



Thursday, March 10th, 2016

CANADIAN SOCIETY OF PALLIATIVE CARE PHYSICIANS JOIN VULNERABLE PERSONS STANDARD CALL TO PARLIAMENTARIANS

The [Canadian Society of Palliative Care Physicians](#) has formally endorsed the Vulnerable Persons Standard. From the Canadian Society of Palliative Care Physicians:

"The CSPCP joins community and health organizations from across Canada to call on Parliament to adopt a series of evidence-based safeguards designed to protect the lives of vulnerable Canadians....The CSPCP publicly endorses the need for robust safeguards regarding hastened death to ensure the protection of all persons vulnerable by condition, situation or disability. We continue to advocate that access to high quality palliative care must be made available for all Canadians living with life-limiting conditions and must be prioritized within any legislative response to physician-hastened death."

Dr. Susan MacDonald of the Canadian Society of Palliative Care Physicians, says, "This debate highlights uneven access to quality palliative services in Canada. As we recognize the right to physician-assisted death, we must also redouble our efforts to ensure that Canadians have access to adequate palliative care options and other supports for patients and caregivers."

"The decision to die should not become a default choice for vulnerable Canadians. We need safeguards to ensure that palliative care and relevant support options have been exhausted," adds Dr. Balfour Mount, Professor and Emeritus Flanders Chair of Palliative Medicine, McGill University.

The Vulnerable Persons Standard was developed by a group of advisors with

expertise in medicine, ethics, law, public policy and needs of vulnerable persons. The Standard balances equitable access to physician-assisted dying with important safeguards to protect vulnerable people. To learn more about the more than 30 organizations supporting the Standard, please visit us at www.vps-npv.ca.

DID YOU KNOW:

The Vulnerable Persons Standard is entirely consistent with the Court's ruling in

Carter. In fact it meets the high standard imposed by the Court to protect vulnerable persons from being induced to commit suicide. Constitutional law experts and human rights lawyers who support the Vulnerable Persons Standard agree that adopting the Standard is an appropriate exercise of legislative authority and consistent with the principle of a constitutional dialogue between the Courts and the legislature.

It has been said that the *Carter* decision establishes the "floor", or minimum standard, which an assisted dying law must meet in Canada. Some have interpreted this to mean that the broad terms utilized in the Court's decision should not be defined and that criteria for providing an assisted death should not restrict an absolute right of access. This interpretation should not stand.

Nothing in the

Carter decision, or in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms should be interpreted in such a way as to put vulnerable persons at risk. If

the *Carter* decision establishes a floor, it is a floor upon which must be constructed a robust set of safeguards for the protection of vulnerable persons.

IN THE NEWS:

Listen to Michael Bach, Executive Vice-President of the Canadian Association for Community Living and Adjunct Professor, Disability Studies, at Ryerson University on [Viewpoints \(beings at 5:15\)](#).

Listen to Trudo Lemmons, Professor and Scholl Chair in Health Law and Policy at the University of Toronto, on [CBC Metro Morning](#).

The Vulnerable Persons Standard is a series of evidence-based safeguards intended to protect the lives of Canadians. These safeguards will help to ensure that Canadians requesting assistance from physicians to end their life can do so without jeopardizing the lives of vulnerable persons who may be subject to coercion and abuse.

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