



Catholic Civil Rights League

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Reject Quebec call for legalized euthanasia, says CCRL

MONTREAL, QC January 16, 2013 – The Catholic Civil Rights League today expressed its opposition to the Quebec government's plan to introduce legislation permitting euthanasia in specified, limited circumstances.

A "select" panel of three lawyers has recommended the change in cases where a patient is close to death and unable to endure the physical or psychological pain, and makes the request clearly in writing. Euthanasia and assisted suicide are illegal in Canada under the Criminal Code, but Quebec junior health minister Veronique Hivon said January 15 the panel determined that provinces have the legal jurisdiction to legislate in matters of health and that the legislation, which she hopes to present in this legislative session, would clarify how acts to end a life could be lawful.

"It is interesting that this announcement coincides with news from Belgium that that country's euthanasia law has just been used to end the lives of two twin brothers who were not terminally ill but feared going blind. In the League's opinion, any liberalization of euthanasia and assisted suicide laws leads inevitably to the abuse of such laws, targeting the ill and the disabled," said Joanne McGarry, League executive director.

The Quebec Select Committee on Dying with Dignity received 427 submissions in hearings across Quebec during 2011. About 60 per cent of the presenters opposed euthanasia, while 99 per cent supported improvements to palliative care. At the time of its report in March, 2012, many pro-life groups expressed concerns that the report's euthanasia recommendations were not in keeping with the views of many of the presenters (Anti-euthanasia groups reject report calling for legalization, Catholic Register, March 28, 2012).

In the League's view, much of Canadians' reported acceptance of euthanasia is driven by misinformation as to what is legal now, and the absence of palliative care facilities in many parts of Canada. On the first point, it is already legal to refuse treatment, and to address pain management even if possible secondary effects could result in shortening life. A commitment to palliative care could go a long way to addressing the fears of extended, futile treatment or uncontrolled pain that often lie behind the belief that euthanasia can be acceptable.

On the other hand, to make a direct, intentional act of killing legal would change the traditional healer role of the doctor, and create serious pressures on the religious and conscientious freedoms of doctors and other health care professionals. As has been observed in the few jurisdictions that currently allow euthanasia or assisted suicide, it can also lead to diminished respect for the lives of the very ill, the frail elderly and seriously disabled.

The League remains concerned that ongoing debate and discussion about end-of-life care sometimes ignores the legitimate, if not majority, views expressed by so many groups in the past who have asserted respect for life of all Canadians, including the ill and disabled. The reliance upon certain previous reports, which have been shown to be expressions of euthanasia advocates, is an improper basis upon which to proceed.

The League made a submission to the federal inter-party Committee on Compassionate and Palliative Care that was established after the vote on Bill C-384, which had called for liberalization of assisted suicide laws. In the brief, the League recommended a strong commitment to improving palliative and other end-of-life care, pointing out that fear of being a burden to family members and of not having adequate pain relief and other care are both major reasons why some people believe euthanasia and

assisted suicide must be available. The committee's final report in 2011 contained many similar recommendations.

Media Watch

Numerous League members (and a number of non-members) alerted us to some inflammatory advertising on TVO's website and in an online TV guide about its January 16 and 17 showing of "Deliver us from Evil", an American-made documentary about an Irish priest convicted of numerous sex abuse crimes in California in the 60s and 70s. The documentary itself is old (made in 2005) and has no Canadian content, but the ad spoke of the "deep corruption of the Catholic Church" rather than the crimes and mismanagement of individual people that this story really concerns. In our letter to TVO we pointed out that this may seem like a fine distinction that doesn't alter the facts, but that in reality accuracy is as important as sensitivity in any re-telling of stories involving the sex abuse scandal. In reply their content and programming staff agreed that a more accurate and less offensive wording would be used in future advertising.

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Sun News, which many of our members enjoy watching on satellite channels, is currently seeking a change to its license that would require cable carriers to offer it on analog and digital basic service in Canada. A petition to support this effort is available at www.canadiantvfirst.ca.

Let the League know: If you see articles, notices of TV programs or other media content that you believe have serious anti-Catholic content, please contact us at ccrl@ccrl.ca to help us evaluate and respond in a timely way.

Support growing for Motion 408

Petitions are now available in support of Motion 408, which calls on the House of Commons "to condemn discrimination against females occurring through sex-selective pregnancy termination."

The motion, introduced by MP Mark Warawa (PC-Langley) in late September following the failure of Motion 312, cites numerous studies showing that the practice of aborting females due to a cultural preference for males is happening among certain communities in Canada, and that 92 per cent of Canadians believe such abortions should be illegal.

"Gender selection has been strongly condemned by all national political parties," said Mr. Warawa. "As well, the Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists of Canada has vehemently opposed sex-selective pregnancy termination."

The League has called for an end to the practice many times in the past, noting that the combination of education and a new law are required to guarantee true equality for the unborn, the most vulnerable population.

League annual dinner to take place May 30

If you live in the Toronto area, or are planning to visit in May, please set aside Thursday May 30 for our annual dinner and presentation of the Archbishop Exner Award for Catholic Excellence in Public Life. Guest speaker will be Stephen Woodworth, MP, who put forward Motion 312, which called for scientific study to support a modern legal definition of when life begins.

Chapter contacts

For upcoming meetings of our *Windsor-Essex chapter* contact Bob Baksi at robert@baksi.com.

Antigonish chapter: Contact Don Maclellan, chapter president, at maclellan_donald@yahoo.ca for details. From September to June the chapter meets the first Tuesday of each month.

St. Catharines Chapter: Contact Justin O'Donnell at justinodonnell@cogeco.ca.

The League is pleased to address parish and school groups in regions where we have a director available. Contact Joanne at 416-466-8244 or ccrl@ccrl.ca for more information. We have information and membership brochures available for parish events and literature racks. We would be happy to send you some upon request.

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1000—120 Eglinton Ave. East

Toronto ON M4P 1E2

416-466-8244

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