

Submission to: Justice and Human Rights Committee
House of Commons, Parliament of Canada

Regarding: Amendments to Bill C-14
An Act to amend the Criminal Code and to make related amendments
to other Acts (medical assistance in dying)

Submitted by: Secular Connexion Séculière
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Premise:

As a body representing and supporting secular humanist values and rights, we feel that the right to choose the way one completes one's life dignity is a fundamental right, and is of particular significance for those whose medical conditions cause irremediable suffering.

Bill C-14, as it is now proposed, prevents the full exercise of that right, particularly in the sections and phrases cited below. This being the case, Secular Connexion Séculière (SCS) strongly urges that the phrases cited here be removed as appropriate to remedy the problems.

In particular:

Section 241.2 (2) (d)

"natural death has become reasonably foreseeable, taking into account all of their medical circumstances, without a prognosis necessarily having been made as to the specific length of time that they have remaining."

should be removed since it provides no additional protection against exploitation, but will cause unnecessary suffering for those individuals who have medical conditions that cause irremediable suffering, but do not create a prognosis that includes death in the foreseeable future.

In our opinion, the Supreme Court of Canada's decision in *Carter v. Canada* did not require that the medical condition suffered be terminal or have a natural death that is reasonably foreseeable.

Section 241.2 (3) (g)

"ensure that there are at least 15 clear days between the day on which the request was signed by the person and the day on which the medical assistance in dying is provided."

should be removed because:

1. The process of requiring two independent doctors to review each request will already take some time after the initial request is made. This time itself will prolong the suffering of the individual who has already made the difficult decision to request medically assisted,
2. The 15 clear days will not provide any additional protection against exploitation of individuals who request medically assisted death to that provided in other clauses in 241.2 (3) or in 241.2 (4) and (5)

Since this clause will cause unnecessary prolonged suffering in addition to the normal delays caused by other requirements, it is an unacceptable interference in one's right to complete one's life with dignity.

Please preserve individual rights by removing 241.2 (2) (d) and 241.2 (3) (g) from Bill C-41.

Secular Connexion Séculière (SCS), founded in 2011, is a secular humanist organization that works toward three primary goals:

1. to act as a communication nexus for secular humanist groups across Canada,
2. to lobby for legislative changes that protect individual humanist rights and that remove the systemic discrimination against atheists that the International Humanist and Ethical Union has identified in Canada,
3. to lobby the Government of Canada and its agencies to protect the human rights of atheists around the world.

Further information about SCS and its work is available at: www.secularconnexion.ca