



The English Speaking Catholic Council (ESCC) is categorically opposed to the legalization of euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide and is deeply disappointed with the decision of the Supreme Court of Canada that in some cases, to refuse “assistance in dying” may infringe on an individual’s rights as outlined in the Charter.

ESCC

The ESCC is gravely concerned that the legalization of euthanasia and assisted suicide in Canada will lead to a neglect of the very real needs of Canadians for competent and compassionate palliative care as well as blindness to the valid, conscientious objections of Canadian physicians to the practice of euthanasia.

The English Speaking Catholic Council was formed in 1980 with a mandate to act as a focal point in coordinating the English-speaking Catholic community of Greater Montreal. The ESCC has endeavored to engage in a competent and meaningful way with policy makers and community organizations in the health and social services sector. In particular, the ESCC has sought to engage legislators on the very divisive issue of euthanasia and end-of-life issues. On June 28, 2010 the ESCC presented a brief before the Select Committee on Dying with Dignity and on December 17, 2010 the ESCC spoke before the Federal Parliamentary Committee on Palliative and Compassionate Care.

The ESCC has noted the high profile cases in jurisdictions such as Belgium and the Netherlands, jurisdictions that believed they were drafting legislation that was careful and guarded, namely cases in which the depressed, the elderly, the blind are euthanized, not because they are terminally ill, but because they are suffering. We fear that despite the most robust safeguards, Canada might not be able to avoid a similar outcome.

Following upon today’s decision of the Supreme Court of Canada decision in Carter v. Canada, the onus is upon elected officials to draft legislation that will prevent the situation we have seen develop in these countries. Such legislation must be stringent enough to disallow a broad and generous interpretation of “enduring suffering that is intolerable to the individual in the circumstances of his or her condition.” Also, in light of a 2013 poll by the Canadian Medical Association which suggested only 20 per cent of Canada’s physicians would be willing to participate in euthanasia were it to become legal across the country, and 42 per cent would refuse outright, the legislation must absolutely respect and protect the conscientious objections of Canada’s physicians to euthanasia, both in its practice and in referral to such a practice.

John Zucchi
President

The English Speaking Catholic Council

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