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**DISABILITY RIGHTS ACTIVISTS DECRY N.L. DOCTOR’S SUICIDE SUGGESTION**

Canadian disability rights activists are dismayed to learn that a Newfoundland doctor suggested assisted suicide in lieu of treatment for a young woman with disabilities. Last November, 25-year-old Candice Lewis was hospitalized in St. Anthony, Newfoundland. The young woman has cerebral palsy and spina bifida, as well as a seizure disorder. A doctor suggested that Lewis receive assistance in ending her life, and called Lewis’ mother Sheila Elson “selfish” for refusing to consent.  Lewis has since recovered.

Taylor Hyatt, policy analyst and outreach coordinator for Toujours Vivant-Not Dead Yet – a nonreligious and nonpartisan organization of people with disabilities who oppose assisted suicide – stated “The doctor’s words are appalling. Yet disabled Canadians saw this coming.”

She noted that this incident confirms the fears held by many of the effect of devaluation of the lives of people with disabilities. “Many people believe it’s better to be dead than disabled, this is the impetus behind the ‘death with dignity’ movement. The legalization of euthanasia and assisted suicide are particularly dangerous for disabled people, who already face pressure to sign ‘do not resuscitate’ orders when we go into hospital. The safeguards in the current legislation will not prevent people from being wrongly killed,” said Hyatt. Bill C-14, which came into effect in 2016, legalized euthanasia and assisted suicide for those with “grievous and irremediable” medical conditions – including disabilities.

“Equally troubling is the fact that no one has spoken to Ms. Lewis about the situation.” said Hyatt. “Only her mother’s comments have been highlighted by media outlets, even though Ms. Lewis was reportedly distressed when she learned about the doctor’s remark. This is another example of how disabled voices continue to go unheard.”

Toujours Vivant-Not Dead Yet (TVNDY) is an organization by and for people with disabilities and our allies. Its goal is to inform, unify and give a voice to disabled people who oppose assisted suicide, euthanasia and other discriminatory end-of-life practices.

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