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Good morning. I am joining you very early in the day from the unceded territories of the Squamish, Musqueam and Tsleil-waututh Nations. I am mindful that modern Western ableism, and particularly scientific ableism serve as historical and ongoing links between colonialism and the policy we are discussing here today.

Stanford historian Londa Schiebenger explains that the emergence of natural rights with Enlightenment created the need for a "science" to provide a rational justification for inequality. Modern Western ableism forms the basis and provides the rhetorical and pseudo-scientific framework for constructing hierarchies, defining "other," establishing "lesser" as well as delineating arbitrary lines between "deserving" and undeserving.

Ableism is the language of biopolitics. It serves to rationalize unequal distribution of wealth and resources. Scientific ableism, and especially medical ableism, provide MAID with a false facade of legitimacy and rigor. Within this system, Track Two MAiD extends the coercive but seemingly arm's length power of the state, to provide a designated class of citizens with premature death at the hands of the state.

I am speaking to you today as the Co-founder of the Disability Filibuster, a national grassroots initiative started by Catherine Frazee and myself on the eve of the passing of Bill C7 and creation of a second track for MAiD. Disability Filibuster was, in part, a response to disabled people being marginalized from the discussion and decision-making around Bill C7 and our frustration that our collective anger was cordoned off and isolated much like our lives. The

Filibuster was the only space created for the only people targeted by the expansion of MAiD to voice their views.

The media was locked down and dominated by the endless public relations work of those lobbying for its expansion. Concerns about the social contagion of covering the ending of one's life was tossed aside. The line between editorializing was blurred to the point of romanticizing and lionizing those who made the choice not to continue to be a "burden" on those around them and to "end things on their own terms." You could almost hear Frank Sinatra singing between the lines. No mention was made of the publicly articulated and enthusiastic support for involuntary euthanasia of disabled people during the time of Tracy Latimer's murder by many of the same people and groups who were now anointing themselves as champions of a demonstrably false version of autonomy.

The political sphere was dominated by the disproportionate representation of politicians enthusiastic for expanding MAiD and/or for being seen in favourable light by its well-connected and well-heeled proponents. A foundation sharing the same last name and lineage as the Prime Minister played more than a minor role in propelling support to the forefront.

Disabled people are a large minority, but we are still the minority. A minority that is disproportionately poor, racialized, and not noted for its strong political value and influence, as is evidenced by our policy absence in political platforms and campaigns during elections. There was no place for disabled people in the discourse around a policy that specifically and solely affects disabled people and no one else. We didn't have a chance.

Even today, the only place for us in media coverage is as human-interest stories about those among us who have resigned themselves to applying for MAiD after tiring of seeking non-existent support and unable to gulp down the prospect of a future of subsistence level poverty inflicted and normalized as a component of our broader dehumanization and oppression. In order to be allowed a presence you have to agree to die.

So removed, uninterested, and ill-formed are politicians and media about our lives and the discussions we have that we found ourselves regularly characterized as right-wing religious fanatics. This characterization is so laughably incorrect I struggle to express the absurdity of it. But such is the degree of distance between disabled people and mainstream society that not only can we be misrepresented to this degree, but there was no ability to correct it – so we built our own space.

Over the course of two years, Disability Filibuster has hosted approximately 80 hours of Zoom meetings. These included panels, readings, art, casual conversations and live processing of our grief and exhausted rage. Participants represented the diversity of Canada's population and diversity of disabilities. We had professors, doctors, sex workers, people living in poverty on disability benefits, artists, writers, students, parents. Adults of all ages and varying interests with little in common besides being disabled and opposing the expansion of MAiD.

In five minutes, I can't convey their words to you. And words can't convey how hunger and the inability to act on it dominates and alters your thought process to such a degree that quaint illusions others indulge in about the siloing of their autonomy are stripped away. Words can't convey the unrelenting demands from the beast pain we experience while living in a society that will potentially deny or criminalize you for seeking relief while offering to put you down out of "compassion."

The truth is, I didn't come here today under the illusion that I can alter minds or inform those who have consistently, persistently and willfully chosen to do the least possible to inform themselves about the lives of disabled people, particularly those living in poverty and on the extreme margins of society. Your society. I came to put it on the record.

Canada's expansion of MAiD to disabled people whose deaths are not reasonably foreseeable, reifies and builds onto the existing dehumanization of disabled people in Canada, breathes new life into the goals of the never-dismantled eugenics and is based on the ableism that formed this country's foundation, and as such represents a serious threat to us. Furthermore, an escalation of oppression and attack on the rights of a marginalized minority is a threat to the democratic rights of everyone. An escalation in dehumanization and eugenics is historically associated with a loss of broader human rights and freedoms.

The material and social conditions of disabled people in Canada are fundamentally different from those of non-disabled people. This is especially true for disabled poor people. The significantly lower presence of positive liberty relative to the general population, results in a negligible existence of real choice for disabled people, a lack of social bonds, deep isolation and exclusion which is further supported by pervasive inaccessibility.

The very different social contract offered to disabled people has yet to provide us with a guarantee of freedom to live in the community, to not be forced into institutions should our needs exceed those deemed appropriately human, the denial of our equal right to travel, and the provision of infrastructure that would make us intended participants not unintended participants in society. Ableist rhetoric, ableist slurs and negative use of disability in non-disability related discourse to signify 'other' and 'lesser' further serves to exemplify, assert and enforce the dominant culture's disdain for disabled people.

I didn't come here with illusions. I came here to remind you that history changes and that one day our roles will be reversed, and you will be the ones answering questions.