



CANADIAN FEDERATION OF CATHOLIC PHYSICIANS' SOCIETIES FÉDÉRATION CANADIENNE DES SOCIÉTÉS DE MÉDECINS CATHOLIQUES



May 2, 2016

Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights
c/o Mike MacPherson, Committee Clerk
House of Commons
131 Queen Street, 6-07
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6
JUST@parl.gc.ca

Re: Recommended amendments to Bill C-14

Dear Committee Members,

Thank you for this opportunity to provide recommendations for amendments to Bill C-14.

As representatives of the Canadian Federation of Catholic Physicians' Societies, we represent Catholic Physicians' guilds with several hundred physician members across Canada. Our Federation does not support euthanasia, but we recognize that Parliament needs to provide a federal law in response to the Supreme Court ruling.

We respectfully submit the following recommendations for your consideration:

1. The Supreme Court has stated that physicians should not be forced to participate in Physician-Assisted Death (PAD). As you are no doubt aware, Quebec's legislation, Bill 52, mandates a referral for assisted dying if requested. The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario passed a policy mandating that physicians refer patients for procedures to which they object on moral or religious grounds. Other Provincial Colleges have and are contemplating similar policies. Such policies are intended to "balance" the conscience rights of doctors with the right of patients to access legal procedures. A forced referral for PAD would require us to participate in a procedure which gravely contradicts our most firmly held convictions informed by faith and reason, as well as the Hippocratic Oath.¹ The current form of Bill C-14 does not

¹ "I will neither give a deadly drug to anybody if asked for it, nor will I make a suggestion to this effect." http://www.hippocraticregistry.com/?page_id=12

EXECUTIVE

President
Thomas Bouchard, MD

Vice-President
Jim Lane, MD

Secretary
Alana Cormier, MD

Treasurer
Jacqueline Wing-Mun
Chow, MD

Past-president
Bryan Dias, MD

Episcopal Advisor
Bishop Gregory Bittman

GUILDS

Calgary
Edmonton
Halifax
Hamilton
Kingston
London
Montreal
Ottawa
Quebec City
Sarnia
Saskatoon
Toronto
Vancouver



CANADIAN FEDERATION OF CATHOLIC PHYSICIANS' SOCIETIES FÉDÉRATION CANADIENNE DES SOCIÉTÉS DE MÉDECINS CATHOLIQUES



acknowledge the conscience rights of physicians or healthcare workers with similar convictions. The freedom of conscience and religion is a Charter right and should be protected by federal laws. If the protection of conscience and religion is not explicitly protected in Bill C-14, we are fearful that it will lead to a patchwork of policies across the country with varying degrees of protections for conscientious objectors. We believe this will lead to physicians and other health care professionals whose Charter rights are being violated to respond by defending his or her Charter right in court or by ceasing to practice in health care. We do not believe that either of these avenues are what is best for Canadians or our medical system. There are other ways for patients to access legal procedures that do not require violating the fundamental freedoms of conscientious objectors.

Recommendation 1: Amend Bill C-14 to clearly protect the conscience rights of health care professionals from being coerced to perform or refer to another physician or third party who would carry out the procedure. They also must be protected from discrimination from current or potential employers based on these conscientious objections.

2. We are deeply concerned for our patients and there is significant evidence from other jurisdictions, most notably Belgium, that despite any legislative safe guards that may be put in place that euthanasia and assisted suicide can and do occur without explicit consent.²

Recommendation 2: Amend Bill C-14 to require a legal review prior to carrying out requests for PAD.

3. Many patients already express concerns about the ability to trust physicians or hospitals. Many, especially those most vulnerable are reluctant to seek care from health care providers or institutions as they are already fearful that they will be killed or harmed. These beliefs were pervasive even when euthanasia and physician assisted suicide was considered a criminal act. We believe the legalization of euthanasia and assisted suicide will make patients even more reluctant to seek the health care they require and as a result the overall burden of suffering in our country may in fact be increased.

EXECUTIVE

President

Thomas Bouchard, MD

Vice-President

Jim Lane, MD

Secretary

Alana Cormier, MD

Treasurer

Jacqueline Wing-Mun
Chow, MD

Past-president

Bryan Dias, MD

Episcopal Advisor

Bishop Gregory Bittman

GUILDS

Calgary

Edmonton

Halifax

Hamilton

Kingston

London

Montreal

Ottawa

Quebec City

Sarnia

Saskatoon

Toronto

Vancouver

² Inghelbrecht E, Bilsen J, Mortier, et al. The role of nurses in physician-assisted deaths in Belgium. *CMAJ* 2010;182:905-910.



CANADIAN FEDERATION
OF CATHOLIC PHYSICIANS' SOCIETIES
FÉDÉRATION CANADIENNE
DES SOCIÉTÉS DE MÉDECINS CATHOLIQUES



Recommendation 3: Amend Bill C-14 to include protection of health care institutions opposed to PAD so that they can continue to provide care consistent with their values and so that patients and families will have the option of choosing these “safe-havens” for their care, places where they will not have to be fearful that they will be killed when they seek medical care and compassion towards a dignified natural death.

4. We are concerned that patients will not be able to make a decision based upon fully informed consent if they do not have access to high level palliative care and have not experienced what this means.

Recommendation 4: Amend Bill C-14 to include a full palliative consultation for all individuals who request euthanasia or assisted suicide prior to this request being granted.

Thank you for your consideration of our recommendations to amendments of Bill C-14.

Sincerely,

Thomas Bouchard, MD, President
Alana Cormier, MD, Secretary

EXECUTIVE

President

Thomas Bouchard, MD

Vice-President

Jim Lane, MD

Secretary

Alana Cormier, MD

Treasurer

Jacqueline Wing-Mun
Chow, MD

Past-president

Bryan Dias, MD

Episcopal Advisor

Bishop Gregory Bittman

GUILDS

Calgary

Edmonton

Halifax

Hamilton

Kingston

London

Montreal

Ottawa

Quebec City

Sarnia

Saskatoon

Toronto

Vancouver