

Bill c300 is now LAW in Canada

OTTAWA, ON (December 14th, 2012) - In a ceremony today in the Senate Chambers, His Excellency Governor General David Johnston signed Bill C-300, a Federal Framework for Suicide Prevention into law. It comes into force immediately.

This means that within 180 days from today, the Government of Canada is required to designate an authority to enter into consultations with other levels of government and interested non-governmental organizations to begin work on the Framework. Within four years of today, and every two years thereafter, this entity must report back to Parliament regarding their activities and progress.

"I'm grateful to the Senate for passing this fairly quickly," said the Bill's sponsor Harold Albrecht. "With all of the timelines expressed in the Bill, every day counts. This is not the end of the journey, now the work starts."

The framework will require the Government of Canada to:

- .provide guidelines to improve public awareness and knowledge about suicide;
- .disseminate information about suicide, including information concerning its prevention;
- .make statistics publicly available regarding suicide and its related risk factors;
- .promote collaboration and knowledge exchange in suicide prevention;
- .define the best practices for the prevention of suicide; and
- .promote the use of research and evidence-based practices for the prevention of suicide.

On Monday December 10th the Senate's Standing Committee on Social Affairs unanimously passed C-300 without amendment, after hearing testimony from various experts in suicide prevention and officials from relevant government departments.

Senator Salma Ataullahjan was C-300's sponsor in the Senate.

"When I opened debate in the Senate, I said that the sooner this bill receives Royal Assent, the sooner we could improve the lives of Canadians," noted Senator Ataullahjan. "I'm overjoyed we were able to move this forward in 2012 - with 10 Canadians dying by suicide each day, we can't put this off any longer."

As Albrecht noted in his testimony to the Senate Committee, even that frightening statistic doesn't tell the whole story: In Canada each year there are, on average, four hundred thousand suicide attempts, twenty thousand hospitalizations due to suicidal behaviours, and eighty-eight thousand visits to emergency rooms.

"There is great work occurring in communities across Canada," stated Albrecht. "This framework will allow these efforts to be amplified, shared, and improved. We will save lives."

Reaction from Waterloo Region's suicide prevention advocates was joy and excitement.

"The passing of Bill C300 is a milestone for suicide prevention in Canada," said Rob Martin, Chair of the Waterloo Region Suicide Prevention Council. "As new information and approaches to suicide prevention emerge, we will be better prepared to work together to build suicide-safer communities. We will be better able to work together to focus our resources on saving lives. The Federal Framework will be of immense value to us, and to all Canadians as it puts Canada in the same league as the rest of the other G8 countries who have a Federal Framework towards suicide prevention efforts."

Albrecht's interest in suicide prevention began with the death by suicide of Nadia Kajouji, who fell victim to an internet predator posing as a friend. People like Rory Butler of Your Life Counts kept the issue on his agenda. It was at the urging of the Waterloo Region Suicide Prevention Council, in the aftermath of a week when three local youths who died by suicide in unrelated incidents, that Albrecht introduced C-300.