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HOUSE OF COMMONS  
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## Canadians want to kill the pain, not the patient, says new survey

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OTTAWA – Canadians want improved access to end of life care, and they worry about the impact of legalized euthanasia on the elderly, according to a new survey. The Environics poll found that 95% of respondents want the government to improve access to palliative and hospice care for the dying.

Two-thirds (66%) of Canadians want the government to make this a high priority. More women than men (72%-59%) support improved access to palliative care.

Studies show fewer than a third of Canadians have good access to palliative care, which can provide pain relief, emotional and comfort care, and relief of suffering at the end of life. “I have made recommendations to the government to increase funding for palliative care,” said MP Maurice Vellacott (Saskatoon-Wanuskewin). “I will continue to urge such measures, with the confidence that such recommendations have the support of almost all Canadians,” he added.

Respondents were also questioned on elder abuse and euthanasia. Three-quarters of those polled worry that legalizing euthanasia could worsen the growing problem of elder abuse. Large majorities in all areas of the country express concern that elderly persons in abusive situations would be pressured to consent to euthanasia. Women (78%) are more likely than men (73%) to be concerned.

The survey also asked Canadians if they supported the legalization of euthanasia without consent - intentionally ending the life of a patient who has not given his/her consent for their life to be taken. Shockingly, 14% of Canadians expressed support for such a provision, but an overwhelming majority of Canadians - 82% - oppose legalization of euthanasia without consent.

Three-quarters (74%) of respondents also said they feared that the legalization of euthanasia - even if the law required consent - would result in a significant number of elderly, sick and disabled persons being euthanized WITHOUT their consent.

“Jurisdictions that have legalized euthanasia have yet to develop a law that effectively protects elderly, sick and disabled persons from euthanasia without their consent,” said Vellacott. “The stories of abuses from around the world continue to pile up. Once this genie has been let out of its bottle, the demand for euthanasia continues to grow, and the vulnerable become disposable victims,” he added.

“I look forward to an increased commitment to palliative and hospice care by all levels of government and all sectors of society as Canada continues to face an aging population,” said Vellacott. He concluded: “As a country we need to focus on killing the pain, not the patient.”