



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Montreal, November 16, 2011- Quebecers have overwhelmingly told the provincial government to respect existing laws banning euthanasia and focus instead on providing high quality palliative care, a study of submissions to the Special Commission on Dying with Dignity shows clearly.

“The numbers are black and white. In the presentations to the Commission there was 99 per cent agreement that palliative care is the dignified choice Quebecers want available at the end of life. At the same time, 60 per cent of the submissions opposed any opening for euthanasia. The government’s democratic direction should be clear,” said Linda Couture, director of the non-partisan, grass roots group, Living With Dignity.

Couture said an exhaustive Living with Dignity independent analysis of the 427 oral presentations and written submissions to the Commission, shows a mere two per cent of the submissions support assisted suicide.

Four per cent of those who made submissions did not have a clear position.

Only about a third of those who submitted to the commission were either somewhat or strongly in favor of euthanasia, Couture said: “This is a far cry from the inflated survey numbers often used in the media by advocates for legalizing or decriminalizing euthanasia in Quebec.”

A further analysis of the content of the submissions of those who apparently favored euthanasia showed significant confusion between directly taking a patient’s life – outlawed under the Criminal Code – and ceasing futile treatment, which is universally acknowledged as ethical and proper.

“Many of those who believe they support euthanasia really oppose overzealous treatment, that is disproportionate measures used to prolong the life of the terminally ill person when there is no realistic hope for improvement in his or her condition” says Dr André Bourque, president of LWD.

“The law already makes a very clear distinction between euthanasia and withdrawal of treatment. Palliative care rejects disproportionate treatment and focuses on comfort care for the person at the end of life. However, we need an extensive awareness campaign in order to overcome the current confusion.

”Dr Bourque says the statistical breakdown of the submissions gives the Commission members a clear direction on how Quebecers want to deal with end of life issues.

“This was not an interest-group survey. It was the National Assembly’s own public consultation. Quebecers have spoken. A clear majority told the politicians they want access to high quality palliative care, NOT euthanasia. MNAs must look beyond their own ideological preferences, heed the citizens, and do their duty,” said Dr Bourque.

Linda Couture noted that with all-but unanimous support for increased palliative care, it is crucial for members of the all-party special Commission to build social solidarity by focusing on what unites Quebecers rather than what divides the majority from a minority pressing for legalization or decriminalizing of euthanasia.

Commission members themselves were justifiably proud of the hearing process having set a record for participation in a National Assembly public consultation. If so many Quebecers across the province took the time to express their will, their marching orders to the government must be respected.

“By honoring the voices of those who spoke at the Commission hearings, the members can produce a final report and make recommendations that will build solidarity among Quebecers on deeply difficult and complex issues of end of life care. Let’s give life to what unites us,” said palliative care physician Dr Patrick Vinay, vice –president of Living with Dignity, For results analysis www.vivredignite.com/en/info_media.html

For interviews with spokespersons

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