Religious Leaders in Canada oppose Bill C-7

“An Act to amend the Criminal Code”

(medical assistance in dying)
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 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 2016.¹

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 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.

¹ 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
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 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. Rob Blackaby
Dr. Rob Blackaby
President
Canadian Southern Baptist Seminary & College

Rabbi Dr. Reuven P. Bulka, CM, Ph.D
Rabbi Dr. Reuven P. Bulka, CM, Ph.D
Rabbi Emeritus and spiritual leader
Congregation Machzikei Hadas, Ottawa

Kim Cairns
Kim Cairns
President
Peace River Bible Institute

Elder Michel J. Carter
Elder Michel J. Carter
Area Seventy, National Public Affairs
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Bruce J. Clemenger
Bruce J. Clemenger
President
The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada

David Di Staulo
David Di Staulo
General Superintendent
Canadian Assemblies of God

Tim Dyck
Tim Dyck
Executive Director
Evangelical Mennonite Conference

Dr. Stephen Elliott
Dr. Stephen Elliott
National Superintendent
The Wesleyan Church of Canada

Steve Falkiner
Steve Falkiner
President
Foursquare Gospel Church of Canada

Rev. Dr. Ian Fitzpatrick
Rev. Dr. Ian Fitzpatrick
National Director
Church of the Nazarene Canada

Brenda Frost
Brenda Frost
Administrative Coordinator
Eston College

Rabbi Baruch Frydman-Kohl
Rabbi Baruch Frydman-Kohl
Rabbi Emeritus
Beth Tzedec Congregation
Vice Chair
Canadian Rabbinic Caucus

The Most Rev. Richard Gagnon
The Most Rev. Richard Gagnon
Archbishop of Winnipeg
President
Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops

Dr. Jeff P. Greenman
Dr. Jeff P. Greenman
President
Regent College
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