



Senator Denise Batters, Q.C.

# NEWS RELEASE

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## SENATOR BATTERS: CANADIANS DEMAND STRICT SAFEGUARDS ON PHYSICIAN-ASSISTED SUICIDE

**Regina** - Senator Denise Batters says today's Angus Reid poll shows that Canadians want strict safeguards on physician-assisted suicide. The poll shows that a strong majority of Canadians oppose the extension of physician-assisted suicide solely on the grounds of psychological suffering or non-terminal illness.

"An overwhelming 78% of those surveyed indicated that psychological suffering should never be the sole reason for accessing physician-assisted suicide," Batters said. "Canadians are pushing back against throwing the door wide open on assisted suicide. They are rightfully concerned that it could be extended in scenarios where there are other options for treatment."

Eighty-two per cent of the individuals surveyed indicated support for physician-assisted suicide in cases of terminal illness with a prognosis of less than six months to live. That support plummeted to 35% for cases involving chronic or non-terminal illnesses.

The survey findings were in line with views expressed during public consultations conducted in 2014 by the Federal External Panel on Options for a Legislative Response to *Carter v. Canada*. Those consultations suggested that Canadians' top concerns regarding physician-assisted dying involved extending access to those with mental health conditions.

"It should not come as a surprise that Canadians oppose the inclusion of psychological suffering," said Batters. "For the past year, I have been speaking out against applying physician-assisted suicide in cases of psychological illness. And in that time, so many Canadians have expressed to me that they are shocked and horrified to hear that allowing this would even be considered."

Today's survey findings stand in stark opposition to the recommendations of the Special Joint Parliamentary Committee on Physician-Assisted Dying. The Committee majority recommended in February that terminal illness should not be required for doctor-assisted death, and that psychological suffering should be permitted as a sole basis for accessing physician-assisted suicide.

"This poll shows just how far the Joint Parliamentary Committee's recommendations strayed from the views of Canadians on this issue," Batters said. "As the Trudeau Government drafts legislation on physician-assisted suicide, they must heed Canadians' warnings to proceed with extreme caution."

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