

*Private Members' Business*

We are proposing with this legislation that the government put forward legislation that we can examine and debate and then go to the public and allow it to discuss this in a rational way with a model before it.

The speaker says the medical profession is against this. This is not correct. The medical profession approaches death as an enemy to be fought. The interesting dilemma I think is that the medical profession has continuously encroached in this area. They have in hospitals what they call nocodes, individuals who are designated by family members as having reached the situation in which they will not use heroic intervention and if the individual is not capable of sustaining themselves they are allowed to pass away in dignity.

The question of murder is interesting. I guess we are talking today about the Criminal Code providing a definition of culpable homicide in providing somebody an opportunity to die with dignity. What my colleague is getting at is that he would like to see that area of culpable homicide removed from the Criminal Code so that terminally-ill patients, suffering tremendously and wishing to end their lives, can be assisted in a reasonable and practical way to do so. That is an element of compassion. It is not a matter that the courts are against and that the medical profession is against.

If we decide that it is not murder then it is not murder. In fact it is compassion and dignity that is being requested here.

The most outrageous thing I have ever heard is the suggestion that euthanasia is an alternative to providing quality palliative care. This is an outrageous statement and it is absolutely not true.

I read in detail the presentation of the the head of the Elisabeth-Bruyère institution in town. I could be mistaken because it was presented a couple of months ago, but I read the testimony in detail. The individual has a perspective on euthanasia that is hostile and, at the same time, is tremendously concerned about providing palliative care.

The government on the other side of the House has created an interesting situation in health care where it

has limited the funds available to provinces. One of the things that has suffered is funding for palliative care. The individual when he appeared before that previous committee on euthanasia made a plea for increased sensitivity for palliative care. I make that plea now, my colleague makes that plea and every person in our party makes that plea. Let those funds go so that people do not have to die in pain and agony, so that they can make a choice of going to a palliative care unit where they get decent treatment and can end their last days in relative comfort and dignity.

• (1515)

That is the point the witness was making. The witness was personally opposed to euthanasia but was strongly speaking for palliative care. We strongly speak for that too. We need more resources in that area, but at the same time the door should not be closed on an individual who says: "I can no longer live in unbearable pain, with a lack of dignity and have no control over myself or my bodily functions. I wish to end my life and I wish to have medical assistance to do so".

It is interesting that we in the House can no longer use the murder argument no matter what our perspective is. This is not murder. These are individuals requesting assistance to terminate their lives. They are incapable of doing it safely and effectively. They ask for medical assistance and there is a willingness to provide that on the part of medical practitioners.

We wish to see more palliative care but we also wish to see options for those people who wish to have them. Of course the courts will carry out the law of this land. If this institution decides that it is not culpable homicide, the courts will read it that way too and people will not have to appear before the courts for assisting a terminally ill patient to die.

There certainly are standards. In the Netherlands it is an outrageous argument to make the statement that it passed this particular legislation because it was against providing palliative care. That is just unmitigated nonsense.