

Canadian province to presume consent for organ donations

3 April 2019

Canada's province of Nova Scotia has proposed a law that would presume all citizens consent to being organ donors unless they opt out, breaking new ground in North America.

Unveiled Tuesday and assured of passage by the province's ruling Liberals, the bill would flip the current practice in Nova Scotia of requiring signed [consent](#) before a person's organs can be harvested after death.

Under the proposed law, consent would be assumed unless a person has actively opted out.

The province already has one of the highest organ donation rates in the country, but officials said it is still not enough to meet demand.

Nova Scotia Premier Stephen McNeil "was concerned that people on wait lists for these life-saving transplants had passed away, and this seemed like a reasonable step to try to address this issue," spokesman David Jackson told AFP.

It is expected to take 18 months to work its way through the legislative process and go into effect.

As early as next week, locals will be given an opportunity to comment on the proposed law at legislative committee hearings, while the province steps up [public awareness](#) and [medical training](#) over the coming year "to increase capacity in the system," he said.

"It'll be a significant push to increase transplants."

Cindy Ryan, who received two [liver transplants](#) since 2013 after a virus attacked her own, was on hand for the bill's unveiling.

She told local media the life-saving transplants allowed her to see her children graduate school and start careers, marry her current husband and celebrate her 50th birthday.

"So many changes in my life, so many things to be grateful for every day, and all because someone I'll never have the honor to meet gave me the most generous gift of all—the gift of organ donation, the gift of life," she told public broadcaster CBC.

"Recycle yourself, together we live on," reads a tattoo on her arm.

Currently in Nova Scotia, prospective donors carry wallet card identifying themselves as such so hospitals can know they can harvest their organs when they die.

Other countries including Belgium, France and Spain saw their respective donations rise after adopting systems like the one being proposed for Nova Scotia.

On Monday, Germany, which has about 10,000 patients awaiting organ transplants, became the latest EU nation to consider adopting the principle of presumed consent.

Critics warned that the practice amounts to turning patients into spare parts.

Juveniles and persons unable to consent for themselves would be excluded from the Nova Scotia law.

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