



Ottawa May 31, 2016

A Call to Parliamentarians from the National Disability Rights Community

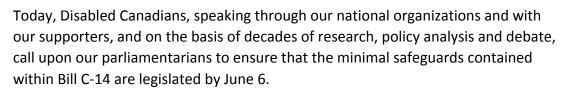
"To Pass Bill C-14 to Ensure Constitutional Rights of Vulnerable

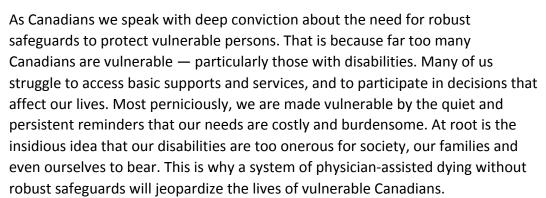
Persons"

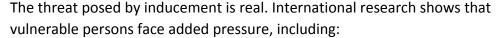


Dear Members of Parliament and Senators,

When the Supreme Court of Canada legalized euthanasia and assisted suicide in February 2015, it also declared that safeguards must be designed to protect vulnerable persons from harm.







- 1) coercion by others who are unable or unwilling to meet caregiving needs;
- 2) hopelessness arising from self-stigma and negative stereotypes about one's
- 3) distorted insight into one's condition and available options, as a result of mental health issues;























- 4) psychological pressure resulting from interactions with health professionals; and,
- 5) lack of access to needed supports and information about alternate options.



While Bill C-14 does not fully address all the risks of error and abuse that arise from these realities, it does recognize that they exist and that safeguards are essential to protect the lives of vulnerable Canadians.



Bill C-14 also commits to study outstanding issues concerning advance directives, mature minors, and persons whose sole underlying condition is related to mental health. Despite this commitment, some argue access on these grounds must be included now, in this very first federal legislative framework. We respectfully disagree. Bill C-14 doesn't take these issues off the table. It says they merit further study and dialogue. Given the significant risks these issues raise for vulnerable persons, we believe Bill C-14 represents a more prudent approach than a legislative vacuum.





Of course, some have also suggested that there will be no real risk if Parliament fails to act now. We strongly disagree. Canadians seeking assisted death will face different rules and medical professionals will have different guidelines depending on their province or territory.



Currently, only five provinces have legislated standards of informed consent, none of which require assessment of vulnerability to undue influence or inducement to commit suicide.



There is only one way to protect the constitutional rights of Canadians in a system for medically-assisted death, and that is by Parliament fulfilling its obligation to establish a pan-Canadian system of safeguards.



We are calling on Parliament to respect the rights of Canadians to both autonomy and to protection of life. Bill C-14 is not a perfect bill — but it does include at least minimal safeguards that help to strike this balance.



It is important to recall that every Canadian is potentially vulnerable and that every vulnerable Canadian is at risk of inducement in a system without adequate safeguards. We ask for your support in passing this important legislation.



Sincerely,

Council of Canadians with Disabilities Canadian Association for Community Living





Alliance for Equality of Blind Canadians

Canadian Down Syndrome Society

Canadian Hospice Palliative Care Association

Communication Disabilities Access Canada

DisAbled Women's Network (DAWN) Canada

L'Arche Canada

National Educational Association of Disabled Students (NEADS)

National Network for Mental Health

People First of Canada

Resources Supporting Family and Community Legacies Inc. (Legacies Inc.)

Association pour l'intégration sociale (Région de Québec)

Community Living Ontario

Inclusion Alberta

Inclusion BC

New Brunswick Association for Community Living

Newfoundland and Labrador Association for Community Living

Nova Scotia Association for Community Living

Prince Edward Island Association for Community Living

Saskatchewan Association for Community

Alberta Committee of Citizens with Disabilities

ARCH Disability Law Centre

Autistic Self Advocacy Network (Winnipeg)

Brockville & District Association for Community Involvement

Centre for Inclusion and Citizenship, UBC

Centre for Independent Living in Toronto

Citizens With Disabilities Ontario

Coalition of Persons with Disabilities Newfoundland and Labrador

Community Living Selkirk

Durham Association for Family Respite Services

Fredericton Association for Community Living

Manitoba League of Persons with Disabilities Ethics Committee

Nova Scotia League for Equal Opportunities

PEI Council of People with Disabilities

Toronto Board of Rabbis

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