

To whom it may concern,

My name is Isaac Longworth, and I am twenty-one years old. First of all, thank you for taking the time to read this email as I'm sure you have a very busy schedule. I am writing to you today on an issue of great importance to me. I am terrified at the speed with which the euthanasia debate has spread across Canada, because of my own personal experience with several of the factors that are being debated so hotly right now.

First of all, I want you to know that I have had three very good friends attempt their own suicide at various points in their life. One was a girl I've known from high school, one a roommate in college, and another a housemate, again from college. The main reason why they felt they had no other option than taking their own life, was because they felt useless, unloved, and that life was just too hard to bear.

I fear that the legalization of euthanasia will send a similar message of despair to people, because it will be reinforcing in them the belief that they are a burden to society and that it would be best for them to have a doctor kill them (just as my friends felt). The people who are most at risk of this practice are vulnerable people who are depressed, the elderly, and the sick and injured. By giving them an option to kill themselves, we are sending the message that their lives are not valuable. The reason I am fearful is because if euthanasia was made available to any of my three friends, who I mentioned above, during the time when they were contemplating suicide they might not be here today. All three of them are living today, because suicide was seen as an evil that needed to be addressed rather than a solution to a problem. I don't think that killing those who are suffering is the truly compassionate thing to do, rather we should seek to help these people deal with their respective pain and affirm that their life still has value despite their circumstances.

Please don't think that I'm naïve or head-in-the-clouds about the legitimate pain that these people who are at risk of euthanasia are experiencing. I just don't think that putting the possibility of suicide as a "medical option" is a good thing to do. My grandparents are from Holland, where euthanasia has been legal for some time now. My relatives who are still in Holland tell them stories that seem to come from a horror movie, or a dystopian novel about "death vans" that euthanize people in their homes, children and babies being euthanized at the request of their parents, and my own relatives having to carry cards that say "Don't Kill Me" on them to prevent involuntary euthanasia. I am worried that this will happen in Canada, and that vulnerable people like my grandparents will be put at risk due to a presumed assent to euthanasia.

I am asking you to please consider these factors when you are debating the issue of euthanasia. I do not believe it is the compassionate choice at all, but rather the deliberate killing of a human being with incalculable value. While I do not agree with any form of mercy-killing or assisted suicide, I do ask that you would consider these preliminary restrictions on euthanasia before it sweeps across our country putting vulnerable patients at risk.

- Because physician-assisted suicide is a matter of life and death, nurses should not have the same authority as doctors in this matter.
- Simply having two doctors to approve such a decision leaves too much room for abuse. At the very least each case should undergo a judicial review.
- The bill does not explicitly state who is eligible for physician assisted suicide. Leaving this open-ended leaves room for abuses to occur. Ask that the bill specifically define the word “terminal”.
- Since physician-assisted suicide will be accessible to all, a right to palliative care must also be added so that those in their final stages of life also have the choice to access this quality care, and not be left with physician assisted suicide as their only option.
- It be explicitly stated that healthcare providers be allowed to refuse to perform and refer for physician-assisted suicide on the grounds of conscientious objection. Conscience rights are a protected freedom under Section 2 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and should not be violated.

Of course these suggestions are just a start to check the tide of euthanasia, but of course I would hope to see a Canada that affirms the life of each person and does not allow suicide to be legalized in any circumstance.

Again, thank you so much for reading this very long email, but I really do mean every word. Please know that I will be praying for you as you deliberate these very important topics. I thank you for your service to this country, and I wish you all the best!

Sincerely,

Isaac Longworth