

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Physicians Urge Protection of Vulnerable Persons Standard: Call on Attorney General of Canada to Appeal Quebec Medical Assistance in Dying Decision

TORONTO, ON – More than 250 doctors from across Canada have signed an urgent open letter to the Attorney General, David Lametti, asking him to appeal a Quebec Superior Court decision that would expand access to medical assistance in dying to those who are not nearing natural death. The decision on the appeal must be made by October 18.

The signatories agree that medical assistance in dying must have limits, and that individual rights must be balanced with protections for vulnerable citizens and greater society. The letter calls for Parliament to address equality gaps that cause suffering and poor health for patients with life left to live rather than provide them medical assistance in dying.

[The letter](#) was penned by Dr. Margaret Cottle and her colleagues who act as advisors to the [Vulnerable Persons Standard](#) (VPS).

Catherine Frazee, Professor Emerita, Ryerson University School of Disability Studies, is a founding advisor on the Vulnerable Persons Standard. Frazee commented:

“In the robust debates that gave shape in 2016 to our present law, Canadians with disabilities were fully engaged and our contributions earned the respect of our legislators and fellow citizens. We raised the alarm that discrimination, stigma and social and economic deprivation could make people vulnerable to seeking a premature death.

When Bill C-14 became law, it carefully balanced the needs of persons whose suffering at the end-of-life was intolerable, and persons who would be vulnerable to suicide when denied the supports and conditions for a dignified life. The foundational requirement that MAiD be reserved for persons already nearing the end of life was a bulwark against this grave danger, and an affirmation of the inherent value and dignity of our lives. The same Prime Minister who heard us in 2016 is now arbitrarily refusing to appeal the Truchon and Gladu decision and has betrayed the commitments of a carefully considered law.”

Dr. Cottle recognized this vulnerability in her patients,

“As physicians, we have extensive, first-hand experience in journeying with our fellow citizens, including those who are living with illnesses and disabilities. We understand--and mourn--the many challenges we encounter together due to inadequate supports of every kind. Each member of our Canadian family deserves to be equally valued, equally supported, and equally protected. This is why we call upon the government of Canada to appeal the Truchon and Gladu court decision, and to affirm every Canadian’s right to live with dignity.”

The letter expands upon the concerns raised by [65+ community organizations](#) - including members of the disability rights community, and health-focused organizations like the Canadian Association for Mental Health and the Canadian Society of Palliative Care Physicians - in an open letter released late last week.

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