

2015-03 MEDICALLY ASSISTED DEATH

Whereas 1 voluntary euthanasia and physician assistance to end one's life are illegal in Canada; and

Whereas 2 84% of Canadians support medically assisted death; and

Whereas 3 palliative care is sometimes not enough to reduce pain and maintain dignity, and

Whereas 4 jurisdictions where assisted death is legal, with safeguards, include the Netherlands, Switzerland, Belgium, Luxembourg, Montana, Oregon, Vermont Washington and Quebec; and

Whereas 5 since assisted death takes place in all jurisdictions even if illegal, it is better to have it legal with safeguards; therefore be it

Resolved 1 that the National Council of Women of Canada (NCWC) adopt as policy that medically assisted dying comprised of voluntary euthanasia and doctor-assisted death, with safeguards, be legal and the person must be a consenting adult having reached the age of majority; and be it further

Resolved 2 that NCWC urge the Government of Canada to:

- a. remove doctor-assisted death and voluntary euthanasia from the Criminal Code of Canada, and
- b. set up safeguards through an Act permitting medically assisted death including the following criteria:
 - i. the person must be terminally ill or have a life-limiting illness/condition
 - ii. no person shall qualify solely because of age or disability
 - iii. the person must make two oral requests and one written request for assistance in dying, or by using alternate communication methods for those with verbal or physical challenges
 - iv. two physicians or two senior health care professionals in cases where a person has no regular doctor must verify that the patient is capable, is acting voluntarily and has made an informed decision
 - v. the person must not be suffering from a psychiatric or psychological disorder or depression causing impaired judgement or be developmentally disabled
 - vi. the person must be informed of the feasible alternatives such as comfort care, hospice care and pain control
 - vii. the person is given 15 days to rescind the request
 - viii. ensure there are provisions for health care professionals to withdraw participation on personal, religious or ethical grounds.

PLAIN LANGUAGE FORMAT

Policy Statement

The National Council of Women of Canada (NCWC) adopts as policy that medically assisted dying comprised of voluntary euthanasia and doctor-assisted death, with safeguards, be legal and the person must be a consenting adult having reached the age of majority.

Request of Government

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- a. remove doctor-assisted death and voluntary euthanasia from the Criminal Code of Canada, and
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 - vi. the person must be informed of the feasible alternatives such as comfort care, hospice care and pain control
 - vii. the person is given 15 days to rescind the request
 - viii. ensure there are provisions for health care professionals to withdraw participation on personal, religious or ethical grounds

Rationale

Voluntary euthanasia and physician assistance to end one's life are illegal in Canada, but 84% of Canadians support medically assisted death.

Palliative care is sometimes not enough to reduce pain and maintain dignity.

Jurisdictions where assisted death is legal, with safeguards, include the Netherlands, Switzerland, Belgium, Luxembourg, Montana, Oregon, Vermont, Washington and Quebec.

Since assisted death takes place in all jurisdictions even if illegal, it is better to have it legal with safeguards.