



Nova Scotia Provincial Council
Catholic Women's League of Canada
Education & Health Communique # 1
One Heart, One Voice, One Mission
(Together We Serve)

To: Diocesan Counterparts (*For distribution to all parish councils*)
From: Sandy Mellish, Nova Scotia Provincial Education & Health Chairperson
Date: September 2016
Copied: Provincial President, Peggy MacNeil and Executive (for information)
National Chairperson, Fran Lucas (for information)



My first Commiqué as your incoming Provincial Chair for Education and Health is on a subject we have all heard much about, yet one, when, if approached with compassion and love, I believe our Christian views can still hugely impact upon.

As Canadians continue to grapple with the February 6th, 2016, Supreme Court decision Canada vs Carter; Bill C-14 and consequent royal assent on June 17, 2016, to allow assisted dying; we must now strive to choose **hope over despair**. There is still much to be done, and much we can do. Shifting the existing mindset is paramount to achieving any marked success.

Much **can** be achieved, if we ensure the focus and attention remains on *living life*, and *dying with dignity*. Even as the Supreme Court's decision, senate, and parliamentary input have put forth the legal way, for assisted dying to take place; there are still groups and individuals who are pressing the issue to include additional cases; such as those who present with birth deficiencies or those who may wish to opt for an **'in case'** scenario. That is, being able to access assisted dying if, in the future, they were to be diagnosed, for example, with dementia.

Even as I prepare to forward this communiqué; the group, The British Columbia Civil Liberties Association (BCCLA) is preparing a constitutional challenge in which it is alleged, that many suffering Canadians are excluded by the federal government's restrictive criteria for medical assistance in dying. The associate director of litigation for BCCLA, Grace Pastine says they have been overwhelmed by responses to its call for help in the case which to date; names one plaintiff, Julia Lamb a 25 year old who suffers from spinal muscular atrophy, a degenerative disease that she fears will eventually consign her to years of intolerable suffering. In addition, they have been stunned by its response to a crowd-funding campaign which just 10 days after initiating the constitutional challenge in late June, met its goal of \$75,000.000. **(1)**

In a recent *QEII Times, Innovation and Learning article* entitled "In Comfortable Surroundings". (2) One place where change is making other or alternate choices available is through an initiative at the QEII Health Services Centre and Emergency Health Services (EHS). Known as the Palliative Care at Home Program, it is funded in part by the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer.

Co-lead, Dr. Alix Carter; an emergency department physician there, says the focus of the program is to have trained and equipped paramedics care for dying patients at home whereby, the patient enrolls in the EHS Special Patient Program and remains at home for treatment of the illness. When pain or other symptoms reach a crisis point, the family or caregiver would call 911 and the paramedics would respond to provide the professionalism and necessary treatment at home, often staying hours at a time. This frees up hospitals, valuable health care dollars, emergency room doctors and provides the family with time to be a part of the patient's final journey in surroundings that are both known and comfortable.

Clearly, the topic of 'Legal Assisted Dying' is far from over...it would appear the subject of inclusion is now on the table. Opposing these views is important to ensure our Christian rights and beliefs to protect life at all stages are ongoing. In an attempt to counteract the projected inclusive clamour, the need remains to interject our 83,000 voices collectively.

Parents are the primary teachers of our faith and our belief structure. As the old Grosby, Stills, Nash, and Young song laments; it is incumbent upon us to 'Teach our Children Well'. It is common knowledge that what we learn in our homes is often carried on into our adult lives. Our primary focus now is to educate all people and to work toward providing and/or improving hospice facilities, the compassionate care of palliative patients and their caregivers, as a means to provide an alternate route for those faced with this very difficult crossroad in their lives.

Perhaps wonderful initiatives such as Palliative Care, Hospice, attending to our; and they really are **OUR, inflicted**, sick, and dying are areas where we, as CWL could assist by first, bringing awareness to the provisions and availability of such program(s) and by funding these valuable programs in our communities. Let your voice be heard!

I invite you to online search the reference articles below. I look forward, over the next two years to serving and providing our councils with informative views on the important subject of Education and Health.

1. *Joan Bryden, The Canadian Press; Article 'Canadians rejected for assisted dying prepare for legal battle' published 6 September 2016; page A6 of The Chronicle Herald.*

2. *QEII TIMES Available online @ QEII Times | The Chronicle Herald Summer 2016 (A Supplement to Chronicle Herald Section B) **Innovation and Learning; June 17 2016 page 14***