

## Quebec to vote on euthanasia bill that contradicts 'basic human values'

Deborah Gyapong Catholic News Service | Jan. 28, 2014  
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Quebec's euthanasia Bill 52 will come to a vote in February, and the province's bishops say it "goes against the most basic human values and contradicts the very purpose of medicine."

"Bringing about a patient's death is not a medical act," the bishops said in a Jan. 23 statement.

"To cause death to a sick person is not to care for him," the bishops said. "A lethal injection is not a treatment. Euthanasia is not a form of care."

The vote could come soon after the Quebec National Assembly reconvenes Feb. 11. The commission tasked with a detailed study of the bill "rushed through going through the articles to finish the amendments" in January, said Nicolas Steenhout, executive director of Living With Dignity, a coalition of people and groups opposed to euthanasia in Quebec.

Although dozens of amendments have been proposed, Steenhout said, the bill would still allow euthanasia, or the deliberate killing of patients.

"The feeling people on the street are getting is this is now something that is good," he said. "They really aren't informed of the problems in the law and the risks the law would bring, especially compared to what is going on in Belgium and Holland."

"People think there is abuse going on elsewhere but it will never happen in Quebec," Steenhout said. "I think that is a very dangerous impression to leave people with."

The bishops said if the legislation is passed, "the act of causing death would be considered a form of 'care' that could be offered and 'administered' to the terminally ill."

"We already have the right to refuse overtreatment. We already have the right not to have our lives artificially prolonged by being plugged in to all sorts of equipment," they said. "These are givens: We do not need a new law to guarantee them."

Steenhout noted that the legislation indicates a person must be at end of life before he or she can be euthanized, but it fails to define what "end of life" means.

"That causes huge risks, leaving the words completely open to interpretation and abuse," he said.

The amended bill also defines "medical aid in dying" as the administration of substances or drugs at the patient's request to relieve the patient's suffering "by causing death," Steenhout said. It means "a doctor is going to administer a poison to someone and they will die."

Euthanasia is legal in Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg.

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