

## **IMPORTANT FACTS ABOUT BILL-C7 AND EUTHANASIA IN CANADA**

Bill C-7 (*Amendments to the Criminal Code – Medical Assistance in Dying*) is now being considered by both houses of Parliament. This Bill would allow people who are not dying or whose death is not foreseeable to be euthanized.

People with disabilities and their advocates are extremely alarmed by this proposed legislation. It means for the first time, people will be able to access “Medical Assistance in Dying” (MAiD) because of their disability without having any life-threatening condition.

In 2019 there were a total of 5,631 people who died via MAiD. The 2019 First Annual Report on Medical Assistance in Dying in Canada<sup>1</sup> lists the types of suffering that people were experiencing that lead them to want to die. People gave multiple reasons. Some of those reasons follow:

- 13.7% (or 771 people) said loneliness or isolation
- 53.3 % (or 3001 people) said loss of dignity
- 82.1% (or 4623 people) said loss of ability to engage in meaningful life activities
- 34% (or 1915 people) said perceived burden on family friends and caregivers

In a recent Angus Reid Group poll, commissioned by Cardus, Canadians were showed to have “deep and genuine concerns about the expansion of MAiD”<sup>2</sup>

- 69% are concerned expanded MAiD will lead to people with mental health issues like depression choosing death rather than dealing with the underlying causes of their condition
- 68% are disturbed by a UN report critical of Canada’s poor MAiD safeguards for people with disabilities and their lack of access to viable MAiD alternatives.
- 65% fear expanded MAiD will lead to people with disabilities or those who are elderly feeling more pressure to choose death in order to avoid being a burden on others.
- 62% worry the health care system will start to ignore long-term care and chronic disease in the elderly as MAiD becomes more available.

Dignity, meaning and value are attitudes that can be reinforced by people around us who love us and help us see that life is worth living. There is a real concern that people are choosing to die because they feel society has given up on them. If Parliament succeeds in making a person’s disability a reason to be euthanized, we will be reinforcing certain “ableist” attitudes that people who are not able bodied are not living in dignity, and therefore should be entitled to be killed.

### **Action needed:**

**Please consider joining the thousands of Canadians who have already written their Member of Parliament to ask that Bill C-7 be defeated in Parliament and replaced by legislation that will provide palliative care for those in need.**

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/hc-sc/documents/services/medical-assistance-dying-annual-report-2019/maid-annual-report-eng.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cardus.ca/news/news-releases/expanded-medical-assistance-in-dying-ignores-mainstream-concerns/>

## Opposition to Euthanasia for the Disabled: Facts to ponder and inspire our concerted action

- In 2019, the World Medical Association reaffirmed its long-standing policy of opposition to euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide.<sup>3</sup>
- Over 70 of Canada's leading disability rights organizations and advocates stated they were "deeply troubled" with the expansion of "MAiD", and that the Quebec Superior Court's decision would "entrench stereotypes and exacerbate stigma for Canadians with disabilities".<sup>4</sup>
- On October 20<sup>th</sup>, the office of the parliamentary budget officer released an estimate that an additional 1,200 people will be eligible for euthanasia this year in addition to the 6,465 deaths currently expected if the law remains unchanged.<sup>5</sup>
- The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was extremely apprehensive concerning the implementation of "MAiD" in Canada from a disability perspective.<sup>6</sup>
- More than 50 religious organizations and faith leaders, including Jewish, Muslim and Christians, released an open letter to all Canadians in opposition to Bill C-7.<sup>7</sup>
- A group of 1,000 Canadian physicians have publicly expressed their opposition to MAiD.<sup>8</sup>
- 140 members of the legal community have endorsed a statement to Parliament opposing Bill C-7.<sup>9</sup>
- Disability-rights organizations and advocates in Canada published a public statement with over 80 endorsements decrying the expansion and loosening of safeguards with respect to the "Medical Assistance in Dying" legislation.<sup>10</sup>
- In the report of the Correctional Investigator (2019-2020), there is a call to the Government to enact a moratorium on MAiD (euthanasia) in prisons due to serious and fundamental concerns regarding consent, choice and dignity, coupled by grave errors, omissions, inaccuracies, delays and misapplications of law and policy.<sup>11</sup>
- The recent letter *Samaritanus bonus* by the Holy See's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, summarizes the position of the Catholic Church on this matter:

*It is gravely unjust to enact laws that legalize euthanasia or justify and support suicide, invoking the false right to choose a death improperly characterized as respectable only because it is chosen. Such laws strike at the foundation of the legal*

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.wma.net/news-post/world-medical-association-reaffirms-opposition-to-euthanasia-and-physician-assisted-suicide/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://inclusioncanada.ca/2019/10/04/advocates-call-for-disability-rights-based-appeal-of-the-quebec-superior-courts-decision-in-truchon-gladu/>

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.pbo-dpb.gc.ca/web/default/files/Documents/Reports/RP-2021-025-M/RP-2021-025-M\\_en.pdf](https://www.pbo-dpb.gc.ca/web/default/files/Documents/Reports/RP-2021-025-M/RP-2021-025-M_en.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=24481&LangID=E>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.cccb.ca/media-release/we-can-and-must-do-much-better-religious-leaders-in-canada-denounce-bill-c-7-an-act-to-amend-the-criminal-code-medical-assistance-in-dying/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://maid2mad.ca/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.christianlegalfellowship.org/billc-7>

<sup>10</sup> <https://dol.ca/documents/2020/10/Statement%20from%20disability%20advocates%20-%20BillC-7%20MAiD-EN.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.oci-bec.gc.ca/cnt/rpt/pdf/annrpt/annrpt20192020-eng.pdf>

*order: the right to life sustains all other rights, including the exercise of freedom. The existence of such laws deeply wound human relations and justice, and threaten the mutual trust among human beings. The legitimization of assisted suicide and euthanasia is a sign of the degradation of legal systems.*<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Letter *Samaritanus bonus* on the care of persons in the critical and terminal phases of life. Section V,1.  
[http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_20200714\\_samaritanus-bonus\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20200714_samaritanus-bonus_en.html)