

Friday, April 1st, 2016

## **THE VULNERABLE PERSONS STANDARD: "THE CANADIAN WAY"**

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"The Vulnerable Persons Standard just makes sense.

When my father chose to die in the last stages of lung cancer, it was illegal. He had to do it on his own without the support of his doctor or his family (whom he was protecting from legal liability by keeping his intentions secret). It turned out to be a messy process, but he was a stubborn old guy and succeeded in the end. Under right to die legislation, my father would not have died panicked and alone.

But he would have been the first one to have endorsed the Vulnerable Persons Standard. As an immigrant, he considered it his duty to learn about the values and traditions of his new country. I remember him getting excited about the Canadian approach to rights. "In Canada rights aren't absolute, they're always in context, in balance," he would say. "My right to free speech is balanced against your right to be free from hate speech. They're both important, they're both taken into account. It just makes sense."

The Vulnerable Persons Standard just makes sense. The rights of people who are vulnerable to pressure to choose death are an integral part of my father's right to a better death. There is no need to sacrifice one for the other. The Vulnerable Persons Standard ensures the protection of both. It is, after all, the Canadian way."

**- Persimmon Blackbridge**

*For the past 40 years, Persimmon Blackbridge has worked as a sculptor, writer, curator and performer, as well as being a fiction editor, cleaning lady and very*

*bad waitress. Winner of the Lambda Literary Award, the Ferro-Grumley Fiction Prize, the VanCity Book Prize, the VIVA award for visual arts and the Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design Distinguished Alumni Award, Blackbridge's art has been shown across Canada and the U.S., as well as in Australia, Europe, and Hong Kong. She currently lives on Hornby Island in British Columbia.*

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The Vulnerable Persons Standard was developed by a group of more than forty advisors with expertise in medicine, ethics, law, public policy and needs of vulnerable persons. The Standard is a series of evidence-based safeguards intended to help ensure that Canadians requesting assistance from physicians to end their life can do so without jeopardizing the lives of vulnerable persons who may be subject to coercion and abuse.

To learn more about the Standard and the many Canadians and organizations endorsing the Standard, please visit us at [www.vps-npv.ca](http://www.vps-npv.ca).

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