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ROAD TO MERCY EXAMINES CANADA'S FIRST LEGALLY SANCTIONED DOCTOR-ASSISTED DEATHS, PREMIERING OCTOBER 6 ON CBC-TV

*Canadian doctors and their patients struggle to identify the limits
of the newly granted right to die under a broad Supreme Court decision,
the first of its kind outside Europe*

*"Future generations will look back on the legalization of assisted suicide as the
most important social, ethical, legal values decision of the 21st-century."*

- Margaret Somerville, Bill C-14 Parliamentary Committee Hearings

Toronto, ON (August 25, 2016) – *Road to Mercy* documents Canada's journey into the furthest ethical frontier – a place where doctors are allowed to take a life and where society must decide on the circumstances under which they can. Through the stories of patients who seek medically assisted death and the committed physicians who agree to help them, the original one-hour documentary chronicles Canada's first legal doctor-assisted deaths and peers into the extreme boundaries of this practice. Following stories in Canada and in Belgium, where doctor-assisted death has been legal for more than a decade, ***Road to Mercy*** reveals the moral and ethical quandaries at the heart of medical aid in dying. ***Road to Mercy*** premieres on **FIRSTHAND**, **Thursday, October 6 at 9 p.m. (9:30 p.m. NT) on CBC-TV.**



**Click on links for [Road to Mercy Media Kit and Photos](#)
Click on link for [Road to Mercy Trailer](#)**

After years of debate and lawsuits, medically assisted death is finally legal in Canada, following a decision by the Supreme Court to decriminalize it on February 6, 2015, in the *Carter v Canada* case. This landmark ruling allows doctors to help end their patient's life when "consenting adults determine they cannot tolerate the physical or psychological suffering brought on by a severe, incurable illness, disease or disability." The Supreme Court allowed the federal government 12 months to enact new legislation that amends the Criminal Code and upholds these fundamental human rights. When the deadline passed with no law in place, the Court granted a four-month extension during which time Canadians had access to physician-assisted death (PAD) under the broad Supreme Court guidelines. ***Road to Mercy*** is a window on the historical period between February 2015 and June 2016 – after the Supreme Court ruling and before Canada's first law on medical assistance in dying (MAID).

As the new ethical frontier opens up, stakeholders – doctors and patients – weigh the options and test the boundaries as they put Canadians’ newly granted right to die into practice. The main characters in ***Road to Mercy*** capture this changing legal landscape as they navigate the ethical dilemmas that must ultimately be addressed through federal legislation. The documentary follows the stories of:

- Maureen Taylor (Toronto, ON), an advocate for the right to die with dignity and the provincially appointed Co-Chair of the Ontario Advisory Panel On Physician-Assisted Dying. In this capacity, she canvassed various stakeholders – associations, medical personnel and patients – on where they stood on the issue before publishing recommendations.
- Dr. Louis Roy (Quebec City, QC), a committed palliative care physician who provides MAID, and his terminally ill patient Danielle Lacroix, who is certain she wants assisted dying in the final stages of her cancer. In Quebec, the province pre-empted the Supreme Court, passing end-of-life-care legislation in 2014, which came into effect December 2015. Unlike the unanimous and broad Supreme Court decision, the Quebec legislation limits MAID to terminal patients.
- John Tuckwell (Edmonton, AB), diagnosed with ALS in 2012, his sister Cathy, and his ALS physician, Dr. Wendy Johnston. John plans on a doctor-assisted death when his quality of life has deteriorated to a state where he no longer enjoys living – something he finds difficult to pinpoint. Dr. Johnston respects his desire for physician-assisted death (PAD), but feels she can’t personally offer it. She struggles to balance her professional duty to her patients and her medical code of ethics.
- Amy De Schutter (Belgium), a 29-year-old woman losing her battle with mental illness, and Dr. Lieve Thienpont, the psychiatrist handling her request for medical assistance in dying. Dr. Thienpont oversees Amy’s application, as she meets with psychiatrists and other mental health professionals in the lengthy approval process to die. Belgium has the world’s most progressive stance on medical assistance in dying. Belgium legalized euthanasia in 2002, going beyond terminal illness to provide medical assistance to persons with degenerative disorders and mental illness, in addition to advance directives in the event that a person becomes irreversibly unconscious. These scenarios made legal in Canada under the recent Supreme Court ruling *Carter v Canada* gives our nation the legal framework to replicate Belgian law.

Road to Mercy is directed, produced and written by award-winning filmmaker Nadine Pequenezza, of HitPlay Productions, for broadcast on CBC-TV’s **FIRSTHAND**.

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About *FIRSTHAND*

FIRSTHAND is a point-of-view documentary series that gets to the heart of issues that matter to Canadians. Celebrating the great Canadian tradition of documentary, Canada's best filmmakers bring films with compelling characters, harrowing tales and unforgettable moments. With unique and often unexpected access, these stories ignite discussions and open dialogues about issues relevant in today's society. For more information, visit cbc.ca/firsthand.

About HitPlay Productions

Toronto-based HitPlay Productions was founded in 2010 by award-winning producer, director and writer Nadine Pequenezza, best known for her observation films offering unique access to character-driven stories about social justice. Her nominations and awards include: a Canadian Screen Award for Best Writing in a Documentary, seven CSA and Gemini nominations, a Gold Hugo from the Chicago International Film Festival, a Golden Sheaf from the Yorkton Film Festival, and a Silver Gavel Award honourable mention from the American Bar Association. As the founder of HitPlay Productions, Pequenezza has produced and directed the company's feature documentary projects, including: *Up In Arms*, *Inside Disaster*, and *Raising Cassidy*. Her most recent documentary feature, *15 to Life: Kenneth's Story*, premiered in August 2014 on the award-winning PBS series POV and garnered one CSA win and three nominations: best directing, best writing and the Donald Brittain best social/political documentary. For more information, visit hitplayproductions.ca.

About CBC/Radio-Canada

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*For more information including series synopses, press releases, hi-res images, video clips and bios, please visit the **CBC Media Centre** at cbc.ca/mediacentre.*

For more information, contact:

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