (medical assistance in dying)*, terminated in August. Unfortunately, the federal government has

vowed to introduce a new bill to expand euthanasia and will likely move it quickly through parliament.

As mentioned in a previous memo, Bill C-7 would allow assisted death for Canadians who are not dying by removing the requirement that a person's death must be "reasonably foreseeable". The bill establishes two streams of eligibility, one for those whose natural death is foreseeable, and one for those whose natural death is not foreseeable. For those whose death is reasonably foreseeable, Bill C-7 would remove some key safeguards such as the 10-day reflection period between the request and the hastened death, and the requirement that a person is able to consent at the time of the hastened death. For those whose natural death is not foreseeable, the bill sets additional conditions for hastened death. Finally, the bill specifies that mental illness alone cannot make someone eligible for assisted dying.

Alex Schadenberg, president of Euthanasia Prevention Coalition, continues to call on the federal government to stop moving forward with its proposed changes to assisted dying. He wants the government to undertake a five-year review of Canada's system as was promised when assisted dying was legalized in 2016. It is extremely important to monitor legislation regarding this critical issue when it resurfaces.

Parliament was reinstated after the prime minister gave his "speech from the throne" with an economic update on how to best move forward with the country's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. After giving his speech, a non-confidence vote was held, which the governing party survived. If the federal government had lost the confidence vote, it could have brought about an election.

It has certainly been an unexpected and unusual year so far. Fall will prove to be an interesting time to see how things will unfold. Encourage members to continue to monitor legislation and be prepared to rally when the time comes.