



Vancouver Archbishop J. Michael Miller released the following statement about the assisted-suicide bill

VANCOUVER (April 14, 2016) – Unfortunately, the “medical assistance in dying” legislation introduced in Parliament today sets Canada on the tragic course of offering death as the solution to pain and suffering.

Bill C-14 is problematic on many levels: ambiguous as to who qualifies for assisted suicide, lacking in conscience protection for institutions, and devoid of concrete financial support for palliative care alternatives to euthanasia and assisted suicide.

I am struck by the bleak dissimilarity between this proposed legislation and the papal document Pope Francis released last week, in which he called assisted suicide and euthanasia “serious threats to families worldwide.”

Pope Francis draws attention to the vulnerability and dependence of the elderly, which can lead to exploitation and abuse. Bill C-14 gives us cause to be greatly concerned for the vulnerable in our country. The draft legislation appears to make assisted suicide available to anyone whose death is deemed “reasonably foreseeable.” But whose death is not reasonably foreseeable? This level of ambiguity in a law that aims to regulate life and death is not only inexplicable, but also very dangerous.

While Bill C-14 acknowledges the “personal convictions” of health care providers not to be involved in euthanasia or assisted suicide, it fails to recognize the right of health care institutions to reject providing these measures to patients entrusted to their care. Catholic hospitals, so long an integral part of Canada’s health care system, are left completely unprotected by this proposed law.

It is also disappointing that the government has failed to deliver on its promise to provide funding for more home care and palliative care. The common good is not well served when Canadians are ready to deliver to sick and suffering individuals the option of a lethal injection, without offering them alternatives that demonstrate compassionate care and respect for the sanctity of life.

I recognize that our legislators face a difficult and agonizing task in attempting to draft legislation in conformity with the direction of the Supreme Court of Canada. They have the assurance of my prayers as they engage in this challenging endeavour over the coming weeks and months.

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Paul Schratz
Communications Director
communications@rcav.net
604-683-0281