

Canada catches up with ban on genetic discrimination

3 May 2016

Canadian lawmakers were a legislative step closer Tuesday to banning genetic discrimination including in the workplace or by health insurers.

The move comes almost a decade after Britain, France, the Netherlands and the United States passed similar legislation.

The Act to Prohibit and Prevent Genetic Discrimination has already been unanimously endorsed by the Senate and is now winding its way through the House and committees.

It could become law in Canada by year's end.

It would forbid employers from using genetic information as a basis for discrimination in hiring and would prevent health insurers from using genetic test results to deny [insurance coverage](#).

It would also prohibit insurers and others from demanding [genetic testing](#) and prevent the disclosure of [genetic information](#) from past tests.

"This law is crucial for the protection of Canadians' rights as the field of genetic testing and precision medicine rapidly expands," said MP Robert Oliphant, who moved first reading of the bill in the House of Commons.

But the failure of Canadian law to keep pace with medical science has curbed the use of genetic tests in healthcare, he lamented.

"Many Canadians who have had genetic testing have then found themselves discriminated against because of the results," Oliphant explained.

"And fear of genetic discrimination is preventing many Canadians from getting testing that their doctors believe could help in their health care. This is wrong."

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