

I am submitting this brief on Bill C7, as I have numerous concerns regarding both the bill and the fact that it is being introduced at this time. No changes should be made to the provisions for Euthanasia in Canada until a thorough analysis has been done on its impact and implementation to date. Even without such a study, it is becoming obvious that there are serious problems. The number of deaths by euthanasia is growing, and should be examined to determine why this route is being chosen by more and more Canadians. The suicide rate in Canada is not dropping, but rising, especially among young people. This could be due to the societal perception that there is such a thing as “a life not worth living” – a belief that is introduced with the provision for euthanasia. The bill should not be introduced before palliative care has been deemed to be accessible and suitable for all who would choose it, so that individuals who would prefer to live if their pain was controlled would actually have that option. The issue of enforcement of illegal performance of euthanasia has also not been addressed at all. It should be examined and then provisions made to ensure that those who kill outside of the law cannot do so with impunity.

Bill C7 proposes to remove the waiting period for some who seek euthanasia. Since it could be argued that those who die by suicide are dying because they feel hopeless and depressed, it is imperative that individuals expressing the desire for suicide receive appropriate help for mental illness, something which can't be fixed in a day. Individuals who suffer from emotional disorders could easily choose suicide one day, and life the next. Dying on the same day as expressing the desire should never be an option. This also does not consider the desires of supportive family members who would help if they knew this was an issue, and imposing this kind of loss on family members could perpetuate depression through generations. Not requiring two witnesses can also make the process open to abuse, speed it up unduly, and thereby prevent access to family members with varying opinions.

Bill C7 also allows for out-dated wishes for euthanasia to be used on an individual. Many individuals with serious health conditions find ways to live with those conditions, and even to provide meaningful societal contributions given time to adjust to their situations. A dear friend with ALS proved that to our family years ago, and of course society has seen someone else with ALS make significant achievements in the world of science. Old requests for euthanasia should not be invoked, as the person's feelings may change over time, or in the face of death, but they may not be in a position to say so.

I have seen no serious attempts on the part of the federal government to study and deal with the effects of euthanasia legislation on doctors. I know that some Canadian doctors are not being qualified here now, either because they will not include euthanasia protocols in how they would treat patients when they are being tested by governing bodies, or they feel their desire to protect and save life will not be respected. Bill C7 would need to explicitly protect doctors from having to reject the Hippocratic Oath and their own values and beliefs, whether that's during exams, or in actual practice. It is hard to imagine what will become of our current medical system if doctors who fight to protect and maintain the lives of their patients are no longer welcome here!