

February 1, 2016

To: Special Joint Committee on Physician-Assisted Dying

From: Denise Holmen, Victoria, BC

I was compelled to write to you on Physician-Assisted Dying since my mother died a slow, terrible death last October. To watch her suffering was torture for me and our family. She lived for a month after pleading to "pull the plug." I urge you to pass legislation as quickly as possible to ensure others do not have to die the way she did.

I recognize that each individual has the right to decide how they want to die. If others want to live as long as possible, no matter their condition, that is their right, and the legislation must protect their right to life.

But for those of us who do not want to live on in pain or as vegetables, please support our right to a quick and painless end, including the following recommendations:

1. Eligibility should not be limited to a list of approved conditions and should instead be open to patients with a "very severe or serious illness."
2. Advance requests for assisted death must be valid when made by a patient who, at the time of the request, was competent, whether they have a diagnosis for a condition that could become grievous and irremediable, or not. For instance, if I should suffer a stroke, or develop dementia to the extent that I was unable to feed and toilet myself, I would want help exiting this world. If I need to wait for a diagnosis before I can request PAD, I may not longer be capable of convincing two doctors that I am competent to make this decision. I want my wishes to be acknowledged now.
3. If a doctor is not available to speed my death, I hope that other medical practitioners, like hospice nurses, be allowed to do so.

Thank you for this opportunity to express my deep concern on this matter!