

**For Immediate Release
March 2, 2016**

**Community Living Ontario Endorses Safeguards Standard Protecting Vulnerable People
from Physician-Assisted Suicide**

Toronto, ON – Community Living Ontario is among a growing list of community and health organizations from across the country that is calling on Canadians to support and endorse the Vulnerable Persons Standard to ensure that people who are at risk of abuse and coercion or find themselves in difficult situations are protected from pressures to end their lives.

The Vulnerable Persons Standard has been developed by a group of advisors with expertise in medicine, ethics, law, public policy and the needs of vulnerable people. The Standard, which was made public yesterday, is intended as a tool for federal and provincial legislators that are contemplating law and policy reform around physician-assisted suicide.

“Research and statistics from other jurisdictions indicate that adults may be motivated to seek out physician-assisted suicide as a result of circumstances apart from a terminal medical condition or prognosis, such as depression, concerns over stress on caregivers, as well as coercion or abuse by others,” said Hélène Morin-Chain, President of Community Living Ontario.

“People who have an intellectual disability are susceptible to undue influence by others and, while we recognize that Canadians with medical conditions that cause enduring and intolerable suffering should have the opportunity to consider all available options, the federal and provincial governments should take the Vulnerable Persons Standard into account while drafting legislation governing physician-assisted suicide in order to ensure that vulnerable people are protected.”

The Vulnerable Persons Standard requires that before allowing the choice of physician-assisted suicide, the following conditions would have to be met:

1. Legislation concerning physician-assisted suicide must not perpetuate disadvantage or contribute to social vulnerability.

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Supporting people who have an intellectual disability

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2. The patient faces end-of-life conditions with no chance of improvement and has enduring and intolerable suffering as a result of a grievous and irremediable medical condition.
3. A voluntary and capable request and consent be made by the patient immediately prior to death. This prohibits the use of advance directives for physician-assisted suicide.
4. An assessment be made to establish that the suffering and vulnerability does not arise from psychosocial or non-medical conditions and circumstances.
5. Arms-length authorization be obtained from a judge or independent body with expertise in the fields of health care, ethics and law.

“Community Living Ontario strongly believes that the Vulnerable Persons Standard that has been developed by a broad range of experts and thinkers from across the country strikes a fair and balanced compromise between a person’s right to physician-assisted suicide when all other options have been exhausted and ensuring that vulnerable people are protected from circumstances other than terminal conditions that may influence a person’s decision to pursue the option to end their life,” said Chris Beesley, Chief Executive Officer of Community Living Ontario.

“This is why Community Living Ontario endorses fully the Vulnerable Persons Standard, encourages others to support it, and asks that they raise the issue with their families, friends, neighbours and Members of Parliament in their respective communities.”

Support the Vulnerable Persons Standard today by visiting www.vps-npv.ca and joining the dozens of organizations and individuals that have already endorsed the Standard requesting that federal legislation regulating physician-assisted suicide incorporates safeguards for vulnerable people. The website also includes answers to related questions, news and resources and other opportunities to make people aware of this very important issue.

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The following people are available for interviews:

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Community Living Ontario is a family-based association assisting people who have an intellectual disability and their families to lead the way in advancing inclusion in their own lives and in their communities. As a province-wide confederation, rooted in a strong network of individuals, families, friends, member organizations and community partners, it will be guided by, adhere to and strive to achieve its goal and vision in all its actions. We are a progressive leader in the Developmental Services Sector representing more than 12,000 individuals, families, over 100 member associations and community partners.

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