

To: Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights regarding Bill C – 7

I oppose Bill C – 7 for the following reasons:

- 1) It removes the requirement that the person's death must be reasonably foreseeable. Nowhere is the phrase, "reasonably foreseeable" defined. Without a definition, reasonably foreseeable can mean anything – 2 weeks? 2 months? 2 years?
- 2) Bill C-7 permits lethal injection of a person incapable of consenting if that person was previously approved for assisted death. We must not permit MAID when a person has become incompetent even if the person was previously approved. Most of us have read about the Dutch woman who requested euthanasia earlier in life but later became incompetent. When her family and doctor decided that the time for her to be euthanized had come, she was given a sedative in her coffee but still resisted and had to be held down by her family in order for the doctor to give her a lethal injection. This hardly qualifies as "death with dignity".
- 3) Bill C-7 waives the ten-day waiting period when a person is deemed to be "terminally ill". We must not eliminate the waiting period since studies show that the "will to live" fluctuates; my family experienced this phenomenon when my mother spent her last five weeks in hospice. Some mornings she would appear severely depressed and wonder why she was still "here", but would thoroughly enjoy a visit from a grandchild the same afternoon.
- 4) Bill C-7 permits MAID for people who are physically or psychologically suffering in a way that is intolerable to the person and that cannot be relieved in a way that the person considers acceptable. Mental illness is considered a form of psychological suffering, but it is not defined in the law. Death by lethal injection is permitted for anyone who believes their physical or psychological suffering to be intolerable even if effective medical treatments for their condition exist. I worked in a hospital as a social worker for six years and know well the connection between mental illness and suicide. That assisted suicide is now available has actually "normalized" suicide and made those of us who worked in suicide prevention wonder whether our efforts are in vain. As a society, do we want to accept suicide as an answer to life's problems? All attempts must be made to prevent euthanasia for mental illness alone. My daughter-in-law's father has suffered from bipolar illness for the last thirty years and has attempted suicide more than once. Knowing that he could request assisted suicide and probably be approved has caused both his daughters much anxiety and heartache.

Please reject Bill C-7, which would make Canada the most permissive euthanasia regime in the world, and begin the promised 5-year review of the 2016 euthanasia law.

Gail Schulte

