

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



SPRING 2023

# VOICE for CHOICE

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER FOR DYING WITH DIGNITY CANADA

## HIGHLIGHTS

 **36**  
WEBINARS  
IN 2022  
(NATIONAL AND CHAPTERS)

 **x2**  
SUPPORT  
REQUESTS  
DOUBLED IN 2022

 **87%**  
SUPPORT

for Canadians who have been diagnosed with a serious, degenerative and incurable disease being allowed to express an advance wish for MAID ahead of the time they are no longer able to legally consent.

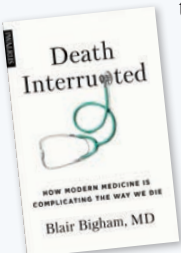
Nanos survey 2023

Join us for **“Death Interrupted”** with author **Dr. Blair Bigham**

April is Advance Care Planning month, join the Greater Toronto Area Chapter of Dying With Dignity Canada for a presentation by Dr. Blair Bigham, author of “Death Interrupted.” In his book, Dr. Bigham helps us understand our end-of-life options, exposes the tensions inherent in dying, and probes the tough questions we all need to think about.

**On April 19**, Dr. Bigham will share his first-hand experiences of how medicine has complicated the way we die.

Registration link on the **Upcoming Events** page on our website.




# THE PARLIAMENTARY Review of MAID WRAPS UP

In February 2023, The Special Joint Committee on MAID submitted their final report ***Medical assistance in dying in Canada: Choices for Canadians.***

We were pleased to see a focus throughout the report in several key areas:

- the recommendation to allow for advance requests following a diagnosis of a serious and incurable medical condition disease, or disorder leading to incapacity; **this supports a future change to the legislation that DWDC and our supporters have long advocated for**
- meaningful engagement with Indigenous peoples and communities
- support for increased funding and improved access for palliative care
- the recommendation that the Government of Canada continue to support persons with disabilities by implementing measures to reduce poverty and ensure economic security
- collaboration between provinces, territories and regulatory authorities to establish quality and standardization of MAID assessments and delivery
- research, consultation and recognition of mature minors in future legislation.

House of Commons rules require a government response within 120 days after a report is tabled. Due to the sensitive nature of some of the topics of the final report, we expect the Government to take their time and it could be June before a response is released.

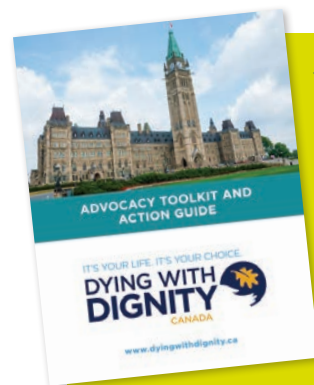
 You can see the full report by searching in your browser: **AMAD + report 2**

## Next steps for advance requests

With the recommendation in the final report in support of advance requests for MAID, we would like to see the Justice Minister table a bill to amend the *Criminal Code* (medical assistance in dying) and begin the legislative process of changing the law to make advance requests legal.

## What can you do?



Send a letter to your MP through DWDC’s updated digital letter-writing campaign in support of advance requests for MAID. Better yet, call your MP or set up a meeting to discuss this important topic in person.



You can download DWDC’s free advocacy toolkit and action guide from our website.

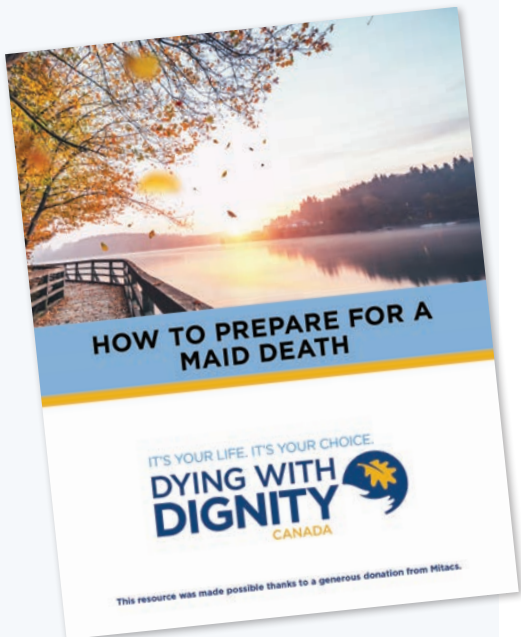


## STAY IN TOUCH! [www.dyingwithdignity.ca](http://www.dyingwithdignity.ca)

Sign up to receive regular updates from Dying With Dignity Canada on upcoming webinars, events, advocacy initiatives, and opportunities to engage. And follow us on:  DWDCanada  @dwdcanada

Support Dying With Dignity Canada to help make unwanted suffering at end-of-life a thing of the past. Charity Registration Number: 11889 0086 RR001.

## NEW RESOURCE:




# How to prepare for a MAID death

This new resource was developed by Ellen T. Crumley, PhD, and Jocelyne LeBlanc, Mitacs Accelerate Intern and St. FX University BAsC Health student in collaboration with DWDC.

The guide was created to help patients and their supporters prepare for a MAID death. The guide offers considerations for the patient, considerations for the patient's supporter(s) and a compilation of additional resources, and checklists.

Some things to consider include: how to discuss MAID with others, who do you want to say goodbye to, do you want to plan a ceremony, how to remove the body after the MAID provision and bereavement support for loved ones?

 YOU CAN DOWNLOAD the free guide from our Education and Resources page on our website.

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# MAID FOR MENTAL DISORDERS EXEMPTION EXTENDED



On March 9, Minister Lametti's Bill C-39 passed the Senate, was given Royal Assent and will delay, until March 17, 2024, medical assistance in dying (MAID) in circumstances where the sole underlying medical condition for the request for MAID is a mental disorder.

We recognize the Government's comments and the need to prepare for this change in the law. We trust those tasked with the preparation and readiness for this category of people who suffer intolerably from treatment-resistant mental illnesses, will work expeditiously and in good faith to establish the clinical assessment protocols to allow these Canadians access to compassionate end-of-life care.

A task group of experts was appointed to develop MAID practice standards, in collaboration with provincial and territorial governments, regulatory bodies, and clinicians across Canada; this work is very close to release. The development of an accredited Canadian MAID curriculum to support

clinician education and training is also well underway.

## WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Send a letter to the Justice Minister through DWDC's digital letter-writing campaign encouraging the government to work swiftly on these final preparations and end the discrimination of people with mental disorders excluded from accessing MAID.

## PSYCHIATRIC VS NEUROCOGNITIVE CONDITIONS

MAID for those whose sole underlying condition is a mental disorder includes conditions that are primarily within the domain of psychiatry. It does not include neurocognitive and neurodevelopmental disorders.

To be clear, neurocognitive disorders such as dementia, Huntington's and Parkinson's are not considered mental disorders and are presently eligible for MAID assessment.

# LAUNCH OF DEATH DIALOGUES PROGRAM

"TALKING ABOUT DEATH WON'T KILL YOU." - Kathy Kortez-Miller

*Death Dialogues* is a new, virtual, weekly pilot program that launched in early 2023. It aims to provide a safe and comfortable space for like-minded people who want to have meaningful discussions and reflect on end-of-life topics, wishes, and values.

The 90-minute sessions are facilitated by trained DWDC volunteers to carry the conversation and encourage engagement amongst the participants.

Each session focuses on different end-of-life topics and includes thought-provoking and reflective questions to encourage discussion.

Following these sessions, it is encouraged to bring these reflections back home and start conversations about death and dying with others.

# Quebec Bill-11

Minister Sonia Bélanger recently tabled Bill-11 in the Quebec provincial legislation. If passed, it will allow those suffering from degenerative neurocognitive disorders such as Alzheimer's, to make an advanced request for MAID. The bill aligns with the recommendation of the report of the Special Joint Committee on MAID.

If the Quebec bill passes, it would not align with the current federal law and it is unclear how the conflicting legislation would be handled. The preferred outcome is that the federal government change legislation, by amending the Criminal Code (medical assistance in dying), which ensures equitable access to advance requests for MAID across the country.