

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – May 23, 2025

Family Support Institute of BC (FSI) condemns discriminatory comments promoting MAiD as a 'solution' for disability and mental illness – including harmful reference to Prader Willi syndrome

(May 23, 2025 – Vancouver, B.C.)— The Family Support Institute of BC (FSI) is deeply disturbed by recent comments made by a Quebec radio host suggesting that Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD) is a reasonable solution for people with disabilities and mental illness. Even more troubling is his specific reference to an individual with Prader-Willi syndrome, reinforcing the false narrative that some lives are less worth living.

The radio host in question, Luc Ferrandez, suggested in French that committees of experts should be able to authorize assisted suicide for people who "no longer have any parents, people who were abandoned ... people who no longer receive visits ... no longer have any joy in life, they have no more interest in living, who live in permanent suffering." Disturbingly, he gave the specific example of a 24-year-old woman who has a rare genetic condition called Prader-Willi syndrome, which is not a terminal illness; he claimed her life was not worth living and that her mother should have the right to end it.

To publicly assert that someone should die because they have a disability is profoundly dehumanizing and ableist. Framing disabilities like Prader-Willi syndrome in the context of assisted death contributes to societal stigma and systemic bias, further marginalizing those already fighting for inclusion, access, and basic respect. These views do not exist in a vacuum; they reflect and reinforce deeply harmful ideas about the value of disabled lives.

Statements like these are not just offensive; they promote eugenicist ideology. Montreal-based disability rights group RAPLIQ noted: "To speak of euthanasia with logistical calm, as if it were a measure of social efficiency, is to deny the value of different lives. It is to slip down a eugenic slope, the very same that has led history into the abyss."

Angela Clancy, Executive Director of FSI, states that "It is shocking and heartbreaking to hear a public figure suggest that death is a preferable option for people with disabilities or mental illness. This rhetoric is not only irresponsible—it is dangerous. It reduces people to their diagnoses and dismisses their right to support, inclusion, and dignity. Instead of promoting death, we must promote life—with the supports and systems that make it worth living."

FSI has consistently advocated for the rights of people with disabilities and has raised concerns about the expansion of MAiD in Canada, especially where death is not reasonably foreseeable. We echo the position of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which has warned that such expansions risk creating a two-tier valuation of life and violate the principles of equality and non-discrimination.

This issue is not about individual choice—it is about the broader societal failure to provide the supports, care, and opportunities people need to live safely and with dignity. When people are offered death as a response to poverty, isolation, or a lack of services, it reflects a failure of compassion, policy, and justice.



Recent developments in federal governance further underscore these concerns. The removal of a dedicated Minister for Persons with Disabilities in the new Canadian cabinet is not just a symbolic loss. It has tangible policy consequences: A ministerial role focused on disability acts as a safeguard, ensuring that policies affecting disabled Canadians are carefully considered through a disability rights lens. Without this representation, there is less oversight—fewer voices within government pushing back against harmful or exclusionary policy directions.

Advocates including David Lepofsky and Rabia Khedr have pointed out that eliminating this role sends a troubling signal, especially as MAiD eligibility expands to include more people with disabilities whose death is not reasonably foreseeable. It suggests that the government is deprioritizing the inclusion and protection of those already facing systemic poverty, isolation, and discrimination.

The connection is clear: when Canada broadens access to assisted death while simultaneously removing structural support for people with disabilities, it deepens the perception that some lives are less valuable. This emboldens voices of exclusion and devaluation to dominate the media. This makes the need for rights-based advocacy, policy safeguards, and public accountability even more urgent.

FSI joins other disability rights organizations in urging the reinstatement of a Minister for Persons with Disabilities, not only as a matter of representation but as a critical mechanism to ensure federal policies protect, rather than endanger, the lives of disabled Canadians. MAiD cannot be a response to unmet needs or systemic failures. Our government must do better to affirm that all lives have equal worth.

FSI calls on elected officials, media leaders, health professionals, and the Canadian public to:

- Denounce narratives that devalue disabled lives and reject MAiD as a substitute for proper care and inclusion.
- Stop using specific disabilities like Prader-Willi Syndrome as examples in discussions of assisted death—it stigmatizes real people and perpetuates harmful myths.
- Invest in comprehensive, accessible supports that affirm the inherent value and dignity of every person.
- Uphold Canada’s human rights obligations to protect, not marginalize, the lives of people with disabilities.

For over 35 years, FSI has worked alongside families across BC to build inclusive communities where all individuals—regardless of ability—are valued and supported. We will continue to advocate fiercely to ensure that no one is made to feel their life is less worthy of living because of disability or mental illness.

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About Family Support Institute of BC:

The Family Support Institute (FSI) supports families who have family members with disabilities and mental health challenges. FSI is unique in Canada and is the only grass-roots, family-to-family support organization. FSI believes families are the best resource to support one another and the most vital voice for their family members. FSI supports all families with children of all ages, disabilities, and concurrent conditions. FSI's supports are free to any family.

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