

Bill C-14 :

THE MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING ACT



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CANADA



DAN ALBAS, MP
CENTRAL OKANAGAN
SIMILKAMEEN - NICOLA



OTTAWA

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CONSTITUENCY

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Dear Constituent;

The Medical Assistance in Dying Act (Bill C-14) would amend Canada's Criminal Code to allow medically-assisted suicide for terminally-ill patients. The new law would allow Canadians, who are at least 18 years old, to make a voluntary request (provided it is informed consent) for medically-assisted dying if they have a "grievous and irremediable medical condition."

To request assistance to die, the person has to meet all the following:

- ◆ They must have serious and incurable illness, disease or disability
- ◆ They must be in an advanced state of irreversible decline in capability
- ◆ Their illness, disease or disability causes them physical or psychological suffering that is intolerable to them and can't be relieved under conditions they consider acceptable
- ◆ Their natural death has become reasonably foreseeable

I am asking you for your feedback on how you would have me vote on Bill C-14 when it makes its final appearance on the House of Commons at "Third Reading."

There are relatively few opportunities for MPs to vote on so clearly defined an issue of conscience. I believe that when decisions such as this come before me as a Member of Parliament, it is necessary for me to put the question to my Constituents.

I believe that the people of this riding, and by extension, the people of Canada as a whole, are for the most part good, moral, people. Therefore, by way of this letter, I am asking for your guidance and for you to tell me how you would have me cast my vote on this important legislation.

The Supreme Court has given Parliament a deadline of June 6th to pass legislation. I expect this will be given high priority by the Liberal Government and it will move quickly through the required process so let me know your thoughts as soon as you can.

Sincerely,

Dan Albas, MP

Bill C-14 : *The Medical Assistance in Dying Act*

Voices in favour of Bill C-14

"After the Supreme Court of Canada's (SCC) unanimous decision in *Carter* [*Carter v. Canada*, the ruling which mandates assisted suicide], it was no longer a question of whether we would have medical assistance in dying, but how we would make it available. Based on the current evidence, we believe this is the best approach to ensure that dying patients who are suffering unbearable pain have the choice of a peaceful death and that the vulnerable are protected."

- **Jody Wilson Raybould, Minister of Justice**

"On Thursday, the federal government unveiled its proposal for meeting the court's ruling. Bill C-14 is narrow in scope, and replete with checks and balances to ensure informed and voluntary consent from those who wish to die. It takes a cautious approach – and in our view, a responsible one."

- **Editorial, *Ottawa Citizen***

"But for the most part, Canadians should be relieved the government is moving slowly. The balance Ottawa needs to achieve is one where no one is left needlessly suffering as the result of undue caution, but no one is hurt by undue haste."

- **Editorial, *Globe and Mail***

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"Today marks an important moment for Canadians. Steps were made to promote a more compassionate health-care system that will empower patients with grievous and irremediable medical conditions to choose among a broader range of appropriate end-of-life options. The federal government took a moderate approach to this complex issue and provided specifics around the definition, consent and eligibility requirements to receive medical assistance in dying."

- **Anne Sutherland Boal, CEO, Canadian Nurses' Association**

"As Bill C-14 says, 'robust safeguards, reflecting the irrevocable nature of ending a life, are essential to prevent errors and abuse.' The proposed legislation requires informed consent, a witnessed request in writing, the approval of two physicians and a 15-day waiting period, among other safeguards."

"...the Liberal government has done a credible job of crafting a compassionate law that would have given Sue Rodriguez the help in dying that she sought, while preventing vulnerable people from being drawn, in moments of weakness or despair, to needlessly end their lives."

- **Editorial, *Toronto Star***

Voices opposed to Bill C-14

"No other foreign jurisdiction in the world that has legalized euthanasia/assisted suicide forces health-care workers, hospitals, nursing homes or hospices to act against their conscience or mission and values. These conscience rights must be preserved."

- **Larry Worthen, Executive Director, Christian Medical and Dental Society of Canada**

"This bill does not provide effective oversight of the law. This bill provides the perfect cover for acts of murder by enabling "other people" who directly participate in the act. This bill does not provide conscience protection for medical professionals who oppose killing patients. This bill is not a harm reduction model, nor does it provide safe spaces for people who are particularly opposed to being killed by lethal injection."

- **Alex Schadenberg, Executive Director, Euthanasia Prevention Coalition**

"As a national citizen action organization, **Canada Family Action** has worked to raise the level of awareness on the issue of assisted suicide and we continue to express serious concerns that it cannot be legalized without placing vulnerable citizens at risk."

We expect the Federal Government to accept that their **primary responsibility** to us, is to provide for the safety and security of the citizens they serve...especially the vulnerable.

We cannot support the Liberal Government's bill to legalize assisted suicide."

- **Doug Sharpe, President, Canada Family Action**

"Once suicide has been accepted, as a formal matter of law, not as something we should wish at all times to prevent, but as relief from intolerable suffering; once it has been established that an individual has a right to such relief, not by his own hand but by another's; once assisting in suicide has been transformed from a crime into a public service, there is no grounds to limit that relief, that right or that service to some sufferers and not to others."

"We do not accommodate people, let alone children, who want to kill themselves. We try to stop them, by force if necessary, a desire to kill oneself having been seen until now as prima facie evidence of mental incapacity. You see a guy standing on a ledge, you pull him in. But assisted suicide asks us to invert that convention: not merely to allow the suicide to proceed, but to facilitate it, indeed to subsidize it."

- **Andrew Coyne, columnist, *National Post***

"...we never expected it to be so restrictive. The most shocking aspect of the tabled legislation is its use of vague, unfamiliar language indicating that assisted dying will only be accessible to people whose natural death is 'reasonably foreseeable.' This means patients suffering from muscular and neurological disorders like amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), who have active, brilliant minds that are trapped in completely failing bodies, might not qualify."

- **Dying with Dignity Canada**

Further information on Bill C-14

For more information on Bill C-14 and links to the websites of the organizations listed below, please visit:

www.danalbas.ca/BillC-14

This page includes the following information:

- **Text of Bill C-14**
- **Report of the Special Joint Committee on Physician-Assisted Dying**
- **Dissenting Report of the Special Joint Committee on Physician-Assisted Dying**

This page includes links to the following websites:

- **Canadian Medical Association**
- **Canadian Nurses Association**
- **Dying with Dignity**
- **Euthanasia Prevention Coalition of Canada**
- **Coalition for HealthCARE and Conscience**

**Should Dan Albas, MP vote for or against Bill C-14
*The Medical Assistance in Dying Act?***