



Canadian Association
for Community Living
Association canadienne pour
l'intégration communautaire

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Essential Next Steps in Medical Aid in Dying - Vigilance, Safeguards & Obligation

On Friday June 17, the federal Medical Aid in Dying law was enacted by Parliament. That the new law commits to not perpetuating disadvantage or social vulnerability, and that it incorporates both substantial and procedural safeguards consistent with that commitment, reflects a balanced approach on the part of Parliament. Many have contributed to the law reform process, including thousands of Canadians represented by local-to-national disability and other organizations who expressed their concerns and voices through support of the 'Vulnerable Persons Standard' at www.vps-npv.ca.

Joy Bacon, President of the Canadian Association for Community Living (CACL) said, "As a founding member of the Vulnerable Persons Standard, CACL is grateful for the leadership of the Prime Minister and his key Ministers on this file including Minister Wilson-Raybould, Minister Philpott and Minister Qualtrough. We feel some security that equal respect and value for the lives of Canadians with disabilities is recognized and affirmed in the new law. We hope this government's solid leadership on this matter will continue and that essential protections - like ensuring that eligibility is only for those who are at the end of life - will be maintained in the face of pressure to expand access."

With anticipated studies on potential access by mature minors, through advance directives and on the sole basis of mental health conditions, CACL and many other organizations will continue to be involved in this issue. Drawing on recent international evidence, we will continue to point to the risk of permissive regimes, and will draw on experts in constitutional law who find the new law *Charter* compliant.

There is important work ahead. Canada has an opportunity to address the failures of systems in the U.S. and in European countries to protect vulnerable persons. We urge the federal and provincial/territorial governments, medical and health care professional associations and health care regulators to ensure that practitioners have the tools and the guidance they require to identify vulnerabilities and risks of inducement among those requesting access. The new criminal law sets a high bar for voluntary, informed consent for assisted death, higher than current health care legislation in Canada. We trust that health care providers will fulfill their obligation to meet that bar.

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