

To the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights,

After reading Bill C-14, I have several serious concerns with respect to this Bill. I respectfully ask you to consider the following suggestions:

Bill C-14 does not provide federal legal protection for the medical practitioner, nurse practitioner, or other health care worker who by their conscience do not want to participate in any way in providing "medical assistance in dying". Those who are unable or unwilling to participate in "medical assistance in dying" MUST be legally protected, so that they are not legally forced to act against their conscience. Many of these people disagree with the deliberate taking of a human life, and view euthanasia and assisted suicide as murder. This legal protection MUST also include legal protection from having to refer a patient to someone who would provide euthanasia and assisted suicide, as this too would be viewed as assisting, and again would be against their conscience to indirectly be involved in this fatal act. For those practitioners and health care workers who conscientiously object to participation in any form of "medical assistance in dying", even a referral is unconscionable and would violate not only their autonomy, but also their rights and freedoms in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Health care institutions, hospices and long term care facilities whose mission, vision and values commit them to heal and care MUST be able to be legally protected from providing euthanasia and assisted suicide as well.

Bill C-14 requires that approval for euthanasia or assisted suicide be done by two independent medical practitioners or nurse practitioners, without requiring oversight from an independent third party. Please provide some sort of board oversight for individual cases of patients who have requested euthanasia or assisted suicide. This should be in addition to the other requirements, to help provide more safeguards for Canadians.

Bill C-14 has exemptions in place for people who commit assisted suicide and assist with euthanasia in error, under "Reasonable but mistaken belief". This clearly allows for abuse, and does not protect people from having their life ended without their explicit consent. It is obvious that the law will protect the "killer" rather than the "victim".

The language of the bill is not restrictive enough and allows legal immunity for murder. When it states that, 'No person is party to culpable homicide if they do anything for the purpose of aiding a medical practitioner or nurse practitioner to provide a person with medical assistance in dying in accordance with section 241.2,' and "...the exemption set out in subsection (1) or (2) applies even if the person invoking it has a reasonable but mistaken belief about any fact that is an element of exemption."

Therefore a medical practitioner, nurse practitioner, nurse, nurse's aid, family member, etc., could "aid" in the homicide of a patient and all that would be shown is a "reasonable" belief about "any" fact that is an element of exemption.

Bill C-14 also allows that someone, other than the person to be killed, can sign the request which again raises huge concerns for the abuse of such a structure. Legal homicide comes to mind. Please be more restrictive in the wording of this bill, in order to provide the ultimate, best possible protection for those in our society who request euthanasia or assisted suicide. NOW is the time to make a law that does the least harm.

Thank you for considering my suggestions, and I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,
Linda McGill

