

Bill C-7 amending the Criminal Code (medical assistance in dying)

The AQDMD calls for the bill to be voted in as soon as possible

Montreal, February 18, 2021 • Now that the Senate has passed the amended Bill C-7, the Association québécoise pour le droit de mourir dans la dignité (AQDMD) is requesting that the bill be passed as quickly as possible by the House of Commons, with or without an amendment.

The AQDMD highlights the urgent need to pass Bill C-7

“The priority is to respond to repeated requests made by our citizens,” stated Georges L’Espérance, president of the AQDMD, an organization that aims to advance the rights of citizens in terms of medical assistance in dying. **First, the AQDMD is hoping that Bill C-7 will be passed immediately, with or without amendments, considering that patients are in urgent need of a clear legal framework.** The second step, which will have to be taken soon afterwards, will be a matter of dedicating time to studying the changes to be made to C-14. Legislation requires a parliamentary review five years after the enactment of C-14, passed in June 2016, especially on the following points: **medical assistance in dying for mature minors, advance requests and requests for which mental illness is the sole medical condition.** The AQDMD supports each of these issues.

The AQDMD calls for passing the amendment on the sunset clause

Despite the urgent need to vote on the project and while the exclusion for mental health remains in place, **the AQDMD believes that the amendment suggested by the Senate must be accepted unconditionally by the government:** to impose an 18-month time limit on the bill’s prohibition for persons who are suffering solely from a mental illness. “This would remove the odious burden of a constitutional challenge that, once again, now rests on the shoulders of one or more citizens, with a predictable outcome,” stated Georges L’Espérance. In fact, denying MAID to people affected by mental illness would go against the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which guarantees equal treatment under the law, regardless of physical or mental disability. The 18-month limit will provide time to define criteria for persons suffering from a mental illness.

“Obviously, this temporary exclusion of mental illness should not apply to people suffering from cognitive neurodegenerative diseases, such as Alzheimer’s disease, because these are physical illnesses”, specified Georges L’Espérance. **Cognitive neurodegenerative diseases should be eligible for advance medical directives. This amendment is being considered by the Senate and the AQDMD would like to see it passed in the coming months, a wish echoed by the overwhelming majority of the population.** A short wait time is needed to clearly define the clinical and legal guidelines that applicants will have to meet. “But for the time being, discussing this amendment will only lead to an endless back and forth process between the House and the Senate, thus causing further delays in passing Bill C-7.” It would be damaging for politics to obstruct fundamental rights by interfering, yet again, in considerations that should be strictly personal,” concluded Georges L’Espérance.

About the AQDMD

Founded in 2007, the Association québécoise pour le droit de mourir dans la dignité strives to promote recognition for the right of every competent adult who has prepared an advance medical directive to have an end of life that is consistent with his or her own values of dignity and freedom. For more information: <https://aqdmd.org/>

- 30 -

Information: Laurie Marcellesi - Wink Strategies
laurie.marcellesi@winkstrategies.com - 514-558-3703

Sources:

Georges L'Espérance, President of the AQDMD
<https://aqdmd.org/>