

A Watershed Year

2015 Annual Report



My life. My choice.
My right.
Dying With Dignity Canada
It's your life. It's your choice.
www.dyingwithdignity.ca

Court has spoken
Physician Assisted Dying
Voice My Choice...
Physician Assisted Dying
IS A RIGHT

Delays,
No Refusal
VO

Compassion
+ Choice
= Assisted Dying
Dying With Dignity Canada
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The Supreme Court has spoken
Physician Assisted Dying
is a right.

The Supreme Court
has spoken.
It's a right

My life. My choice.
Voice Your Choice
for nationwide access.
Physician Assisted Dying
is a right.
Dying With Dignity Canada
It's your life. It's your choice.

My life. My choice.
My right.
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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR & CEO

When the Supreme Court struck down the ban on physician-assisted dying, we at Dying With Dignity Canada knew the decision would signal a new era for our movement, our organization and for the country as a whole. But we had no way of knowing the decision would be just one of several earth-shaking events in what turned out to be the most important – and most challenging – year in DWDC’s history.

Less than two months after the historic ruling, our charitable status was officially annulled, a casualty of the Harper government’s controversial political-activity audits. Under the leadership of former CEO Wanda Morris, we realized the loss could be turned into an exciting new opportunity. Without the constraints of our charitable status, we embarked on a new phase of unencumbered political advocacy, raising as strong a voice as possible on behalf of the 85 per cent of Canadians who support the Supreme Court’s decision. We knew it wouldn’t be easy.

Due to the generosity of our supporters, we were able to make crucial investments to help us weather the coming storm. In the first half of 2015, we hired three new full-time staff, bolstering our ranks in the areas of fundraising, volunteer management and communication. Our new website, launched in June, continues to help us expand our reach in the fast-moving digital sphere. These improvements couldn’t have come at a better time.



After months of near silence on the assisted dying file, Ottawa announced in July its plans to hold a public consultation on end-of-life choice. Two weeks later, the longest federal election campaign in modern Canadian history kicked off. Two weeks after that, a group of 11 provinces and territories announced they were assembling their own expert panel to study possible legislative responses to the Supreme Court’s decision. In each case, we responded on our blog and in the media, demanding answers on what our lawmakers planned to do to ensure Canadians have real access to their right to assisted dying.

The summer gave us a true taste of what was in store for the rest of 2015 and beyond. Despite the hurdles we’ve faced after losing our charitable status, we’ve tried our best to advance our agenda of compassion and choice on every possible front: meeting with relevant lawmakers, both federal and provincial; making our voices heard in the dizzying number of public consultations that have popped up; helping our supporters

share their personal stories in the media; and connecting with doctors who support our mission and want to lend their expertise. This is our new normal.

With the push for patient-centred federal legislation well underway and a spate of provincial campaigns on the horizon, we expect the need for our work to only intensify in the months ahead. Thankfully, we’re enjoying the challenge – there are more than a few political junkies in DWDC’s ranks, and we relish the opportunity to work for lasting change. More importantly, though, we are guided by our North Star: our supporters and the millions of other Canadians who want meaningful access to their right to a peaceful death. Your stories and your words of encouragement fuel our efforts. We refuse to let you down.

Jim Stephenson, Chair
Shanaaz Gokool, CEO

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Chris Young/CP Images

THE DAY THAT CHANGED EVERYTHING: FEBRUARY 6, 2015 MARKED THE BEGINNING OF A NEW ERA FOR OUR MOVEMENT

For our movement, it was the day The Wall fell.

On the morning of February 6, 2015, the Supreme Court of Canada declared once and for all that the *Criminal Code* ban on physician-assisted dying violated Canadians’ Charter rights, and thus, it could not stand. Just like that, the old law – which for so many years separated Canadians from their right to die in peace and with dignity – was fated to the dustbin of history.

At Dying With Dignity Canada’s national headquarters in Toronto, the groundbreaking news was met with tearful celebration, followed by an emotionally charged press conference in front of more than a dozen reporters and photographers. Images from the occasion appeared in newspapers and TV broadcasts all over the world. We became, as the cliché goes, an overnight success many years in the making.

In fact, the unanimous ruling immediately established this country as an emerging global leader in the realm of end-of-life rights. When it finally comes into force on June 6, 2016, the high court’s decision in *Carter v. Canada* will decriminalize

physician-assisted dying for competent adult patients who are suffering intolerably as the result of a “grievous and irremediable illness” and who clearly consent to the termination of life. More expansive than Quebec’s 2014 Medical Aid in Dying law, it does not limit access to assisted dying to individuals who are terminally ill, nor does it automatically exclude Canadians struggling with mental illness from eligibility. Upon reading the judgment for the first time, one former DWDC board member, a veteran defence lawyer in Toronto, called it a “once-in-a-generation decision.”

Within hours of the announcement, our thoughts shifted from celebrating our incredible victory to gauging the enormity of the work ahead. The Supreme Court initially suspended its decision for a period of 12 months, giving lawmakers and regulators a full year to debate and develop new rules.

For our part, we vowed we would not sit on the sidelines and let others decide the future of end-of-life choice in Canada.

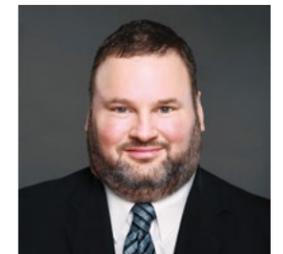
FACES OF FEBRUARY 6

Meet three extraordinary individuals who were instrumental in winning Canadians the right to die with dignity.



British Columbia’s **Lee Carter** was one of the plaintiffs in the lawsuit that eventually led to the Supreme Court’s

historic ruling in *Carter v. Canada*. She acted on behalf of her mother, Kay, who suffered from spinal stenosis and travelled to Switzerland in 2010 to end her life on her terms. Lee is now a member of DWDC’s Patrons Council.



For many years, former Conservative MP **Steven Fletcher** was Parliament’s leading right-to-die advocate,

having introduced Private Member’s bills on assisted dying in the House of Commons. In 2015, he joined DWDC’s Patrons Council and published a memoir called *Master of My Fate*, which chronicles his efforts to get doctor-assisted death legalized in Canada.



Her emphatic calls for compassion and change made her a mainstay in the national news media – even before

the Supreme Court’s decision was announced. As DWDC’s CEO, **Wanda Morris** steered the organization safely through treacherous waters after the annulment of our charitable status. Under her leadership, we became a louder, more effective voice for patient rights.

TWELVE MONTHS OF MILESTONES

2015 was a whirlwind for Dying With Dignity Canada. Here's a timeline of key moments in the biggest year in our movement's history.

JANUARY 20

Our office phones ring off the hook after we announce that our charitable status would be annulled as the result of a controversial Canada Revenue Agency political-activity audit. In a confounding letter explaining its decision, the CRA stated it had twice given our organization charitable status "in error" — once in 1982 and again in 2011.

FEBRUARY 6

The Supreme Court releases its decision in *Carter v. Canada*, striking down the country's decades-old ban on physician-assisted dying. A press conference at our national offices in Toronto is broadcast live on major national news networks.



MARCH 10

Dying With Dignity Canada's charitable status is officially annulled, marking the beginning of a new era of unfettered political advocacy for the organization.

MAY 3

Members and other stakeholders gather in Vancouver for DWDC's first Annual General Meeting since the Supreme Court's decision in *Carter v. Canada*.

JUNE 25

DWDC unveils its brand-new website. In order to make waves in the always-competitive digital world, we built an interface that functions as smoothly on your smartphone as it does on your laptop computer.

JULY 7

We launch an online petition urging the federal government to announce its plans to respond to the Supreme Court's decision on assisted dying. More than 3,000 Canadians sign the petition.

JULY 9

A story about DWDC's Personal Support and Advocacy program makes the front page of the *National Post*.

OCTOBER 8

Provincial medical Colleges across the country begin public consultations on assisted dying. DWDC releases toolkit after toolkit with tips on how our supporters can make the best of these opportunities.

OCTOBER 19

Canadians go to the polls to vote in the country's 42nd general election.



SEPTEMBER 17

DWDC's Voice Your Choice Campaign officially launches. As its name suggests, the campaign's purpose is to give our supporters a platform to speak out for fair, safe access to physician-assisted dying.



Voice Your Choice

AUGUST 14

After months of federal inaction, the Government of Ontario announces that it, with the support of 10 other provinces and territories, has established the Provincial-Territorial Expert Advisory Group on Physician-Assisted Dying. Assisted dying advocate Maureen Taylor is appointed co-chair.

AUGUST 2

At the request of Prime Minister Stephen Harper, Governor General David Johnston dissolves Parliament, kicking off the longest election campaign in modern Canadian history.

JULY 17

Five months after the Supreme Court's decision is announced, the Conservative government finally reveals its plan to hold a public consultation on physician-assisted dying. The government taps Dr. Harvey Chochinov, a long-time opponent of assisted dying, to chair the panel that will conduct the consultation.

OCTOBER 29

DWDC and the BC Civil Liberties Association issue a "Blueprint for Leadership," outlining the steps Canadian decision-makers need to take to ensure equitable, safe and timely access to physician-assisted dying.



NOVEMBER 4

Hundreds of DWDC supporters hold rallies in 10 cities as part of our second annual National Day of Action.

NOVEMBER 11

Commissioned by DWDC, an independent analysis of the federal panel's online survey on assisted dying is released. The report finds the consultation to be "ambiguous and biased." Three days later, the federal government announces it is narrowing the panel's mandate.

DECEMBER 3

The newly elected Liberal government asks the Supreme Court to delay the implementation of its decision on assisted dying by a period of six months. DWDC speaks out in the press against the request.

DECEMBER 10

Quebec's Dying with Dignity law comes into full effect, making it the first province to offer legal assisted dying to patients at end of life.



DECEMBER 14

The Provincial-Territorial Expert Advisory Group's final report is released. Its 43 recommendations lay out a path forward to a compassionate national framework for assisted dying.

DECEMBER 18

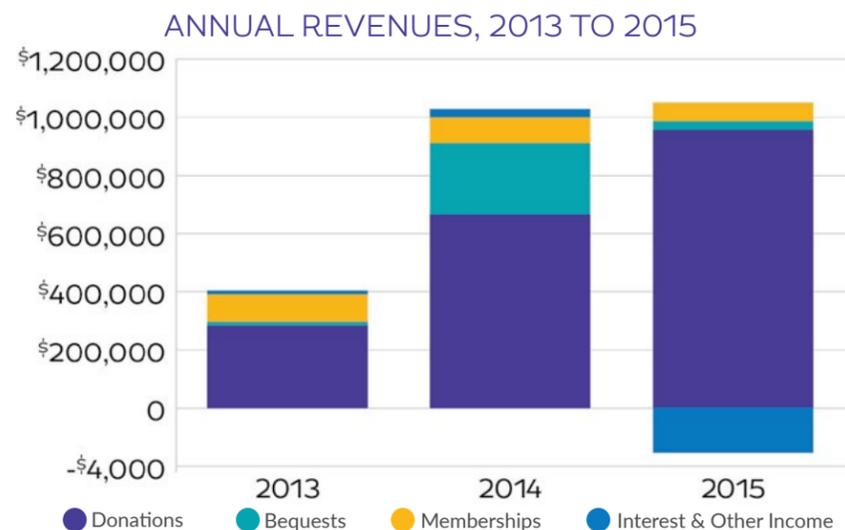
The Supreme Court agrees to hear arguments into the federal government's extension request. Hearings are scheduled for January 11, 2016.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION AT A GLANCE

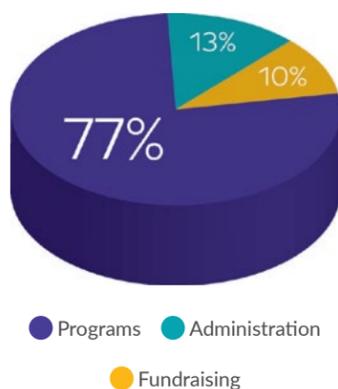
Despite the loss of our charitable status in the first quarter of the year, Dying With Dignity Canada managed to achieve its lofty fundraising goals in 2015. Our total revenues were \$1,047,293, edging out our earlier record of \$1,029,334, set in 2014.

The incredible generosity of our supporters not only ensured the survival of the organization; it also allowed us to speak out time and time again in defense of patient rights. Last year, you gave us the resources to build a sleek new website, secure meetings with powerful stakeholders, hire our first-ever full-time fund development officer and launch a new advocacy campaign, Voice Your Choice. These investments will continue to reap rewards well into 2016 and beyond.

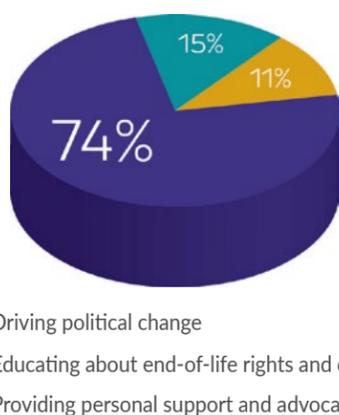
The charts on the right illustrate how we put your 2015 donation dollars to work. Nearly eight in 10 dollars that DWDC brought in last year went towards our programs. Because of our transition from a charity to a not-for-profit organization, we were free to dedicate more resources than ever before to our political advocacy efforts. In 2015, 74 per cent of our program spending went towards driving political change — up from 13 per cent in 2014.



WHERE THE MONEY GOES



PROGRAM SPENDING BY TYPE



OUR CHAPTERS AND VOLUNTEERS

Dying With Dignity Canada owes much of its success in 2015 to its growing roster of dedicated volunteers and regional chapters. Last year, our supporters logged more than 10,000 total volunteer hours.

DWDC volunteers contributed to the movement in myriad ways. They held Advance Care Planning workshops, sent letters and made phone calls to their elected representatives, attended election debates and told their stories in the media. Our Physicians Advisory Council drove our outreach in the medical community, while our Disability Advisory Council ensured that our policies are informed by the perspectives and interests of Canadians with disabilities.

Many of our volunteers come to us through our regional chapters. Last year, DWDC added five new official



chapters — in Victoria, B.C., Vancouver, Hamilton, Ont., Toronto and at the University of Ottawa — bringing the organization's total to 14. We thank all of our chapters for their on-the-ground commitment to raising a strong voice for compassion and choice in their local communities.

2015 DWDC MAJOR DONORS

Our successes in 2015 would not have been possible without the financial support of our donors and members. These champions of compassion were instrumental in establishing end-of-life choice as a right for all Canadians. Because of their generosity, we can continue our fight for better quality of dying.

GREATER THAN \$25,000

Richard W. Ivey
Nancy's Very Own Foundation
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Rachel Wellock
Susan Westersund
Meg Westley and Jay Klassen
Joan Williams

LEAVING A LEGACY

We would like to recognize donors who have committed to leaving a legacy to Dying With Dignity Canada. We thank these incredible individuals for their dedication to lasting change.

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Giuseppe and Jean Gizzi
Pamela Hobbes
Michele and Brian O'Keefe
Carol Rankmore

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