

Dear Sir/Madame:

Re: A letter in support of Bill C-7

I became a member of Dying with Dignity in 2013, shortly after the death of my father in January of that year. His name was Gordon Robertson. You may recognize the name. Among his many positions with the federal civil service, he was Clerk of the Privy Council and Secretary to the Cabinet from 1963 to 1975; Secretary to the Cabinet for Federal-Provincial Relations from 1975 to 1979; and then President of the IRPP. I mention these things because they indicate the extent of his intelligence and capability.

A couple of years after my mother died in 2001, my father was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease. He deteriorated slowly over the next agonizing decade. Although he had requested in his personal directive that his life not be extended if he was no longer capable of a rational existence, that was of course not possible. It still isn't. The passage of Bill C-7 will not change that. However, Bill C-7 is an important step toward making MAID accessible to anyone whose life has – in their view – become intolerable.

The request to die cannot be as simple as asking and receiving. There must be safeguards. Bill C-7 recognizes this. In my view, the safeguards associated with MAID for those whose deaths are not reasonably foreseeable are overly harsh. But, as my father used to say, "Don't let the perfect get in the way of the possible." What Bill C-7 proposes with respect to allowing access to MAID where death is not imminent is infinitely better than the legislation as it currently stands.

Removing the requirement for final consent is also a vast improvement. I personally know someone who requested MAID before she really wanted it because she feared losing capacity. It was a cruel choice that she – and Audrey Parker – had to make. Waiving that necessity will allow people to live longer. And it will provide peace of mind and a better quality of life to those remaining days.

There are other changes proposed by Bill C-7. All are good. Some are less than perfect. But they provide a stepping stone to other, equally important amendments to the law. Allowing advance requests for MAID is on my, and many other Canadians', wish list. So is allowing people with mental illness as the sole condition to be eligible for MAID. Hopefully, the upcoming legislative review will lead to both.

This government has been gratifyingly responsive to the wishes of Canadians in moving MAID forward. I hope this continues with the passage of Bill C-7.

Sincerely,
Kerrie Hale