



ADVOCACY TOOLKIT AND ACTION GUIDE (MI-SUMC)

IT'S YOUR LIFE. IT'S YOUR CHOICE.

**DYING WITH
DIGNITY** 
CANADA

www.dyingwithdignity.ca

Dear supporter of end-of-life rights,

Under Section 15(1) of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination. This includes on the basis of a mental or physical disability. Excluding people whose sole underlying condition is a mental illness from assisted dying legislation is a breach of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

That's why, in August of 2024, Dying With Dignity Canada (DWDC) joined forces with legal firm Paliare Roland, John Scully, and Claire Elyse-Brosseau in a legal challenge to secure equality for those whose sole underlying condition is a mental illness in Canada's assisted dying legislation. DWDC will act as public interest litigant on behalf of clinicians, patients, families, and loved ones who have been denied their Charter rights.

While this legal work is underway, DWDC is limited in what can be achieved through our direct advocacy work with parliamentarians. We know that individual people across Canada can – and do – influence changes in legislation, regulation, and policy. Many of the historic changes to medical assistance in dying (MAID) legislation are a result of not only court challenges, but also the countless hours of advocacy by DWDC's dedicated volunteers and supporters across the country, who met with their elected officials and wrote letters and emails to their parliamentarians.

If this issue is one that is important to you, I would encourage you to talk or meet with your Member of Parliament. We have a new government, new ministers, and many new Members of Parliament. It's critical that they understand not only the need to stop any further delay to access to MAID for those with a mental illness as sole underlying medical condition, but also the fundamental support across Canada for our current assisted dying legislation.

This toolkit has been designed to provide you with the messaging and resources to effectively communicate DWDC's position on MAID and mental illness as the sole underlying condition to your Members of Parliament.

We are incredibly grateful for the advocacy, passion, and commitment of the DWDC community, but our work is not done. Please help us to ensure that everyone in Canada who wishes to consider a MAID death has equitable opportunity to do so.

Thank you for raising your voice in the name of human rights,

Helen

Helen Long

CEO

Dying With Dignity Canada

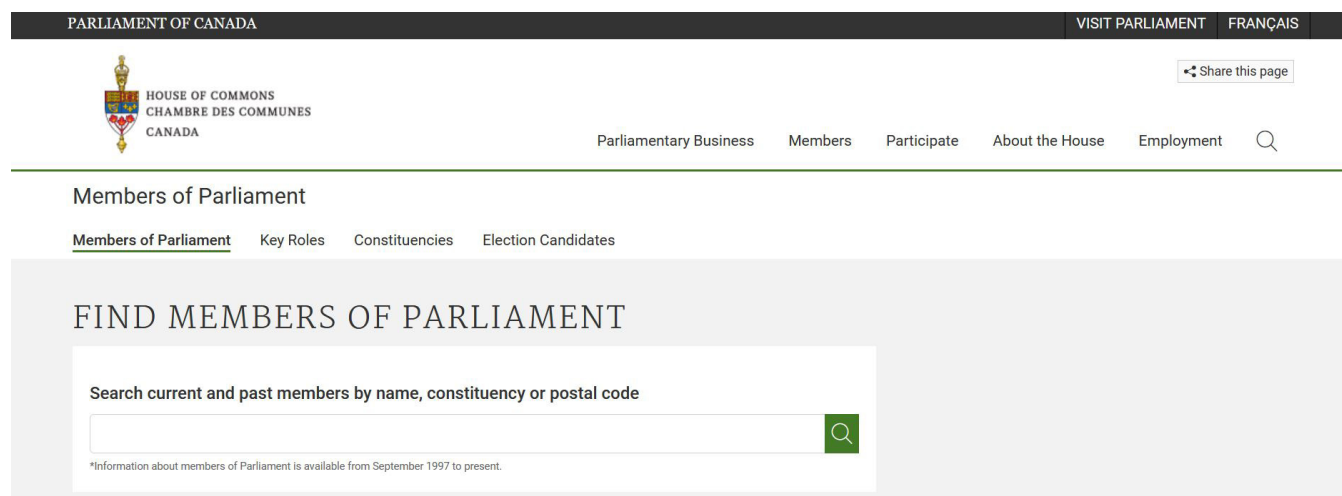
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ENGAGING WITH YOUR MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT (MP)

Finding your MP

If you don't know who your MP is, an easy way to find out is by visiting www.ourcommons.ca/members/en and inserting your residential postal code.



The screenshot shows the official website of the Parliament of Canada. At the top, there is a dark blue header with the text 'PARLIAMENT OF CANADA' on the left and 'VISIT PARLIAMENT' and 'FRANÇAIS' on the right. Below the header is a navigation bar with the House of Commons logo and the text 'HOUSE OF COMMONS CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES CANADA'. To the right of the logo is a 'Share this page' button. Further right are links for 'Parliamentary Business', 'Members', 'Participate', 'About the House', and 'Employment', followed by a search icon. Below the navigation bar, the page title 'Members of Parliament' is displayed. Underneath, there are links for 'Members of Parliament', 'Key Roles', 'Constituencies', and 'Election Candidates'. The main section is titled 'FIND MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT' and contains a search box with the placeholder text 'Search current and past members by name, constituency or postal code'. A green search button is to the right of the search box. Below the search box, a small note states: '*Information about members of Parliament is available from September 1997 to present.'

Requesting a meeting with your MP

When reaching out to your MP's office to request a meeting, remember that their schedules can be busy. It's better to propose a concise 15- or 20-minute meeting or a phone or video call than to be turned down for requesting an hour of their time. Many meetings may still be held via phone call or virtual meeting platform.

A call from a constituent makes a real impact. All MPs should be making themselves available to meet, so be sure to mention that you live in the riding, and that your request is polite, friendly, and non-partisan.

Sample email meeting request to MP

Subject: Constituent meeting request re: MAID and mental illness as the sole underlying condition (MI-SUMC)

Dear Mr./Ms./Dr. [Last Name],

As one of your constituents, I am writing to request a brief meeting with you to discuss the issue of MAID and mental illness as the sole underlying condition (MI-SUMC).

I would appreciate 15 to 20 minutes of your time to learn more about your views on this important issue. Please let me know when would be best for your schedule.

Thank you,

[Your name]

[Your postal code]

[Your contact information]

Familiarizing yourself with your MP

Once you have confirmed a meeting, it is important that you familiarize yourself with your MP's background.

DWDC volunteers and supporters are encouraged to visit ourcommons.ca/Members/en and view the Roles, Work and Contact tabs to view Members' experience in Parliament, their committee participation if any, and their contact information.

For newer MPs who may have limited parliamentary experience, a simple Google search of their name should provide information on their personal and professional background and experience, and likely a biography.

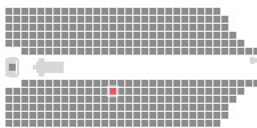
Members of Parliament > Anita Anand

THE HONOURABLE ANITA ANAND



OVERVIEW
Political Affiliation:
Liberal
Constituency:
Oakville East
Province / Territory:
Ontario
Preferred Language:
English / French

EXPENDITURES REPORT
For more information on the expenditures incurred by members in the discharge of their parliamentary functions, see the [Summary of Expenditures for Members](#).

SEAT IN THE HOUSE
See where the Honourable Anita Anand sits in the House of Commons chamber.

ROLES**WORK**CONTACT

Delivering Dying With Dignity Canada's (DWDC's) key messages

Now that you are more familiar with your MP, the meeting should be focused on educating them about your position on MI-SUMC. Volunteers and supporters can use the key messages developed by DWDC, which are included in this package, to deliver the key “asks” during meetings with MPs.

We encourage volunteers and supporters – provided they feel comfortable doing so – to share their personal stories and lived experiences as they relate to MI-SUMC.

The meeting

Introduce yourself and explain why you are passionate about end-of-life rights, including the importance of ensuring access to compassionate and humane end-of-life options for people across Canada.

- Feel free to mention DWDC and your involvement
- Focus on delivering the points from the key messages and relating them back to why they are important to you
- Ask if the MP has any questions
- Let them know that you would be happy to provide any additional information and that more information is available at dyingwithdignity.ca
- Thank the MP for their time

After meeting with your MP, express your appreciation for their time by sending an email or a letter. This is also another opportunity to emphasize the key messages you communicated in your meeting. Feel free to personalize this thank you by including more details about what you discussed in your meeting.

Sample Thank You Email / Letter

Dear Mr./Ms./Dr. [Last Name],

I wanted to send you this short note of thanks for meeting with me recently. We met on [date] to discuss MAID and mental illness as the sole underlying condition (MI-SUMC). As you know, this issue is important to many people across Canada – A 2023 poll conducted by Ipsos on behalf of DWDC shows a strong majority (82%) of people across Canada agree that with the appropriate safeguards in place, an adult with the capacity to provide informed consent should be able to seek an assessment for medical assistance in dying for a severe, treatment-resistant mental illness for which they experience intolerable suffering.

I am pleased to hear that you are concerned about this issue. I want to ensure that Canada protects end-of-life rights for those who are suffering intolerably and am calling on you and your party to continue to develop compassionate policies respecting the end-of-life rights of all people across Canada.

I greatly appreciate your time and your interest in protecting end-of-life rights in Canada. If I can provide any additional information, please do not hesitate to let me know.

Sincerely,

[Your name]

[Your postal code]

[Your contact information]

--- The following two pages (9-10) can be printed and left behind with your MP(s) ---

KEY MESSAGES

MAID and mental illness as the sole underlying condition (MI-SUMC)

Definition: MI-SUMC is an acronym for medical assistance in dying (MAID) where a mental illness is the sole underlying condition. It was studied as one of the issues under the Parliamentary Review of MAID and is currently not a legal option in Canada until 2027.

DWDC Position: Excluding people whose sole underlying condition is a mental illness from assisted dying legislation is a breach of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Supporting Messages:

- Suffering caused by mental illness is no less “real” than suffering caused by a physical illness, injury, or disability. In many cases, symptoms of a mental illness are indistinguishable from those caused by a non-psychiatric medical condition.
- Under Section 15(1) of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination. This includes on the basis of mental or physical disability.
- Individuals with a mental illness as their sole condition were not excluded under the Carter decision. Carter’s wording was eligibility for “competent adults who are suffering intolerably as a result of a grievous and irremediable medical condition.” It was the introduction of reasonably foreseeable natural death in Bill C-14 that led to the exclusion issue since most mental illnesses are not going to cause one’s natural death to be reasonably foreseeable.
- In the Netherlands, where assisted dying for mental illness has been available for 20 years, only 1% of assisted deaths have been approved for those suffering from mental disorder.

- The passage of Bill C-62 to further delay eligibility of MAID for those whose sole underlying medical condition is a mental disorder until March 2027 solidified a total six-year delay and denial of constitutional rights for suffering people across Canada. That is why Dying With Dignity Canada has joined forces with legal firm Paliare Roland, John Scully and Claire Elyse-Brosseau to secure equality for those whose sole underlying condition is a mental illness in Canada's assisted dying legislation. Dying With Dignity Canada will act as public interest litigant on behalf of clinicians, patients, families, and loved ones who have been denied their Charter rights.
- The necessary work committed by the Government is complete. This includes the development of the Model Practice Standard for clinicians, the accompanying Advice to the Profession document, the release of the first nationally accredited Canadian MAID Curriculum, and changes to the reporting standards to include demographic information. Extensive work has also been done by provincial/territorial health services and MAID coordination teams across Canada.
- During an AMAD Committee Meeting, Dr. Douglas Grant, Registrar and Chief Executive Officer, College of Physicians and Surgeons of Nova Scotia and Representative, Federation of Medical Regulatory Authorities of Canada indicated: "Regulators are ready for this. We don't need any more time...In March 2024, all medical regulators will have guidance in place, professional standards in place that are built from or informed by the Model Practice Standard developed by the Health Canada Working Group...We have a solemn and legal duty to be ready."

For more information, please contact advocacy@dyingwithdignity.ca.

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www.dyingwithdignity.ca



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