

SENATE
The Honourable Betty Unger



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L'honorable Betty Unger

CANADA

An Open Letter to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau

"It is a profound injustice to offer physician-assisted dying (PAD) to those suffering with mental illness. I urge you to ensure that PAD is not made available to anyone struggling under this dark cloud."

March 2, 2016

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau,

As the country awaits your proposed legislation on physician-assisted dying (PAD), I am reminded of your comments in the House of Commons on February 24, 2015.

In your speech, you made it clear that you support the Supreme Court's decision in *Carter v. Canada*. You said, "I have a strong opinion. It is based on my personal experience, when I sat by my father in his final moments of life. I know that we must respect personal freedoms and choice while ensuring as a society that the most vulnerable among us are protected. I believe that the Supreme Court made the right decision..."

While I disagree with your moral position on this issue, I understand the impact your father's death had on you. I appreciate how difficult those times can be when a loved one is suffering in their final days.

However, as you consider your legislative response to *Carter v. Canada*, I urge you to not only remember your father's experience in death, but to remember your mother's experience in life. Her struggle with depression in your childhood years is well-known. It was a dark and difficult time from which she eventually found relief. You must be very thankful that PAD was not available to entice her with a permanent solution to a temporary problem.

I urge you to ensure that this gift which was granted to your family is protected for other Canadians struggling with mental illness – time. Time to heal; time to recover; time to realize that there is hope and that there are those who care.

It is a profound injustice to offer PAD to those suffering with mental illness. I urge you to ensure that PAD is not made available to anyone struggling under this dark cloud. While you endeavour to respect your father, please remember your mother, and protect those who suffer from mental illness.

Sincerely,

Betty E. Unger, Alberta Senator