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Help Promote LifeCanada E-Newsflash!

LifeCanada's monthly news bulletin offers quick news reports on the latest developments in life issues throughout Canada and around the world. We provide information on current research developments, pro-life events and activities, news reports and much more. Please consider forwarding this monthly E-Newsflash to family, friends, and others who would like to be kept up-to-date and informed on life issues. Sign up for E-Newsflash [here](#).

Exodus 2009 – A Future Without Abortion

Join pro-life Canadians from across the country in the 12th annual March for Life, marking 40 years of abortion in Canada. The National March for Life "Exodus 2009 – A Future Without Abortion" will be held in Ottawa on Thursday, May 14, 2009. Participants will gather on Parliament Hill at noon and begin a march through downtown Ottawa at 1:30 pm. For more information, [click here](#) or contact Campaign Life Coalition at 1-800-730-5358.

Assisted Suicide: Threat to Canada's Seniors

The threat of assisted suicide and euthanasia legislation in Canada has particular significance for seniors, the fastest growing demographic in Canada. We cannot ignore the potential for abuse of seniors under a law permitting assisted suicide.

- **Most assisted suicides are among seniors.**
Of the 60 individuals who died from assisted suicide in Oregon in 2008, the average age was 72. Most (77%) were over 65. The average age of the 401 people who have died from assisted suicide over the past decade was 69.
- **Canada's population is rapidly aging.**
Canada's senior population surpassed 4.3 million in 2006, rising to 13% of the general population, according to census data. Population projections estimate that seniors will account for nearly one-quarter of the population by 2026.
- **Canada's health care system is severely overtaxed.**



Quality palliative care is only available for less than 40% of those who need it. Considering the current shortage of resources, it is highly probable that a law permitting assisted suicide and/or euthanasia will open the door to covert pressure on the aged to end their lives by the quick, cheap method of assisted suicide before they become a drain on the system.

- **Almost 3 million Canadians participate in senior care.**
The care of our elderly is a significant factor for an increasing number of Canadians. 2.7 million Canadians provided some form of unpaid care to seniors with long-term health problems in 2007, and one-quarter of those caregivers (about 675,000 people) were themselves seniors. One third of those senior caregivers were over the age of 75.
- **The elderly are vulnerable to the fear of burdening others.**
Nearly 40% of patients who died from assisted suicide in Oregon said they chose to end their lives out of fear of being a burden to their family. Did coercion play a part in their decision? Were they made to feel that assisted suicide was the only acceptable choice for them? There is no way of knowing.
- **Legislative guidelines to prevent abuse of the vulnerable are not effective.**
It is impossible to regulate the interactions that take place in the privacy of homes, residences and doctor's clinics, where the suggestion of assisted suicide may significantly influence an already vulnerable senior. Oregon's guidelines leave seniors open to pressure from family members and others. Of the two witnesses required to sign off on the assisted suicide request form, one may be a direct inheritor of the individual's estate.

It is disturbing to consider that vulnerable elderly men and women may be pressured, perhaps subtly, to "voluntarily" end their lives. There are no safeguards possible to ensure such a tragedy does not become a reality.

Dignitas Wants Suicide Pacts

The Swiss death facilitator, Dignitas, provides lethal prescriptions (for a hefty fee) for people experiencing terminal disease, severe disability, or mental illness. Under liberal Swiss laws, foreigners travel to Zurich in order to end their lives at Dignitas' suicide facility.

Now the organization's leader, Ludwig Minelli, is seeking legal permission from the Government of Switzerland to help healthy people commit suicide. A healthy Canadian woman wants to kill herself in a suicide pact with her husband. Betty and George Coumbias, an elderly Vancouver couple, tried to commit suicide together at the Dignitas facility in Switzerland several years ago but were told they didn't qualify. George suffers from heart disease, but a Swiss doctor said his illness was not severe enough to warrant assisted suicide. Betty wants to die with George. In the 2007 documentary on Dignitas, "The Suicide Tourist", Betty said that while she loves their two daughters, she loves George more and "doesn't think she could face life without him".

Dignitas is under a two-year investigation by Swiss authorities into allegations that the organization is profiting from the fees it charges people to help them die. According to a 2008 account in the German newspaper *Der Tagesspiegel*, Dignitas charges around \$9,500(CAD) for assisted suicide and additional fees for disposing of the body if family is not present. Nearly 1,000 individuals have died through Dignitas since the organization opened in 1998. Minelli claims purely altruistic motives and says the facility adheres to a non-profit mandate, but those claims have been undermined by his refusal to disclose financial records.



Other allegations under investigation include accusations that personal belongings of patients who died at the facility went missing after their deaths, and the payment of significant sums to Minelli by individuals who died at the facility—including a payment of \$320,000 to Minelli by one elderly woman.

Charges of misconduct against Dignitas by former facility staff contributed to the decision to launch an investigation. One nurse, Soraya Wernli, went to the police with her concerns after she left the facility in 2005. She accused Dignitas of pressuring people to commit suicide in order to profit by their deaths. In a *Daily Mail* interview in January 2009, Wernli documented how she was asked to sort through garbage bags of individuals' belongings, which Minelli sold to pawn shops and second hand stores. Patients were required to sign forms that gave Dignitas the right to dispose of their personal effects.

Canadian Institute for Health Research Sponsors Pro-Assisted Suicide Event

The Canadian Institute for Health Research (CIHR) recently sponsored an event in Ottawa showcasing a leading Canadian activist for assisted suicide and euthanasia, Dr. Jocelyn Downie. The CIHR is a federal agency that funds research projects in Canada. The agency receives its funding from the federal government and is accountable to Parliament under the Minister of Health.

Downie is a Canada Research Chair in Health Law and Policy, and Director of the Health Law Institute at Dalhousie University. She has written multiple articles advocating for assisted suicide and euthanasia and is the author of [Dying Justice: A Case for Legalizing Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide in Canada](#).

Dr. Downie was the sole presenter at the event, titled "Who's Life is it Anyway? Assisted Suicide in Canada." Dr. Jose Perreira, head of palliative care services in Ottawa, had approached the CIHR with the offer of presenting the other side of the debate at the event. Dr. Perreira's experience in palliative care work in Switzerland, where assisted suicide is legal, led him to adopt the position that legalized assisted suicide was incompatible with palliative care. His offer was declined.

When challenged by audience members on the agency's promotion of assisted suicide, CIHR representatives insisted the event was unbiased and did not represent the official viewpoint of the agency. "We like to give one expert time to thoroughly present their views," stated moderator Colleen Flood, scientific director of CIHR. "Opposing viewpoints come forward through the audience participation." A CIHR event scheduled for March 31 on men's mental health issues, however, included a total of three experts on the panel.

In her presentation Downie advocated for the legalization of assisted suicide, dismissing concerns over the impact such a move would have on vulnerable populations and pointing to Oregon as a prototype to follow. Dr. Downie stated that she has already drafted legislation that would permit assisted suicide and is waiting for someone willing to bring such a bill forward.

Bloc MP Francine Lalonde has declared her intention of introducing a bill this spring to legalize assisted suicide and euthanasia, her third attempt to get such a law through Parliament. Her two previous bills were broadly-worded documents that would have permitted assisted suicide for a wide range of reasons including mental pain and depression.

Who Controls Reproductive Technologies in Canada?

The federal government is seeking to retain control of human reproductive technologies in a constitutional challenge case now before the Supreme Court of Canada. The Assisted Human Reproduction Act (AHR Act), legislation that sets the boundaries of the science in Canada, was



challenged by the province of Quebec over jurisdictional issues on regulations established under the Act. Quebec has argued that regulation of reproductive technologies belongs under provincial control.

The AHR Act was established March 29, 2004 to prohibit or regulate activities related to human reproductive technologies, including human cloning, embryonic research, gamete donation, sex-selection, and in vitro fertilization. While the Act has been criticized for permitting unethical activities such as research using human embryos, the Act does serve to establish a set of coherent standards for reproductive technologies that is consistent across Canada. If regulation of reproductive technologies passes to the provinces, it will become much more difficult to protect the current limits that have been established under the Act and ensure activities such as the creation of embryonic human-animal chimeras are prohibited.

The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC) and the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCC) are acting together as interveners in the case, arguing for the public interest in a consistent national standard of regulation on human reproductive technologies.

"We believe that human beings, created in the image of God, have inherent worth and dignity," stated EFC Vice-President and General Legal Counsel Don Hutchinson. "Human life, therefore, must be valued, respected and protected for its uniqueness. In Canada, this can best be done by regulating the artificial creation of human life with standards debated and established at the federal level."

The case is expected to proceed quickly. The hearing will be held at the Supreme Court of Canada on April 24, 2009, and a ruling is expected by the fall.

Three provinces have intervened on behalf of Quebec—Alberta, New Brunswick and Saskatchewan. British Columbia withdrew a request for intervener status earlier this spring.

New Youth Resource Available

An excellent pro-life resource for young people is available from the National Campus Life Network. [We Know Better Now](#) is a full-color newspaper insert that deals with pregnancy, abortion, sexuality, abstinence and other tough issues for young people. All material is based on current Canadian research and statistics. [Check it out here](#). For more information contact:

(Eastern Canada): director@ncln.ca / 416.483.7869

(Western Canada): westerncanada@ncln.ca / 778.833.0327

2009 National Pro-Life Conference – “Building Bridges: Making Choices for Life”

The 2009 National Pro-Life Conference will be held in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan on October 29-31 at the Hilton Garden Inn. The conference will be hosted by the Saskatchewan Pro-Life Association and co-sponsored by LifeCanada and Campaign Life Coalition. Information will be posted on www.lifecanada.org as it becomes available. Make your plans now to attend this excellent pro-life conference!

Send in Nominations for 2009 Mother Teresa Pro-Life Award

Do you know someone who has made an outstanding contribution to the cause of life in Canada? Nominate them to receive the 2009 Mother Teresa Pro-Life Award!



One year ago LifeCanada established a new pro-life award in recognition of the many dedicated workers in the Canadian pro-life movement, many of them serving in hidden ways that go unrecognized by the wider pro-life community. We sought and received permission from the motherhouse of the Missionaries of Charity in Calcutta, India, to name the award after Mother Teresa in keeping with her spirit of reverence for all human life. The annual award is extended to an individual who has made an outstanding contribution to the work of defending human life in Canada.

We welcome nominations for individuals whom you feel have had a particular impact on the work of promoting respect for life in our country. The deadline for nominations to be received in the LifeCanada office is **June 15, 2009**.

The nomination package is posted on the LifeCanada website homepage at www.lifecanada.org. Please contact the LifeCanada office for further information at 866-780-5433 or email at lifecanada@bellnet.ca.

2009 "Have we gone too far?" Campaign

LifeCanada is inviting groups across Canada to help spread a message that has been censored by Advertising Standards Canada (ASC). This industry body has declared our very successful 2008 national ad campaign to be "deceptive." The ads show a pregnant woman along with the words "9 Months – The length of time abortion is allowed in Canada. Abortion – Have we gone too far?"

Privately-owned billboards or trailers used as billboards are not subject to the ASC ruling. Many small communities have pro-life billboards at the entrance to their town. We are asking them to consider updating the message with our ad. We can adapt our artwork to fit the size of your billboard or trailer.

Help us keep this important message available to the public.

If you are interested in helping us to spread the word on abortion in Canada, contact Gudrun Schultz in our Ottawa office at 1-866-780-5433 or by email: gschultz@lifecanada.org.

NEW! French-language resource – fetal development brochure now available

LifeCanada has a new fetal-development resource available for French-language pro-life groups. "*Regardez-moi grandir!*" is a full color, beautifully illustrated brochure on the developmental stages of the unborn child, produced by Little One Publishing in Baltimore, Maryland. Contact the LifeCanada office for more information at 866-780-5433 or email at: lifecanada@bellnet.ca.

Get in-depth stories on current life issues: Subscribe to LifeCanada News

For thoughtful, well-researched information on current developments in Canada's pro-life movement, subscribe to our bi-monthly newsletter *LifeCanada News*. The newsletter provides in-depth information on current life issues and offers insightful commentary on developments in our society that impact respect for life in Canada. We cover difficult topics such as the ethics of end-of-life care, what's wrong with In Vitro Fertilization therapy, and why the crime of rape does not justify abortion.

Educate your community on current life issues by giving your pastor, parish priest or other community leader a gift subscription to the newsletter.



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Pre-Authorized Giving Plan

Become a monthly donor and support pro-life education at the national level! Monthly donations are a hassle-free way of investing in pro-life work throughout the year. Just complete a donor form, send in one cheque to the office, and the pre-authorized amount will be automatically deducted from your bank account each month.

If you would like to donate twenty-five, fifty, one hundred dollars or any other amount to LifeCanada each month, contact the office at 866-780-5433 or email us at info@lifecanada.org to obtain a pre-authorized donation form.

Become a Partner for Life

Invest in the work of creating a culture of life in Canada by advertising on our website at www.lifecanada.org or in our bi-monthly newsletter *LifeCanada News*. Take this great opportunity to build a pro-life network of organizations and businesses across the country and help secure LifeCanada's financial base.

A sponsorship ad on our website - \$500 for one year. A business card ad in *LifeCanada News* - \$125 per issue or \$600 for six issues.

For more information, please call LifeCanada's toll free number at 1-866-780-5433 or email us at info@lifecanada.org

Note: LifeCanada does not have a charitable tax number.