

The Last Word

By Brent Rathgeber, MP

Controversy regarding Bill C-384



Many constituents have written, called and emailed me regarding a Private Members Bill introduced in the House of Commons by a Bloc Quebecois Member of Parliament, Francine Lalonde. Bill C-384 *An Act to amend the Criminal Code (right to die with dignity)*, seeks to amend the Criminal Code of Canada so that Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide would no longer be prosecuted.

Euthanasia is the deliberate killing of a person by act or omission with the purported purpose of eliminating suffering.

I am strongly opposed to both the concept behind, and the details of, this Bill.

Euthanasia is very different from respecting an individual's request not to have treatment or to withdraw treatment when it has dubious benefits. This further can be distinguished from other situations where medication is administered to relieve pain and suffering, even though it is foreseeable and, often the case, that this pain management might ultimately shorten the patient's life.

I do not accept the argument that Euthanasia or Assisted Suicide is a compassionate response to suffering. As life nears its natural end, the compassionate response to any pain and hardship is good palliative care, not the termination of the patient's life.

Our "Charter of Rights and Freedoms" part of our Constitution, provides that all Citizens are entitled to "Life, Liberty and Security of the Person". Accordingly, society depends upon the commitment of all citizens to uphold the dignity of every human life; the legalization of Assisted Suicide and Euthanasia would irreparably detract from this common goal.

Moreover, Doctors for centuries have taken an oath that they must heal and never kill. If Bill C-384 were to pass and Doctors were granted license to terminate life, a patient's trust in their doctor and the Doctor – Patient relationship would be irreparably damaged.

This legislation, if passed, would pose a threat to the elderly, the infirm, the disabled, newborns and all members of our society, who are unable to express an opinion or look after their own best interests.

I believe this issue, more than any other, has captured the attention of many constituents in the Edmonton - St. Albert Electoral District. My constituents are nearly unanimous in their opposition to this Bill and also to the concepts of Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide.

Rest assured that I share your point of view on this matter and will be voting against Bill C-384.

If you would like to discuss this or any other matter with me, do not hesitate to contact me at 780-475-6906 or by email at rathgb1b@parl.gc.ca.