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CASP and CCSMH Urges Action on National Suicide Prevention Strategy Before Parliament Considers Legislation on Assisted Suicide.

In response to proposed legislation before the House of Commons that would legalize assisted suicide the Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention and the Canadian Coalition for Seniors Mental Health are asking that the federal government take action and support a national strategy for suicide prevention. Under Bill C-384 the criminal code would be amended to provide provisions for assisted suicide including people living with persistent mental pain. Almost 4,000 people die every year by suicide affecting nearly 3,000,000 Canadians. Canada remains one of the few industrialized countries in the world that does not have a national suicide prevention strategy.

“ Most people who die by suicide were experiencing intense feelings of sadness, emotional pain and hopelessness. Suicide is the most preventable type of death. With compassion, understanding and access to appropriate resources most people who are suffering and at risk of suicide will recover and experience a life that is meaningful, hopeful and satisfying”, said Tim Wall, Executive Director of CASP. Wall added that “the many added stressors in peoples lives, such as financial worries and the economy, a pan Canadian flu epidemic, the environment and threats caused by flooding, fires, draughts, BSE etc may result in people having diminished capacity to cope, lowered resiliency and become more vulnerable to thoughts of suicide. “

According to Marion Cooper, President of CASP, “Assisted suicide is a complex issue for which there is no easy answer. It is our belief and one shared by our partners in mental health that before we start a national conversation on assisted suicide we should first have a national conversation and a strategy for preventing suicides. It’s disappointing and ironic that parliament and the federal government has yet to come out publicly in support of suicide prevention and CASP’s Blue Print for a National Suicide Prevention Strategy but seems prepared to discuss legislation on assisted suicide. Our position is not one that is against assisted suicide but rather is for suicide prevention and for the federal government taking specific and direct action on this important public health issue. Canada must have a national strategy and the federal government must become a partner.”

For more information on CASP’s Blue Print for a National Suicide Prevention Strategy go to www.casp-acps.ca.

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