

## Standing Committee on Bill C-14

The three areas of concern that I want to address are: (1) **sanctity of life**, (2) **palliative care** and (3) **freedom of conscience**.

### Sanctity of Life

As a Wolastoq, I have been taught by my Elders that the source of Life is our Creator. Each person has only one right — **the right to life**. The rest of our life is a path of responsibility.

My Catholic faith teaches that God created me in His Image [**Genesis 1:27**]. The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops [CCCB] made a presentation to the first Panel of Experts on October 19, 2015. Bishop Douglas Crosby stated: *Every human life, from the moment of conception until death, is sacred because the human person has been willed for its own sake in the image and likeness of the living and holy God. – Catechism of the Catholic Church, n. 2319*. The **sanctity of life** is fundamental and must be respected. Jesus came to give and support life, not to destroy life. He healed people but did not kill them.

Saint John Paul II spoke in Denver at World Youth Day on August 15, 1993 and said: *If you want equal justice for all, lasting justice and peace...defend life...All the great causes that are yours today will have meaning only to the extent that you guarantee the right to life*. I defend these teachings publicly and privately.

### Palliative Care

Palliative care is defined by Health Canada as:

*an approach to care for people who are living with a life-threatening illness, no matter how old they are. The focus of care is on achieving comfort and ensuring respect for the person nearing death, and maximizing quality of life for the patient, family, and loved ones, and is a societal affirmation of caring for the most vulnerable amongst us. Palliative care addresses different aspects of end-of-life care by: managing pain and other symptoms; providing social, psychological, cultural, emotional, spiritual and practical support; supporting caregivers; providing support for bereavement.* [Declaration Against Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide, October 29, 2015 signed by CCCB, Evangelical Fellowship, Orthodox, Protestant, Jewish, Muslim and 36 faith leaders].

The Report, **Not to be Forgotten: Care of Vulnerable Canadians**, was written in November 2011 by Parliamentary Committee on Palliative and Compassionate

Care which did an exhaustive study on *palliative and end-of-life care*. On pages 48-49, it stated:

*ICESCR in Article 12.1 states that “The state parties to the present covenant recognize the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health” Commenting on the Covenant the UN Interpretive Committee overseeing the ICESCR states in General Comment #14: “In particular, states are under the obligation to respect the right to health by...refraining from denying or limiting equal access for all persons, including to preventative, curative and palliative health services.”*

It recommended that the **Canada Health Act** could be amended to include *palliative care* if the definition of *medically necessary/insured services* was changed.

The Government must invest financial resources into making sure that palliative care is available to all Canadians irrespective of residence. The people are our greatest resource. It is imperative to sustain life, not to destroy life.

### **Freedom of Conscience**

The Charter states that:

**2. Everyone has the following fundamental freedoms:**  
**(a) freedom of conscience and religion;**

**Bill C-14** does not respect the freedom of conscience of those who will be forced to participate in the **medically assisted in dying**. Section 241.3 makes it an offence if medical and nurse practitioners and pharmacists do not cooperate following their consciences.

Freedom of Conscience is protected by the UN which Canada has endorsed. Parliament, composed of the House of Commons and the Senate, is being asked to ignore this human right. It is imperative that the Freedom of Conscience be protected for all medical personnel and health institutions that do not want to participate. The Coalition of HealthCare and Conscience has stated: ***No other foreign jurisdiction in the world that has legalized euthanasia/assisted suicide forces health care workers, hospitals, nursing homes or hospices to act against their conscience or mission and values.***

What has become of our country that has fought for freedom of other people in the world from oppression, genocide, violence and danger to lives? Surely, Canada must continue to respect human rights of its own citizens. Canada will lack moral authority when it tries to criticize repressive governments from other nations of the world who trample on the human rights of their citizens.

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