

RN Voice in National Discussion Regarding End-of-Life Care

Submitted by: RNAO Board of Directors

WHEREAS a national discussion is underway regarding end-of-life care with specific emphasis on 'dying with dignity' which involves a review of assisted suicide and/or euthanasia; and

WHEREAS the final decision on permitting assisted suicide and/or euthanasia rests with the public; and

WHEREAS there is support from all three provincial political parties to engage in a discussion regarding end-of-life care; and

WHEREAS RNAO is being asked by stakeholders and media to comment on this issue;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT RNAO urge the provincial and federal governments to engage in formal public dialogue on end of life issues and dying with dignity, including discussions, related to assisted suicide and/or euthanasia; and

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the following principles be considered when discussing assisted suicide and/or euthanasia:

- Personal autonomy and justice are fundamental principles
- Ensuring timely access to evidence-based palliative care must remain a top priority
- The government must reject calls for involuntary euthanasia
- Assisted suicide and/or euthanasia must never be considered within the context of cost-savings
- Procedural safeguards must be enacted, including:
 - Restricting assisted suicide and/or euthanasia to competent adults with terminal illness;
 - Requiring that requests for assisted suicide and/or euthanasia be initiated by the person seeking the service and would subject to a thorough review process that includes: independent confirmation on terminal illness; determination of capacity by a mental health-care professional (with appeal to the Consent and Capacity Board); providing access to all reasonable alternatives and establishing a waiting period.
- The practice of assisted suicide and/or voluntary active euthanasia must be restricted to professionals who have sought designated education and training.
- No health professional or organization should be required to participate in assisted suicide and/or voluntary active euthanasia.
- A provincial monitoring and reporting system must be developed, including a process for responding to complaints.