The Catholic Women's League of Canada
Position Paper

TITLE: Euthanasia and Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD)

POSITION STATEMENT

The Catholic Women's League of Canada, in accordance with the Catholic church teachings, respects human life from conception to natural death. Any deliberate killing of another human being by euthanasia/MAiD is gravely wrong, even when done out of compassion when someone is dying or there is concern about their quality of life. The League:

- affirms its support for allowing a person to die a natural death with support from palliative care.
- believes that each member of society is unique, including the underprivileged, disabled, sick or infirm, whose dignity needs to be honoured, respected and protected.
- recognizes that Canadian legislation is on a slippery slope of becoming more accepting and desensitized about euthanasia, making it available to the vulnerable populations that were protected in the initial legislation. Internationally, Canada is becoming recognized as being one of the most liberal countries regarding MAiD legislation and its application.
- urges all Canadians to reflect deeply on the consequences and dangers of giving individuals the right to take the life of another human being.

BACKGROUND

Church doctrine states euthanasia is the deliberate killing of someone by action or omission, with or without their consent, for compassionate reasons. To assist another with the deliberate intention of death is not excused, even if requested (Congregation). The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* further describes intentional euthanasia as "gravely contrary to the dignity of the human person and to the respect due to the living God, his Creator" (Vatican 2277).

The Catechism supports end-of-life measures such as palliative care. Medication to alleviate the suffering of the dying, even if it shortens their life, can be "morally in conformity with human dignity if death is not willed as either an end or a means, but only foreseen and tolerated as inevitable. Palliative care is a special form of disinterested charity. As such, it should be encouraged" (Vatican 2279).

Since the legalization of euthanasia in 2016, pressure has existed to expand criteria to more vulnerable populations and to reduce the need for consent. The current Bill C-7 is a historic advance in expanding criteria to those living with disabilities, mental illness and emancipated minors without the requirement of a terminal illness. As a result, individuals, such as those living with disabilities, are finding their right to life and human dignity increasingly challenged (Ending).

Since 2021, 31,664 Canadians have died through MAiD, with 17% requesting it because of isolation or loneliness and 43% reporting the need for disability support services (Health Canada; Whatley). Palliative care funding and access are inconsistent across Canada. Many Canadians do not understand the practice of palliative care as an alternative to MAiD (Access; Whatley).

SUPPORTIVE ACTIONS

- Advocate for accessible and affordable palliative care and actions that facilitate public understanding of palliative care services.
- Call on the government and all Canadians to respect the dignity of every human life and to not abandon the most vulnerable, the sick and dying.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

"Access to Palliative Care in Canada." *Canadian Institute for Health Information*, 2018, secure.cihi.ca/free_products/access-palliative-care-2018-en-web.pdf.

Canada. House of Commons. "Bill C-7 (43-2): An Act to amend the Criminal Code (medical assistance in dying)." *Parliament of Canada*, www.parl.ca/DocumentViewer/en/43-2/bill/C-7/royal-assent.

Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. "Letter '*Samaritanus Bonus*' on the Care of Persons in the Critical and Terminal Phases of Life." *Holy See Press Office*, 22 Sept. 2020, press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2020/09/22/200922a.html.

"Ending of Life Ethics." *Council of Canadians with Disabilities*, www.ccdonline.ca/en/humanrights/endoflife.

Health Canada. "Third Annual Report on Medical Assistance in Dying in Canada 2021." *Canada.ca*, 9 Jan. 2023, www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/medical-assistance-dying/annual-report-2021.html#a4.4.

Vatican. "Catechism of the Catholic Church: Respect for Human Life." *The Holy See*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 4 Nov. 2003, vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/__P7Z.HTM#-2CI.

Whatley, Shawn. "More than We Imagined? Unresolved Tensions and the Current State of Physician-Assisted Suicide and Euthanasia in Canada." *Macdonald Laurier Institute*, 20 April 2023, macdonaldlaurier.ca/more-than-we-imagined-unresolved-tensions-and-the-current-state-of-physician-assisted-suicide-and-euthanasia-in-canada/.

STATUS

Date of initial adoption:	February 7, 1986
Revised:	1992,1994, 2006
Reaffirmed:	October 3, 2014

Current status:

Revised:	August 2023