

June 25, 2010

Mme. Amik Laplante,
Secrétaire de la Commission spéciale
Hôtel du Parlement
1035 rue des Parlementaires
Québec, QC G1A 1A3

Re: Dying in Dignity

Dear Mme. Laplante,

The family is the template of society.

When I was just a teenager I remember how joyfully we all prepared for the visit of our beloved grandfather - my maternal grandfather - my father's parents were dead. From the conversations and plans it was evident that my parents hoped David Stacey would consent to leave Newfoundland where he was born to come live with us. Though our family life appealed, Grandfather found the pace of life in mainland Canada (Montreal area) too fast, too upsetting, so he elected to return to his home for good. He entered Hoyle's Home in St. John's - easy airport access. My mother would choose different family members from their six children to visit in the summer. Grandfather died there as he had always lived, despite being unable to read nor write, in dignity, and at advanced age - a beloved respected gentle man.

Some years later my parents sold our family home on Lorne, number 14, in St. Lambert.

My husband Elmar and I invited them to live with us and our nine children at 1300 Oak

Avenue in Sillery (now all Quebec). We offered to prepare a quiet private living space — full service, and meals with the family. They were not ready yet, as it seemed a relinquishment of their independence. They chose a retirement home in St. Lambert within sight and strolling distance of my Dad's garden. We visited often.

As Dad declined he could no longer make the effort to converse but I often brought a smile to his face by recounting a multitude of happy childhood memories which he had made possible. Despite the excellent home nursing staff Dad did not live long. I had the privilege of holding his hand when he died — in dignity.

We again pressed Mom not to live there alone. To our relief she accepted to come to us.

My husband and my mother were always comfortable together. He often joked that he kept his mother-in-law in his garage, and it was true! Elmar designed for her a bright attractive living space, very well insulated, ceiling to floor windows with a door onto a small wooden deck and a wheel-chair ramp to the driveway for frequent outings. Her bathroom and shower were safe and wheel-chair accessible as her disabilities increased. A trusted friend, a contractor carried out the work lovingly. Mom loved it.

In her 85th year medical tests revealed terminal cancer, which news she accepted with serenity. We surrounded her with love and care and en famille we moved peacefully through the end-of-life stages. She died as she hoped she would in her

own bed, accompanied by the affection of her entire family. We had the treasure of her company for five years of love and laughter. Like a spent candle her life ended in quiet dignity.

One after another our children married and moved off to establish their homes and families. We sold our property and downsized to a more appropriate two-bedroom apartment at 1500 Avenue du Parc Beauharnois - living there in peace and contentment for 12 years. In the meantime my husband's cancer came out of remission, complicated by Parkinson's - throat paralysis, which caused repeated bouts of pneumonia.

Our son-in-law generously converted for us a no longer used home-office space on their first floor. My Elmar died here, in his bed, content and peaceful knowing that I have a cherished place in the home and hearts of our children and grandchildren, who took turns by his side to relieve me in nursing him to the end.

The Aylmer CHSC provided praiseworthy support also. They ably seconded our efforts with 24 hour help - cheerful, compassionate, dedicated, practical staff - remarkable human beings - and sound palliative home care. I wrote a letter of appreciation & praise to the local bulletin.

Sincerely,

Bridget Kane (Mrs. Elmar J Kane)