



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on January 10, 2025

Canadian Doctors: Why Not Take Organs From Live Assisted-suicide Patients?

Canadian doctors, having accepted the country's assisted-suicide regime, are now considering whether to harvest organs from euthanasia patients before they have died, [The Federalist](#) reported Wednesday.

The doctors reason thus: Organs are normally removed from a donor as soon as possible after death to ensure they are in the best possible condition for transplant. If organs were removed from a live person, they would be in even better condition. And if that patient is about to die voluntarily anyway, what's the harm in killing him by taking his organs?



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Stealing Hearts

"The best use of my organs, if I'm going to receive a medically assisted death, might be to not first kill me and then retrieve my organs, but to have my mode of death — as we medically consider death now — to be to retrieve my organs," [said](#) Rob Sibbald, an ethicist at Ontario's London Health Sciences Centre.

Sibbald made those remarks at a conference in 2018, just two years after Canada's assisted-suicide law, known as medical assistance in dying (MAiD), was passed. According to *The Federalist's* Logan Washburn, the event was sponsored by three organizations who are so intent on increasing organ donations that they were, apparently, willing to entertain the notion of euthanizing a patient by removing his organs.

They aren't alone. Toronto's [National Post](#) reported in 2019:

Three years after assisted death became legal in Canada, the medical community is debating a provocative question: should organs be removed from consenting euthanasia patients while they're still alive?

That same year, the *Canadian Medical Association Journal* published [guidance](#) on organ donation after MAiD. A year ago, the same journal featured a [study](#) on the subject from Quebec, a province whose MAiD laws are even laxer than those of the Canadian government. Ottawa allows MAiD for patients with incurable conditions whose deaths are not "reasonably foreseeable." Quebec has started taking [advance requests](#) for MAiD.

Canada is the [leading country](#) for post-euthanasia organ transplants. In Quebec, where doctors are required to inform MAiD patients of their organ-donation options, [14 percent](#) of organ donors in 2022 were MAiD patients.



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Ethics? We Don't Need No Stinkin' Ethics!

One obstacle to the modern-day Mengeles' dreams of taking living patients' organs is the "dead donor rule," a medical-ethics guideline stating that doctors should not harvest organs from living patients.

Wrote Washburn:

"We're so invested in this dead donor rule," Sibbald said. "That rule has become so ingrained in the medical community that we hold it out as a foundational principle. ... And I think just as likely there are people who question that value now. And I know there's perhaps not an appetite to go there, but raising the question — is the dead donor rule even relevant?"

He suggested death may not occur at one particular moment in time, and said the "best use" of organs from patients who are "going to receive a medically assisted death" could be to harvest them while the victim is alive.

"If, to meet your definition of the dead donor rule, you have to consider me dead once you've first put me under and you have no intention of bringing me back — well then fine, I can accept that if those are my values," Sibbald said.

The ethicist appeared to imply that doctors should make this decision on their own, asking forgiveness rather than permission.

"I think legally, yes, we do need an answer, and we're going to come to that," Sibbald said. "But of the possible solutions to our pragmatic issues, we can continue to allow physicians to decide and let the conflict go to the courts."

Canada's Criminal Code defines MAiD as the administration of a "substance" that causes death. Therefore, killing a patient by harvesting his organs would not qualify as MAiD.

In comments to Washburn, Sibbald denied that he had suggested "that physicians should operate outside the bounds of existing legal or professional ethical standards."

"Rather," he explained, "I have suggested that in light of legal developments we should take time to consider whether other legal or professional standards are now also in need of update or reconsideration."

Profits of Doom

Why the push for more organs when euthanized Canadians are already donating? For one thing, the country's socialized healthcare system has a [chronic organ shortage](#). For another, there's big money in both MAiD and organ trafficking.

"MAiD is a huge money-making business — now they're saving money on future healthcare," Heather Hancock, a disabled Canadian who said she was pressured to let doctors kill her, told Washburn. "They're literally [denying](#) us healthcare treatment and [offering us MAiD](#) instead."

Angelina Ireland, whom Washburn described as "executive director of the Delta Hospice Society, an end-of-life care facility that the Canadian government shut down and then took over for not terminating its patients," told him, "You can get big, big money on the world market" for human organs. "We have opened ourselves to some horrific stuff."

Roger Foley, a disabled man who claims he was offered MAiD four times, questioned whether doctors'



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public musings on taking organs from MAiD patients were merely hypothetical.

“It could be they’re already doing euthanasia by organ harvesting, we just don’t know about it,” he told Washburn.

As always, opening the door to euthanasia lets many other ugly practices inside, too. The “sliding practice” of MAiD, Foley contended, “leads not only towards expansion of eligibility criteria, but also towards euthanasia organ harvesting methods.”



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