

Euthanasia is Now Being Performed ... on Prisoners

Not too long ago, a request by a Belgian prisoner for euthanasia made international headlines – even though he was not permitted to take advantage of the legislation.

But in a measure of how enthusiastically Canada has embraced euthanasia, one prisoner has already been killed under its Medical Aid in Dying (MAID) law, and three others have been approved. According to a report in [CBC News](#), the death took place in a hospital outside of the prison, under the supervision of two correctional officers. It seems to have slipped under the radar of the ever-vigilant journalist of the Canadian media – even though it could be a world first.

Correctional Service Canada (CSC) told CBC News that it had, to date, received eight requests for MAID.

[CSC is now permitted](#) to organise MAID in a community hospital – but it can also take place in a penitentiary regional hospital or treatment centre in exceptional circumstances and at the request of the inmate. The procedures for prisoner all all set out in a set of [detailed guidelines](#).

Correctional Investigator Ivan Zinger criticised the possibility of inmates being euthanised in a prison in a letter to the CSC head:

“Practically and perceptually, I simply can not imagine a scenario where it would be considered acceptable to allow an external provider to carry out a MAID procedure in a federal penitentiary,”

Zinger said that MAID should occur only outside prisons. A prohibition on MAID within prisons would protect the integrity

of the system now and in the future, when eligibility for assisted death could expand to prisoners suffering from acute psychiatric illnesses – and in prisons there are a number of these.

You wonder where the logic of personal autonomy will end. Prisoners must be amongst the most vulnerable people of all possible candidates for euthanasia. Their surroundings seem purpose-made to inspire despair and promote groupthink. Their custodians benefit from their deaths by cutting costs. They are already being punished by restricting the exercise of their autonomy. It seems perverse to allow them to choose death when they cannot even choose their favourite TV program.

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