

Bernadette Secco

1 May 2016.

Members of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights:

Re: **DRAFT BILL C 14**

I understand why the committee has had a short period of time to draft Bill C 14. In my opinion, there are several important points that need to be revised to have it agree with *Carter v Canada*.

The Supreme Court of Canada decision does not require terminal illness or “reasonably foreseeable” natural death. I have had one ALS patient live a quality life for almost 10 years following diagnosis because he wanted to show his granddaughter she was worth fight for. Another, died two years after diagnosis ending incredible, overwhelming pain. A friend suffered unspeakable horrors from esophageal cancer, slowly losing the ability to swallow her own saliva let alone food. Each had a “reasonably foreseeable” death ahead of them once their diagnosis was delivered. Each should, in my opinion, have had the opportunity of an assisted death with dignity prior to their natural death.

Many Canadians believe they will age like a “Freedom 55” commercial totally in denial of the possibilities of dementia or other degenerative conditions. Without advance consent as part of an informed and deliberate future planning process, their fantasy may end with a horrific death or even suicide with all its stigmas. Please include “advance consent” in a revised Bill C 14.

Requiring the patient to be competent at the time of their request AND at the time of the assisted death makes sense on paper but is neither practical nor compassionate. One morning I was a working mom making major divorce/financial/custody decisions and driving my daughter to school. A truck ran a red light and within seconds, my life and me, changed. I was diagnosed as permanently disabled and for ten years suffered from a brain injury. I have managed to re-hab through it all. As difficult and painful as it was, at no point did I wish I could have had assistance dying. But I know personally, how quickly a healthy person can lose their competency. It’s even easier for someone with an already compromised health condition.

In summary, I believe Bill C 14 must be revised to include and reflect the language and spirit of *Carter* and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms for the benefit of all Canadians needing to consider this most serious of decisions.

Yours truly,

Bernadette Secco