

Coalition for HealthCARE and Conscience

www.canadiansforconscience.ca



Medical Assistance in Dying (MAID) is a controversial procedure that has been permitted by the Supreme Court of Canada and Parliament. Some caregivers believe that it is morally acceptable to end the life of a patient upon request while others do not. Some go further and believe that all caregivers must help willing patients to end their lives prematurely. For example, the College of Physicians and Surgeons (CPSO) requires that conscientiously objecting physicians refer patients for MAID.

The Coalition for HealthCARE and Conscience represents more than 110 healthcare facilities (with almost 18,000 care beds and 60,000 staff) and more than 5,000 physicians across Canada.

Our members come from diverse perspectives, but all agree that taking a patient's life or referring for this procedure violates at least one of the following:

- The Hippocratic Oath;
- Our religious convictions;
- Our mission and values;
- Our professional ethics;
- Our creed; or,
- Our deeply held conviction that healthcare should heal people, not hasten death.

Our position is supported by Evangelical Christian, Roman Catholic and Orthodox Jewish theologians and moral authorities.

Our right to freedom of conscience and religion is enshrined s. 2 of the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. Our right to protection against discrimination is enshrined in s.15.

Many other provinces, such as Alberta, have adopted alternatives to effective referral and no other foreign jurisdiction that allows assisted suicide or euthanasia requires effective referral.

CPSO experts insist that conscientiously objecting physicians will have to leave family medicine, palliative care and other specialties and move to a smaller number of specialties like pathology or cosmetic surgery. The CPSO intends to investigate and discipline conscientious objectors.

A prominent Canadian medical ethicist at Queen's University, has advocated for a morals test to be applied to medical school applicants to screen out those with conscientious objections.

The government of Ontario has the opportunity to protect the conscience rights of physicians and other medical professionals by amending Bill 84 to include conscience protection. This would protect health care providers from those who seek to impose an absolute requirement to perform, refer for or assist in MAID. Conscientious objectors need to be able to continue to care for their patients.

Call for Conscience Campaign

February 6 - March 31, 2017

Please contact your Member of Provincial Parliament (MPP) to urge them to support:

1. An amendment to Bill 84 that would provide robust conscience protection. Health care workers should not be forced to refer for, perform or assist in MAID against their will and should not be discriminated against for taking this stand.
2. Creation of a Care Coordination Service consistent with the approach of Alberta, which protects both patients and health care workers.

To send a letter to your local MPP, you can:

1. Use the letter writing form on our website:
www.CanadiansforConscience.ca/ontario

OR

2. Mail it to them. You can find contact information for your MPP at www.bit.ly/findlocalmpp
Please ensure you include adequate postage if you are using letter mail. Please also mail the same letter to the Minister of Health:
Hon. Dr. Eric Hoskins
Minister of Health and Long-Term Care
10th Floor, Hepburn Block
80 Grosvenor St.
Toronto, ON M7A 2C4

Sample Letter to Legislators

Feel free to use this sample letter but personalize it wherever possible

Your name, address and date

Dear Member of Provincial Parliament

As your constituent, I am writing to express my deep concern regarding conscience rights. I understand that the Ontario government has introduced Bill 84, Medical Assistance in Dying (MAID) Statute Law Amendment Act which, at present, does not provide conscience protection for doctors and health care providers who conscientiously object to taking part in MAID.

Despite conscience protection in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and language in federal Bill C-14 that no health care professional should be compelled to provide or assist in providing these procedures, the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario (CPSO) requires an "effective referral" for "Medical Assistance in Dying". For doctors or health care workers who are unable to participate, an effective referral is akin to performing the procedure. Doctors may have an objection for any number of reasons: conscience, ethics, moral convictions or the Hippocratic Oath.

Ontario now has an opportunity to offer the same conscience protection that is in place in every other country worldwide where medical assistance in dying has been legalized. Why won't Ontario respect these fundamental rights?

To protect conscience rights and prevent the thousands of objecting physicians and health care providers from being forced out of their practice, I ask you to support the following:

1. An amendment to Bill 84 that would provide robust conscience protection: health care workers should not be forced to refer for, perform or assist in MAID against their will and should not be discriminated against for taking this stand.
2. Creation of a Care Coordination Service consistent with the approach of Alberta, which protects both patients and health care workers

I respectfully request that you make every effort to raise this issue with your colleagues as soon as possible. Know that I very much appreciate the important work you do each day on behalf of your constituents.

Thank you,