

Delay the dying law

In less than three months, Canada's long-standing criminalization of assisted suicide becomes null and void. Unless new legislation is hurriedly passed — or the Feb. 6 deadline is extended — Canadians and their doctors will be forced to make end-of-life decisions in legal limbo.

That mustn't happen. Nor should the newly elected Liberal government rush to deliver legislation on what is, quite literally, a life-and-death issue. The only responsible option at this point is to formally ask the Supreme Court of Canada to extend the deadline for crafting a new law by several more months.

Given that parliamentary business was interrupted by the longest election campaign in modern history, and a new government has taken office facing a steep learning curve, it's hard to imagine the court rejecting a request for more time. The case for delay is even stronger now that both Ontario and British Columbia have signalled that a postponement would be welcome.

As reported by The Canadian Press, B.C. Health Minister Terry Lake said his province is amenable to working with Ottawa over a longer period, stressing that assisted suicide legislation will require a great deal of thought: "The more time to be able to do that, the better." Ontario Health Minister Eric Hoskins added that "Ontario would be very understanding if the federal government were to ask for an extension."

Quebec has less to say on the matter because it is already well ahead of Ottawa, having crafted its own right-to-die law, set to take effect on Dec. 10.

Quebec's legislation sets out strict rules, with doctors allowed to give lethal injections only to fully competent adults. Assisted suicide is limited to people in an advanced state of irreversible decline, suffering constant and unbearable pain, and who have no reasonable chance of relief. Two doctors need to sign off on the assisted death, and there's a two-week period of reflection before lethal drugs are administered.

That's a far cry from federal law, which deems participating in an assisted suicide a crime punishable by imprisonment. The Supreme Court unanimously ruled in February that Ottawa's existing rules amount to cruelty, condemning people who are terminally ill to "severe and intolerable suffering." The court gave Parliament exactly one year to correct that injustice.

Such legislation must be drafted with great care, and that will require more time.

The Independent & Free Press

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Letters to the editor

Lions Club sets the Santa record straight

An article and letter to the editor that was circulated in the Nov. 12 edition of the Georgetown Independent & Free Press has brought about many questions and concerns surrounding the credibility of our Halton Region Police Services and their role in our community, more specifically, their role in the Santa Claus Parade.

For 85 years, the community of Georgetown and surrounding areas have enjoyed the benefits of a family outing to our annual Santa Claus Parade.

While some may have interpreted the statement in this recent article as an indication that Halton Regional Police are not supporting this year's parade, the truth is totally opposite.

Halton Regional Police play a vital role in our annual parade.

With an increase in popularity and float entries this year, the Lions Club was looking for additional adult volunteers.

Along with Pay Duty Officers, Halton Regional Police are supplying all the Auxiliary Officers they have available for the night of the parade.

Maintaining public safety is the number one priority of Halton Regional Police and the Georgetown Lions Club while, at the same time, bringing a fabulous parade for you and your families to enjoy.

On behalf of the Georgetown Lions Club, I apologize for any misunderstandings.

It was not intended to be communicated that Halton Regional Police do not contribute to this ever-so-popular annual event, but more of an emphasis on a need for additional help from adult volunteers in addition to the already appointed Auxiliary Officers.

The timing of Santa's arrival at the mall this year has sparked many concerns from the community of Halton Hills. For 24 years, since the mall became an enclosed shopping centre, management at the Georgetown Market Place has always co-ordinated with the Lions Club for Santa's arrival.

Even when The Lions Club made the decision to move the parade to Saturday evenings, the mall gladly co-operated

and had Santa arrive on the next day (Sunday).

Unfortunately, this year, there was a misprint on the Lions Club website, listing the parade as Nov. 14.

The mall planned their events for Sunday, Nov. 15. In order to secure these famous characters for the event, it requires long-lead times and cancelling would result in major penalties. After several discussions between the mall management and The Lions Club, it was decided that we would keep the events separate for this year.

The mall has always been a big supporter of the Lions Club Parade and will continue to do so.

In light of what has transpired, we hope this letter will provide some clarity and we look forward to your continued support of both events.

We appreciate everyone's understanding and wish you all a Safe and Happy Holiday and look forward to seeing you all on the night of Saturday Nov. 21, 2015 at 5 p.m.

Louie Violo,
Chair, Santa Claus Parade 2015
Lions Club Of Georgetown