

May 1, 2016

To: Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights

Re: Bill C-14

From: Linda Jarrett

Background

I am a 68 year-old woman, happily married for over 40 years to David Whitfield. We are the proud parents of two grown children (also happily married!) and grandparents to four young grand-daughters.

In 1998, at the rather advanced age of 50, I was diagnosed with Secondary Progressive Multiple Sclerosis. I was truly blessed in receiving this news after being able to be actively involved in raising our children, and enjoying a rewarding career as a French teacher, Grades 4-8. I retired from teaching in 2004.

Since diagnosis, my mobility has been compromised to the point where I can no longer walk. I rely completely on my motorized scooter, and am grateful to still be able to drive my wheelchair accessible van, albeit with hand controls!

But the view of the years ahead are troubling to me. It is unlikely that a definitive cause for MS, or a cure for my particular form of MS, is likely to be found in the foreseeable future. I do not wish to be taken care of 24/7 in a long-term care facility for possibly years on end! I was beginning to think that hastening my own death, even "too early" was what I might have to do, so as to avoid implicating criminally anyone helping me, and while I could still physically take my own life.

And then came the incredible unanimous Supreme Court ruling in February 2015! I felt such joy in knowing that I could start enjoying life again, instead of worrying about how to hasten my death, and felt that I could be assured of a peaceful death when the quality of my life was no longer acceptable to me!!!

Reality

The proposed Bill C-14, as currently presented, will deny me, and other like-minded people, the end-of-life choice we had thought could be our right.

I am hopeful that Bill C-14 can be amended so that its eligibility requirements are consistent with those laid out in the Supreme Court's ruling, which establishes assisted dying as a right for "a competent adult person who (1) clearly consents to the termination of life and (2) has a grievous and irremediable

medical condition (including an illness, disease, or disability) that causes enduring suffering that is intolerable to the individual in the circumstances of his or her condition.”

Another important amendment needed to make this bill a realistic embodiment of choice at end of life, is to allow for advance requests for medical assistance in dying. Given my own situation, I suppose I can only hope that I stay mentally competent until such time that I might qualify for a physician-assisted death! And yet here I am today, a woman of above-average intelligence, with a very clear vision of the time when my quality of life will not be acceptable to me, suffering from a condition which is only going to get worse, and I am not being permitted to make an advance request??!!! Not allowing for this vital amendment is to condemn many people to a prolonged life of suffering.

In closing, I recognise the complexity of the topic, and am very respectful of the fact that others do not share my wish for a physician-assisted death. But, PLEASE, ensure that there is , at the very minimum, a viable CHOICE!

Respectfully submitted,

Linda Jarrett