

Subject: Vote against Bill C-218—your decision affects my life

Dear Members of Parliament,

I am writing to every member of the House of Commons to urge you to vote against Bill C-218. For me, this is not an abstract political debate. It concerns my life, my suffering, and my right to have my circumstances assessed with dignity.

You must confront what closing that door can mean for people such as me. Denying access to an assessment does not make suffering disappear. My fear is that people enduring intolerable suffering will turn to desperate, solitary, and less humane ways of ending their lives, including intentional overdoses involving recreational drugs. That is a consequence Parliament must take seriously.

Historic decisions by the Canadian Armed Forces in regard to the Captain Father Angus McRae child sexual abuse scandal on Canadian Forces Base Namao when I was younger directly contributed to the mental illness and complex post-traumatic stress disorder I live with today. I am still carrying the consequences. Now, through this bill, Parliament proposes to permanently close off the possibility of MAID eligibility on the basis of a mental disorder alone. I experience that as another profound intrusion by the government into a life it has already harmed.

My issues were diagnosed in 1980 in the aftermath of the CFB Namao child sexual abuse scandal on Canadian Forces Base Namao. Social service records that I only became aware of in 2011 made it very clear that the military social worker in whose care I was placed, had very little concern for my mental health and wellbeing.

My younger brother, another victim of the CFB Namao scandal, overdosed on Ketamine just days after his last communication in July of 2024. I can't say for sure that his death was an intentional overdose, but just days before he had died he had contacted me and he was anxious to know if the DOJ, the CAF, and the DND were willing to settle and if so could he use the money for mental health treatment.

No one should feel forced toward suicide or an intentional overdose because the possibility of a compassionate exit has been removed. No one should be told that their only acceptable future is to endure unbearable suffering indefinitely. People need meaningful access to care, support, and treatment, alongside respect for their capacity to participate in decisions about their own lives.

From 2000 through 2023, 94,805 deaths were recorded as suicides in Canada, according to the Statistics Canada figures.

The number of suicide attempts in this country is a “guesstimate” at best as people who often attempt suicide and fail don't report their attempts as they know full well the stigmatism attached to suicide. I fear surviving a suicide attempt with a severe brain injury and requiring long-term care..

Mental health professionals and politicians often portray suicide as a rash decision that often occurs with little to no warning and that the issues that prompted the suicidal ideations were brief and fleeting. This is not the case in my matter. My suffering cannot be understood solely as a brief crisis. The conditions I describe have affected my life for decades. My diagnosed but untreated major depression, severe anxiety, CPTSD, and other issues have been long lingering.

Government institutions failed me as a child. Following the sexual abuse at CFB Namao, access to care and protection was obstructed, and promised psychiatric treatment never materialized. I have lived with the consequences for nearly 46 years. It is profoundly distressing that the same government now proposes to permanently deny people in my circumstances the possibility of an individual assessment for MAID.

And so here I am, almost 46 years removed from the events of Canadian Forces Base Namao, having to plead with the Government of Canada and the Members of Parliament to not remove from me my ability to seek a dignified end to my suffering.

I believe a request for MAID should be considered between the person making it, their physician, and qualified assessors, within a rigorous framework of safeguards. A request deserves an individual assessment of capacity, voluntariness, medical history, available treatments, and circumstances. Politicians cannot make that assessment for every person by imposing a permanent blanket exclusion.

I am not asking you to assume that every request should be approved. I am asking you to preserve the possibility of a fair assessment. My diagnosis should not automatically erase my voice.

Before you vote, consider the people who will have to live with the consequences of your decision. Listen to those of us whose lives have already been profoundly affected by government actions. Our experiences must carry weight in a debate about our suffering and our autonomy.

Please vote against Bill C-218.

Please reply with your intended vote and explain how your position addresses the consequences I have described.

Sincerely,

Bobbie Garnet Bees
Vancouver, BC,