



# We Can and Must Do *Much* Better

**Religious Leaders in Canada oppose Bill C-7**  
“An Act to amend the Criminal Code”  
(medical assistance in dying)



***We are convinced that a robust palliative care system available to all Canadians is a much more effective response to suffering and to protecting the sacred dignity of the human person.***

## **Open Letter to All Canadians**

We are obliged to express our strong concern and opposition to Bill C-7 which, among other things, expands access to euthanasia and assisted suicide to those who are not dying. It perplexes our collective minds that we have come so far as a society yet, at the same time, have so seriously regressed in the manner that we treat the weak, the ill, and the marginalized. We the undersigned remain inalterably opposed to

***It perplexes our collective minds that we have come so far as a society yet, at the same time, have so seriously regressed in the manner that we treat the weak, the ill, and the marginalized.***

euthanasia and assisted suicide, the intentional killing of human beings, euphemistically being called “Medical Assistance in Dying,” (MAiD) but which is more accurately, and tragically, nothing less than murder, as was recognized by the Criminal Code of Canada prior to the passing of Bill C-14 in June 2016.<sup>1</sup>

We, of course, have no desire to impose pain on the sick, nor do we wish that anyone suffer unduly. This is not our approach to illness and dying. We are convinced that a robust palliative care system available to all Canadians is a much more effective

response to suffering and to protecting the sacred dignity of the human person. Palliative care addresses pain in a loving and caring environment, wherein people go out of their way to offer comfort and solace. It makes everyone into a better person. Palliative care is a viable and life affirming alternative, which does not discriminate against any group and which gives expression to the ethics of caring and inclusion, hallmarks of Canadian values.

It is clear that the offerings of Bill C-7 will have harmful effects on persons with disabilities, as their representatives and organizations have made abundantly clear, and as [the United Nations Special Rapporteur concluded on her visit to Canada](#). Offering euthanasia or assisted suicide to those living with a disability or chronic illness, but who are not dying, suggests that living with a disability or illness is a fate worse than death. This will create certain pressures to accept such lethal procedures, putting the lives of these Canadians at greater risk in what is now a new regime that sees certain lives can be ended.

***We the undersigned remain inalterably opposed to euthanasia and assisted suicide, the intentional killing of human beings, euphemistically being called “Medical Assistance in Dying,” but which is more accurately, and tragically, nothing less than murder, as was recognized by the Criminal Code of Canada prior to the passing of Bill C-14 in June 2016.<sup>1</sup>***

<sup>1</sup> Prior to the exemptions of Bill C-14, medical practitioners and nurse practitioners in Canada, would have been charged criminally with “culpable homicide” if they “intentionally cause the death of another person, even if they consent to die (section 14 of the Criminal Code).” Likewise, prior to Bill C-14, it was a criminal offence for anyone to “assist a person to die by suicide, whether or not suicide ensues (paragraph 241(b) of the Criminal Code).” Cf. <https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/other-autre/ad-am/p2.html>



*With our world-renowned health care system now endorsing euthanasia as a “solution” to human suffering, we will be undermining the creativity and resolve that is needed to confront some of the most complex cases of care.*



Soon, the Federal Government will be contemplating the expansion of euthanasia to “mature minors” and to those whose sole medical condition is mental illness. With our world-renowned health care system now endorsing euthanasia as a “solution” to human suffering, we will be undermining the creativity and resolve that is needed to confront some of the most complex cases of care. We are, in effect, imposing the intentional taking of human life as a solution to human suffering. This is not just deeply troubling; it is unacceptable for a civilized society. The course on which we have embarked has resulted in the perverse reality that doctors and other health-care professionals who, on basic religious or ethical principle, refuse to administer a lethal injection could be subject to sanctions, even to the point of losing their license. How precipitous a fall we have made into a moral abyss. This is not what we, as Canadians, have in mind when thinking of ourselves as a caring, compassionate and inclusive society.

Instead, we must embrace those who suffer, and offer exceptional care to those who are confronting illness

and death; to deploy our expertise and resources in confronting complex cases of care, rather than choosing lethal procedures that are incompatible with the dignity of both the patient and the health-care professional. Palliative care administered with unwavering compassion, generosity and skill expresses the best of who we are. Rather than withdrawing from those who are not far from leaving us, we must embrace them even more tightly, helping them to find meaning up to the last moments of life. This is how we build compassionate communities.

*We must embrace those who suffer, and offer exceptional care to those who are confronting illness and death... Palliative care administered with unwavering compassion, generosity and skill expresses the best of who we are.*

*Rather than withdrawing from those who are not far from leaving us, we must embrace them even more tightly, helping them to find meaning up to the last moments of life. This is how we build compassionate communities.*





*In the presence of human pain, suffering and loneliness, we need to respond as a society with profound solidarity and extraordinary care. It is via the deep acknowledgement of the beauty and dignity of human life, lived and experienced as a gift, filled with meaning and love, that we can come to the aid of the most vulnerable among us.*

As Canadians, we can and must do better. It is our firm belief that to avoid moving too quickly toward a reality that has serious and long-lasting repercussions, we need to press hard on the pause button, and take serious stock of the impact of MAiD. As religious leaders in Canada, we provide this moral vision through the

## ***We urge a more complete consultation with all Canadians on this grave matter.***

living memories of our respective traditions which stem from thousands of years across continents and cultures. We do not claim to have the technical solutions to all these complex problems; however, our duty is to witness to the lessons about the human spirit, the



inestimable value and meaning of life, and the equal dignity of all learned through the crucible of history and through our extensive experiences of being at the bedside of the sick and dying. A society suffering from moral amnesia is perilously vulnerable to repeating the painful mistakes of the past. Let us not forget what is most becoming and appropriate to human dignity.

We urge a more complete consultation with all Canadians on this grave matter. In the presence of human pain, suffering and loneliness, we need to respond as a society with profound solidarity and extraordinary care. It is via the deep acknowledgement of the beauty and dignity of human life, lived and experienced as a gift, filled with meaning and

love, that we can come to the aid of the most vulnerable among us. This is a defining moment for Canada. Let us take this moment with careful and complete deliberation, so we can become/be a society of care, compassion and inclusion for all. ☸



# Signatories

*Rev. Bill Allan*

**Rev. Bill Allan**

President

Associated Gospel Churches of Canada

*Dr. Stephen Elliott*

**Dr. Stephen Elliott**

National Superintendent

The Wesleyan Church of Canada

*Dr. Rob Blackaby*

**Dr. Rob Blackaby**

President

Canadian Southern Baptist Seminary & College

*Steve Falkiner*

**Steve Falkiner**

President

Foursquare Gospel Church of Canada

*Rabbi Dr. Reuven P. Bulka, CM, PhD*

**Rabbi Dr. Reuven P. Bulka, CM, Ph.D**

Rabbi Emeritus and spiritual leader

Congregation Machzikei Hadas, Ottawa

*Rev. Dr. Ian Fitzpatrick*

**Rev. Dr. Ian Fitzpatrick**

National Director

Church of the Nazarene Canada

*Kim Cairns*

**Kim Cairns**

President

Peace River Bible Institute

*Brenda Frost*

**Brenda Frost**

Administrative Coordinator

Eston College

*Elder Michel J. Carter*

**Elder Michel J. Carter**

Area Seventy, National Public Affairs

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

*Rabbi Baruch Frydman-Kohl*

**Rabbi Baruch Frydman-Kohl**

Rabbi Emeritus

Beth Tzedec Congregation

Vice Chair

Canadian Rabbinic Caucus

*Bruce J. Clemenger*

**Bruce J. Clemenger**

President

The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada

*The Most Rev. Richard Gagnon*

**The Most Rev. Richard Gagnon**

Archbishop of Winnipeg

President

Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops

*David Di Staulo*

**David Di Staulo**

General Superintendent

Canadian Assemblies of God

*Dr. Jeff P. Greenman*

**Dr. Jeff P. Greenman**

President

Regent College

*Tim Dyck*

**Tim Dyck**

Executive Director

Evangelical Mennonite Conference

## Signatories (continued)

*Rabbi Jarrod Grover*

**Rabbi Jarrod Grover**

Beth Tikvah Synagogue in Toronto  
& President of the Ontario Rabbinical Assembly

*Rabbi Dr. Geoffrey Haber, BA, BA, MA,  
DMin, DD (Hon.)*

**Rabbi Dr. Geoffrey Haber, BA, BA, MA,  
DMin, DD (Hon.)**

Baycrest Health Sciences

*Rev. Dr. Eric R. Hallett*

**Rev. Dr. Eric R. Hallett**

District Superintendent  
Central Canada District of the Wesleyan Church

*Rev. David Hearn*

**Rev. David Hearn**

President  
The Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada

*Farhan Iqbal*

**Farhan Iqbal**

Missionary  
Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at Canada

*The Most Rev. Shane B. Janzen*

**The Most Rev. Shane B. Janzen**

Archbishop  
The Anglican Catholic Church of Canada

*Rev. Steven Jones*

**Rev. Steven Jones**

President  
The Fellowship of Evangelical  
Baptist Churches in Canada

*Dr. David P. Lavigne*

**Dr. David P. Lavigne**

Bishop  
The Evangelical Christian Church in Canada

*The Right Rev. Brian K. Magnus*

**The Right Rev. Brian K. Magnus**

Bishop  
The United Brethren Church in Canada

*Rev. Tim McCoy*

**Rev. Tim McCoy**

Executive Minister  
Canadian Baptists of Ontario and Quebec

*Rev. David McGrew*

**Rev. David McGrew**

President  
Canadian Fellowship of Churches and Ministers

*Rev. Paul McPhail*

**Rev. Paul McPhail**

General Secretary  
Independent Assemblies of God International Canada

*Rev. Wesley E. Mills*

**Rev. Wesley E. Mills**

President and National Director  
Apostolic Church of Pentecost of Canada, Inc.

*Rev. Rob Ogilvie*

**Rev. Rob Ogilvie**

Executive Minister  
Canadian Baptists of Western Canada

*Rev. Frank Patrick*

**Rev. Frank Patrick**

Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada

## Signatories (continued)

*Michael B. Pawelke*

**Michael B. Pawelke**  
President  
Briercrest College and Seminary

*Rev. John Pellowe, MBA, DMin*

**Rev. John Pellowe, MBA, DMin**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Canadian Centre for Christian Charities

*Mark Penninga, B.A., M.A.*

**Mark Penninga, B.A., M.A.**  
Executive Director  
ARPA Canada

*Rabbi Reuben Poupko*

**Rabbi Reuben Poupko**  
Congregation Beth Israel Beth Aharon, Montreal  
Executive Member  
Canadian Rabbinic Caucus

*Dr. Rick Reed*

**Dr. Rick Reed**  
President  
Heritage College and Seminary

*Imam Refaat Mohamed*

**Imam Refaat Mohamed**  
President  
Canadian Council of Imams

*Ingrid Reichard*

**Ingrid Reichard**  
National Faith & Life Director  
Canadian Conference of  
Mennonite Brethren Churches

*Rev. Dr. Peter Reid*

**Rev. Dr. Peter Reid**  
Executive Minister  
Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada

*Dr. Rob Reimer*

**Dr. Rob Reimer**  
President  
Steinbach Bible College

*Rev. David Rowley*

**Rev. David Rowley**  
General Secretary  
The Union of French Baptist Churches in Canada

*Pastor David Ruis*

**Pastor David Ruis**  
National Director  
Vineyard Canada

*Rev. David Schrader*

**Rev. David Schrader**  
National Pastor  
Congregational Christian Churches in Canada

*Kevin Schular*

**Kevin Schular**  
Executive Director  
Baptist General Conference of Canada

*André Schutten, HonB.A., LL.B., LL.M.*

**André Schutten, HonB.A., LL.B., LL.M.**  
General Legal Counsel & Director  
of Law and Public Policy

*Pastor Terry W. Snow*

**Pastor Terry W. Snow**  
General Superintendent  
Pentecostal Assemblies of Newfoundland & Labrador

## Signatories (continued)

*His Eminence Metropolitan Archbishop Sotirios*

**His Eminence Metropolitan Archbishop Sotirios**

Primate

Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Toronto

& All of Canada

*Rabbi Chaim Strauchler*

**Rabbi Chaim Strauchler**

Shaarei Shomayim Congregation, Toronto

*Dr. Bill Taylor*

**Dr. Bill Taylor**

Executive Director

Evangelical Free Church of Canada

*Archbishop Papken Tcharian*

**Archbishop Papken Tcharian**

The Primate of the Armenian Prelacy of Canada

*Rev. Timothy Teuscher*

**Rev. Timothy Teuscher**

President

Lutheran Church-Canada

*Dr. David Williams*

**Dr. David Williams**

President

Taylor Seminary and College

*Rev. Dr. David R. Wells, MA, DD*

**Rev. Dr. David R. Wells, MA, DD**

General Superintendent

The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada



Code: 185-152 978-0-88997-895-9

Legal Deposit: Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa

Creative Commons License:

Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0)