



VOICE FOR CHOICE



DWDC CEO Shanaaz Gokool and Sean Griffin, of Montreal's Langlois Lawyers, at a November 2, 2017 event in Toronto.

DWDC to defend patient rights in court challenge to Bill C-14

The Quebec case is poised to be a major test of Bill C-14's controversial 'reasonably foreseeable' requirement.

It's official: Dying With Dignity Canada (DWDC) is going to court to defend patients' rights in a high-profile legal case challenging aspects of Bill C-14, the federal assisted dying law.

We learned in late September that Justice Christine Baudouin, of the Superior Court of Quebec, had accepted our application to serve as an official intervener in support of the two plaintiffs

in the case. Nicole Gladu, 72, and Jean Truchon, 50, suffer from severe, chronic medical conditions and wish to exercise their right to a peaceful death. However, they have been denied access because they do not satisfy certain controversial eligibility criteria laid out in Bill C-14 and in Bill 52, Quebec's provincial assisted dying law.

"We are pleased to be granted the

opportunity to speak out against unfair, unconstitutional rules that deprive suffering Canadians of their hard-won right to medical assistance in dying," said DWDC CEO Shanaaz Gokool. "We also recognize the courage of Ms. Gladu and Mr. Truchon, who, by going to court to advocate for their own rights, are defending choice for the rest of us."

DWDC will be making a joint intervention with our Quebec sister organization, L'Association québécoise pour le droit de mourir dans la dignité (AQDMD). Providing pro bono legal representation for the two organizations are Sean Griffin and Véronique Roy, of the Montreal firm Langlois Lawyers.

Both residents of Montreal, Gladu and Truchon each live with serious and debilitating health conditions that cause enduring and intolerable suffering. According to court documents, their medical conditions render them eligible to access medical assistance in dying (MAID) under the rules laid out in the 2015 Supreme Court decision in *Carter v. Canada*. The unanimous court ruling established MAID as a right for competent individuals who are suffering intolerably from a "grievous and irremediable medical condition" and who clearly consent to the termination of life.

However, Bill C-14 restricts MAID eligibility further. Only those Canadians whose natural deaths are "reasonably foreseeable" may access their right to a peaceful death — a provision that has drawn fire from constitutional scholars and human-rights advocates, including our organization.

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Dying With Dignity Canada

Suite 802 – 55 Eglinton Avenue East
Toronto, ON | M4P 1G8
Tel: 416-486-3998
Toll-free: 1-800-495-6156
Fax: 416-486-5562
Website: www.dyingwithdignity.ca

CEO: Shanaaz Gokool
Editor: Cory Ruf

MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

Another year of firsts

The post-Bill C-14 era continues to present us with opportunities to break new ground, writes DWDC CEO Shanaaz Gokool.

In the past two years, Canada has experienced more than a handful of “firsts” related to the legalization of assisted dying.

In December 2015, Quebec became the first jurisdiction in Canada to allow medical assistance in dying (MAID). About two months later, Calgary’s Hanne Schafer became the first non-Quebecer to access a legal assisted death in her home country. Nearly four months after that, Parliament passed a historic, if problematic, assisted dying bill, formally legalizing MAID from coast to coast.

Each of these firsts spawned a set of new firsts — for families and clinicians involved, and for the healthcare administrators and advocates who have been tasked with implementing this monumental change. And we as a country will encounter many more firsts as our MAID systems, and our understanding of them, continue to mature.

This has certainly been the case for us at Dying With Dignity Canada. This year was chock full of firsts, a trend that shows no sign of slowing. It would be impossible to list every single one, but I’d like to share with you a few new ways in which we worked to defend your rights in 2017.

In June, Kelly Doctor, of the Toronto law firm Goldblatt Partners LLP, spoke out in court in support of regulation in Ontario that requires doctors who oppose MAID to provide patients who request it with a timely referral. It was the first time a lawyer representing DWDC delivered oral arguments on our behalf.

Weeks later, we published “Challenges to Choice: Bill C-14, One Year Later,” a 20-page report that shed light on the human and legal impacts of the federal assisted dying law. It was the first time DWDC had released a paper on a major piece of public policy.

Then, in August, we put out a call to our supporters asking them to contribute their personal stories and perspectives to our official submission to the group of researchers tasked by the federal government to study the future of MAID



Shanaaz Gokool is DWDC's CEO.

in Canada. We set a goal of gathering 500 responses; nearly 750 of you sent in letters. It was the first time we conducted a public consultation of this scope and scale.

The growing need for our work

To me, what’s most significant about these milestones is what motivated them in the first place. Like all of our programs, they responded to a need. Canadians need an organization with our level of MAID expertise to defend their rights in court. They need evidence-based research about the real-world impacts of Bill C-14. And they need their voices to be heard as part of what could end up being the most influential study on the future of Canada’s MAID laws.

If this year is any indication, 2018 will also be a year of firsts. The need that exists for our work is too great for us to rest on our laurels. In order to address the challenges facing Canadians who are navigating their end-of-life choices, we must be alert, nimble and creative. It can make for tiring work, but it’s rewarding and never boring.

Of course, none of this would be possible without our donors, volunteers and other supporters. All of our accomplishments are a result of your generosity and encouragement. They belong as much to you as they do to me or anyone else here at DWDC, and we delight in sharing them with you.

I want you to remember that as you read through this newsletter or the next time you hear us quoted in the news. Any time we break new ground, you break new ground, too.

DWDC calls for plaintiffs' 'rights to be restored as quickly as possible'

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"Canadians who qualify under the rules set out in *Carter* have a right to choice," Gokool said. "They should not have to live in a state of intolerable suffering — against their will, for years or even decades — because of this unconstitutional rule."

Gladu and Truchon launched their court challenge in June, one year after Bill C-14 was passed in Parliament. In addition to taking aim at unconstitutional rules in Bill C-14, the applicants are also challenging criteria in Quebec's assisted dying law, which limits MAID access to patients who are terminally ill.

Gladu survived a childhood bout with polio, but has lived with post-polio syndrome for the past 30 years. The condition gradually led to a spate of health problems and the deterioration of her quality of life.

"Each breath has become for me a conscious effort which consumes three-quarters of my waning energy," she said in a June statement.

Truchon was born with cerebral palsy and said he lived a fulfilling and independent life until 2012, when he lost the use of his one functioning limb, his left arm.

At a press conference in June, Truchon told reporters he no longer recognizes the man he once was. "A life in institutions is not for me," he said in a statement read by an assistant. "I've tasted what living for myself is like and since I've lost that, the daily pleasures of living are not enough anymore."

Government's legal strategy criticized

The Quebec case is one of two high-profile court challenges to elements of Bill C-14. The other case, *Lamb v. Canada*, was launched in B.C. in June 2016, less than two weeks after the bill received Royal Assent.

Advocates have charged that the federal government is trying to slow down the court process and is effectively pushing to re-litigate the issues that were considered in the Supreme Court's *Carter* decision.

In Quebec, the government has asked for the judge to hear from 12 "expert witnesses" who, if they are allowed to testify, are expected to argue that Bill C-14's restrictive eligibility criteria are necessary to protect vulnerable Canadians

from abuse or coercion.

In the B.C. case, a judge recently granted government lawyers' request to contest some of the findings that led the Supreme Court to decriminalize MAID in the first place.

The government's legal strategy is in fact harming suffering vulnerable Canadians who qualify under the *Carter* decision and who want to exercise their right to a peaceful death, said Jean-Pierre Ménard, the lawyer representing Gladu and Truchon.

"We're saying that federal and provincial laws have taken away the rights of our clients, rights that were granted in *Carter*," Ménard told Radio-Canada at the end of August.

At the time of writing, Baudouin had not announced whether she would allow the government witnesses to provide testimony, nor had she issued a timeline for when interveners must submit their arguments to the court.

"Dying With Dignity Canada is calling for Ms. Gladu and Mr. Truchon's rights to be restored as quickly as possible," Gokool said. "They have been made to suffer for far too long."

Robyn Moro, co-plaintiff in B.C. challenge to Bill C-14, dies

One of the two B.C. women at the fore of a court challenge to Canada's assisted dying law has died.

Robyn Moro, of Delta, B.C., died with a doctor's help on Aug. 31. She was 68.

In May, Moro added her name to the *Lamb v. Canada* case after her request for medical assistance in dying (MAID) had been denied. Though Moro suffered constant, excruciating pain on account of Parkinson's disease, her doctor, Vancouver's Ellen Wiebe, told her that she did not satisfy an eligibility requirement in the law: that her natural death be "reasonably foreseeable."

"To say no to her was one of the

hardest things I've ever done," Dr. Wiebe told The Canadian Press in September.

However, it was a court judgment on the other side of the country that led Dr. Wiebe to change her answer. In June, Ontario Superior Court Justice Paul Perell issued a ruling that provided additional clarity about Bill C-14's controversial "reasonably foreseeable" requirement.

In his decision, Perell confirmed that an individual isn't required to have a fatal illness in order to be eligible for MAID. In addition, he wrote that, when assessing whether a patient's death is reasonably foreseeable, the "physician need not opine about the specific length of time that the person requesting [MAID] has remaining in his or her lifetime."

Perell's ruling came in response to the case of a 77-year-old Ontario woman with severe osteoarthritis who went to court to confirm her eligibility for MAID. AB, whose name is protected by a



B.C.'s Robyn Moro (Nathaniel Lowe/
B.C. Civil Liberties Association)

court-ordered publication ban, received personal support from Dying With Dignity Canada before her death in early August.

"AB's courageous decision to go to court to defend her rights not only broke down barriers that she faced, but it's now helping others as well," said DWDC CEO Shanaaz Gokool, who provided personal support to AB in the last months of her life. "This is what she hoped for, and indeed it is part of her legacy."



Rachel Phan (left) and Kelsey Nash prepare DWDC's official submission to the Council of Canadian Academies.

After the flood

When we asked our supporters to share their personal perspectives with the federal independent studies on assisted dying, the response was overwhelming, writes DWDC Digital Communications Coordinator Rachel Phan.

I remember the moment it truly hit me that we were doing something monumental.

It was a Monday morning, and I had just turned on my computer, when I saw my inbox flooded with dozens and dozens of letters from Canadians across the country.

I was stunned: people had carved out time in their weekend to share the most intimate, painful details of their lives with us in the hopes that it would make a difference. I was so moved that I cried at my desk.

Up until that moment, I had no real way of knowing the magnitude of what we at Dying With Dignity Canada were setting out to do. We were one of 500 organizations invited to make a submission to the Council of Canadian Academies (CCA), the group of researchers studying the future of assisted dying in Canada.

These researchers have been tasked by the federal government with studying the possibility of extending assisted dying access to three groups currently excluded under the law: mature minors, individuals whose sole underlying medical condition is a mental illness, and individuals who would need to make an

advance request to access assisted dying.

With so much at stake, then, we were disheartened to discover that ordinary Canadians whose rights were on the line would not be consulted by the CCA. We wondered: *How could any serious examination of the future of assisted dying in this country not include the voices and experiences of everyday Canadians?*

We knew we had to act, but what that meant in practice was unclear at the time. Our written response to the CCA had a 1,000-word limit, which seemed like an impossible task given the subject matter.

That all changed when a colleague came up with the idea to include Canadians' personal stories as supplementary material to our submission. There were no limits to what we could include as attachments; the CCA guidelines stipulated that they would also accept, along with academic studies and news stories, "traditional knowledge." We interpreted that to mean *your voices* could be included, too.

We relaunched our Voice Your Choice campaign and invited our supporters from coast to coast to share their personal stories and perspectives. Since the CCA was consulting with 500 different organizations, we

wanted to include the voices of 500 Canadians in our submission.

In total, we received 746 letters, far surpassing our original goal.

Raw, impactful stories

What I quickly realized on that Monday morning, and what was continuously hammered home throughout the entire CCA process, was that these weren't just stories. These were our supporters' lives — their fears, their most painful and traumatic experiences, their hopes. We had been made privy to these hurts and hopes because these individuals had few other outlets to push for change. And, there is no mistaking their pleas: they are *desperate* for changes to a tremendously flawed law that abandons so many Canadians.

There were hundreds of stories written by people who had watched a loved one slip into the horrifying ravages of dementia. Many authors feared that they will suffer the same fate if the ban on advance requests is not lifted. Others spoke candidly about prior suicide attempts and the years, often decades, of living with chronic, intolerable mental illness.

These stories profoundly affected me. My co-worker Kelsey Nash and I oversaw the painstaking compilation of the letters. We not only included every single letter in DWDC's official submission — which came in at a hefty 957 pages — but the two of us personally read every single letter, too.

Sometimes, it felt too heavy to read all the painful details. But Kelsey and I knew it was our duty to treat these stories with care and sensitivity. When we started the CCA process, we vowed to read every word and to make sure the researchers on the CCA panels would hear all 746 voices loudly and clearly. I am confident we did that.

On October 6, we sent the CCA our official submission. The CCA won't have its findings ready until the end of 2018, but our supporters can be assured that their voices shone through powerfully and persuasively. Now, armed with these most intimate of insights, the CCA researchers have a duty to inform lawmakers where the gaps in the legislation lie and how they can — and must — be fixed.

On the front line: Q & A with DWDC's Nino Sekopet

The manager of DWDC's Personal Support Program reflects on how the legalization of assisted dying has affected the questions he receives from Canadians exploring their end-of-life options.

Medical assistance in dying (MAID) has been legal in Canada for more than a year now. Has the nature of the calls you receive changed much during that period of time?

I really don't think so. Most of the calls are still about finding facts about the eligibility criteria and about the steps of the process.

What is noticeable is that, in some areas or within certain facilities, the process is much smoother than it used to be. But on the other hand, I'm also discovering how ill-prepared some other facilities can be.

What would you say are the biggest misconceptions that people who contact you have about the MAID rules in Canada?

I think people are often unaware that a diagnosis of mental illness, on its own, won't qualify. They are also unaware that, [if they are diagnosed with dementia], they cannot consent to MAID through an advance request. On the other hand, lots of people still think that, in order to qualify, one must be terminally ill.

How do you approach clearing up these misconceptions?

People who inquire about MAID because they have a mental illness or because they've been diagnosed with dementia, they are obviously disappointed. They very quickly go into the territory of explaining why the rules aren't fair and why there is no logic in how the system is set up right now. And quite honestly, I agree with them. If you validate their logic, and if you validate their opinion, it will quite often defuse some of the frustration and aggravation that they have. But at the end of the conversation, they still feel disappointed, and I'm afraid that you can't do anything to erase that.

Increasingly, people are coming to us to ask what bereavement services are available in their communities for loved ones of individuals who accessed MAID. How would you say their needs differ from a family who is grieving the loss of someone who died without medical assistance?

The differences that do exist come from the fact that MAID is new in our society. Lots of people still feel that it's a taboo or that something is not right about it. That is really the only difference. [Families whose loved ones accessed MAID] mourn as much as the people whose loved ones died with a natural death do.

In fact, I would imagine that people whose loved ones died with MAID often have a certain advantage because they knew in advance when it was going to happen. That usually opens up a space and family members usually say goodbye and kind of wrap up the story to the degree that it can be wrapped up.

What would you say is the most challenging part of your job?

What irritates me is the rigidity of the system and how little recognition the system has around the trauma that those people are going through.

I've spoken with a couple people who had had their MAID date set and then literally a day before, or even on the day of, it got cancelled for administrative reasons, as if it was a hernia operation. I think that the system doesn't recognize what those patients and their families are going through. My sense is that if they



Nino Sekopet is DWDC's Personal Support Program manager.

knew how complex and difficult a process it was, they'd never cancel it like that.

And what would you say is the most satisfying part?

The most satisfying part is when you get a call from somebody and you direct them to some resource, and you feel that the whole village stepped in and the whole process went smoothly for them. For me personally, that brings hope about humanity and about us really caring about each other.

To contact DWDC's Personal Support Program, send an email to support@dyingwithdignity.ca or call us toll-free at 1-844-395-3640.

Learn more

DWDC's Personal Support Program provides information, education and emotional support to Canadians who are exploring their legal end-of-life options. The program also provides bereavement services for individuals and families who had a loved one access MAID. Find out more by visiting dyingwithdignity.ca/get_personal_support.

Why I volunteer with Dying With Dignity Canada

Three highly committed supporters explain in their own words what drives them to contribute their time and talent to the cause.



LIANA BRITTAIN

Maximeville, P.E.I.

Roles:
Website contributor,
media spokesperson

Dying With Dignity Canada became my lifeline in the days following my husband's medically assisted death. The volunteer work I do for this not-for-profit organization has given my husband's death meaning and helped me grieve the loss of my loved one.

Together, we have built a legacy of which my husband would be proud. DWDC has provided professional counselling support, but more importantly, they have become my friends — always there to listen and help me work through a wide variety of issues.

The Supreme Court of Canada has identified our individual right to die. However, the fight is not over until everyone has the choice to end their intolerable suffering and die with dignity.

There will be challenges in the days to come and it is becoming increasingly important that we all stand together. As a collective, we can ensure that our voices are heard and our rights are preserved. Being a volunteer for DWDC allows me to continue this valuable work.



DR. CHANTAL PERROT

Toronto, Ont.

Roles:
Member of DWDC's Physicians
Advisory Council, media spokesperson

I have been a supporter of death with dignity for many years. Early in my career I was even a member of DWDC, but after a few years was sidetracked by other concerns and I let my membership lapse.

Fast forward more than two decades to the 2015 *Carter* decision. Where had I been that I did not know this was happening? I then thought, "If I can provide medical assistance in dying (MAID), then I should, but where do I turn for information?" The medical associations had not been forthcoming with guidance to physicians. I hadn't discussed it with any of my colleagues, nor they with me.

I heard about a DWDC open house, so I went and introduced myself as a likely MAID provider looking for information. I was welcomed with open arms.

The support and encouragement provided to MAID assessors and providers like myself has been strong and unwavering from the outset. We would not be where we are today without this support.

DWDC is a small organization with a broad scope, a broad reach, and a big heart. The few staff there do the work of many. It only makes sense to me to support them in the work they do on behalf of all Canadians.



BRADLEY PETER

Edmonton, Alta.

Roles:
DWDC Board member,
co-chair of DWDC's Edmonton
chapter, media spokesperson

One of the most common questions I receive is, "What is a young person doing volunteering for Dying With Dignity Canada?"

As it turns out, I volunteer with DWDC for the same reason so many of us do: because I watched someone I love die in a prolonged and painful manner. For me, this person was my grandma, Edna Krueger.

Following her death, I heard about the work of DWDC in a radio story featuring Nagui Morcos, an Ontario man suffering from Huntington's disease. I was moved by the compassion in this story, but I was also angry, wondering: "Why was I not a better advocate for my grandma? Why were there not more end-of-life options available to her?" I quickly contacted DWDC and was encouraged to channel this energy into advocacy work.

I am so proud of the tremendous victories DWDC has achieved, yet much remains to be done. Issues surrounding institutional barriers, prior requests, and mental illness compel me to continue volunteering, and I am endlessly inspired by my colleagues in the Edmonton chapter, on the Board of Directors, and on the DWDC staff.

Witnesses to choice

Volunteers in DWDC's independent-witness program explain what it's like to help break down barriers facing Canadians trying to exercise their right to assisted dying.

Empowerment for the patient: that is the goal of every Dying With Dignity Canada volunteer.

But some volunteers go an extra mile. They act personally as a "witness" to patient requests for medical assistance in dying (MAID) and their task is, by law, essential. Even if two doctors approve the person's request to access their choice, their request cannot go ahead unless it's signed by two independent witnesses — individuals who are not involved in the applicant's care and who don't stand to materially benefit from the person's death. Finding two suitable witnesses has proven difficult for Canadians seeking to access a peaceful death, which is why DWDC recently put a call out for more volunteers.

What does a witness do? And what is it like to provide this service? He or she visits the patient requesting MAID and signs a very short form affirming that patient's intention. That is all. The volunteer witness may meet the patient wherever he or she lives: hospice, hospital, nursing home or private residence. A companion volunteer witness accompanies him or her, and both sign the expression-of-intent form. It all takes about 15 minutes — but it can change a life.

Glen MacDonald, of Toronto, says that he finds that the patients he meets face their situation with a clarity and courage that is "awesome." Fifteen times in the past year, Glen has acted as a witness. He stresses that his work has unexpectedly, and greatly, enriched his life. In addition, Glen says, he appreciates the chance to get to know other volunteers who feel exactly as he does: that it's a privilege to help the most vulnerable people in the world at precisely the time they need help the most.

In Calgary, another witness, Trish Remmers, echoes the feelings and the

views of Glen MacDonald. Like Glen, Trish has been impressed by the dedication of her fellow volunteers in Calgary, but most of all by the courage and the welcoming

attitude of patients. "One patient even opened the door to me," she remembers.

Trish has acted as a witness 12 times this past year, with the locales varying widely: hospital, hospice, nursing home and private home. Along with Trish, 12 other Calgarians are also acting as witnesses now; each one works with an accompanying witness, plus sometimes a social worker or an experienced "nurse navigator."

"What keeps me going," says Trish, "is my passionate belief in what Dying With Dignity Canada is all about: the right of every person to a peaceful death."

When it comes to accessing MAID, sometimes the hurdles a patient faces are huge — and sometimes they are seemingly petty. A witness helps a patient surmount a problem that is huge *and* small.

In Vancouver, Alex Muir has acted as a witness 10 times since only May of this year. Alex is a witness coordinator in Vancouver, working with 27 other witnesses in the area.

And what fuels Alex's commitment? Mainly two particular cases, Alex explains: his father's death (only 18 months ago) and that of a cousin with ALS.

Though his main task may last only a quarter of an hour or so, he says that, in his experience, "sometimes a patient wants to share his or her feelings with



DWDC volunteers have served as independent witnesses in more than 150 MAID cases this year. (Claudio's Pics/Adobe Stock)

me." That happens maybe half of the time, Alex notes, and then his job is simple: just to listen.

"Yes, I found acting as a witness a challenge at first," Alex admits.

"But you come to see yourself as actually lifting such great sorrow for a patient — and sometimes a traumatized family, too. That is what keeps me going."

Alex meets patients mainly in their own private home, and, in that case, always with a family member there. If the locale is a hospital, a social worker will accompany him.

He predicts that his witness program will steadily add more volunteers in the Vancouver area, thanks mainly to word of mouth.

As Canada ages, more and more of us will ask for MAID when facing intolerable suffering and a total loss of autonomy. DWDC volunteers like Glen, Trish and Alex will be there to help.

—Laura Common

Are you interested in serving as an independent witness for MAID? If so, please contact DWDC National Events and Volunteer Coordinator Kelsey Goforth at kelsey.goforth@dyingwithdignity.ca or toll-free at 1-877-389-1251.

A race against time

How an Ontario man's journey with assisted dying led his wife to become a vocal defender of dignity

When Scott Doherty was diagnosed this past May with an inoperable malignant brain tumour, he immediately told his doctor that he wanted medical assistance in dying (MAID). This came as no surprise to his wife, Karen, and their two children. Scott had always been very vocal about his end-of-life wishes to his family, who were steadfast in their support.

But despite Scott's clarity around his wishes, his three-month journey with assisted dying was anything but straightforward. He and his family encountered more than a few twists and turns as they navigated a healthcare system that has been slow to recognize Canadians' right to a peaceful death. Their experiences have led Karen to become an active supporter of Dying With Dignity Canada and a vocal advocate for the right to prior requests for assisted dying.

In the 17 years since his retirement from the pulp and paper industry, Scott and Karen thoroughly enjoyed their time together, spending their winters in the Florida sun and travelling the globe in search of some of the world's greatest golf courses. It was in Florida where Scott first began showing signs of his tumour: "I thought he began showing the early signs of Alzheimer's disease, and we just couldn't wait to get home," Karen remembers.

Local hospital wouldn't provide assisted dying

Back home in Cobourg, Ont., Scott and Karen received the devastating test results. Scott knew about assisted dying and was extremely thankful that it was legal. At 77 years old, Scott's biggest fear wasn't the prospect of dying. He was more afraid of losing his ability to consent, which he needed to retain if he was to go through with a request for MAID.

While Scott's physician was supportive of his right to have MAID, the doctor was not willing to take the request any further.

"Scott was also cautioned several times by his medical team that our local

hospital didn't provide MAID, so all bets were off if he ended up there," Karen says.

While Karen was grateful for the care Scott's doctors provided him, she felt that her husband's medical team very much treated him as "an experiment."

"They wanted him so badly to go through radiation to prolong his life by maybe six months," Karen says. "But that wouldn't be living for Scott."

Luckily, Scott and Karen were able to connect with their local Community Care Access Centre, which introduced them to a physician who provides MAID to eligible patients.

The delays, though, had already taken a significant toll. Scott was deteriorating quickly at that point and was nearly overcome by the fear that he would soon lose the mental capability to provide consent at the time of his death.

"Scott's co-ordination had deteriorated significantly, and the threat of falling and potentially breaking a limb that could land him in the hospital was constantly on our minds," says Karen.

Once Scott was approved and a MAID date was set, he spent every morning wishing that today was the day.

Scott had his assisted death on July 20, ending his life peacefully at home surrounded by his family. "It was very, very hard to say goodbye," Karen shares. "But he was finally at peace, and he never wavered in his decision."

Sharing lessons learned

Since Scott's death, Karen has committed herself to speaking out on the law's unfair restrictions, in the hopes of making assisted dying more easily available to suffering Canadians. She sincerely hopes that in the future, the law will change to



Karen and Scott Doherty (Courtesy of Sheila Doherty)

allow for people like Scott to make a prior request for assisted dying, one that could be honoured after they have lost capacity.

Karen's experiences led her to become one of the more than 700 Canadians to contribute to DWDC's official submission to the Council of Canadian Academies, which is studying possible changes to the law. "The voices, experiences and rights of ordinary Canadians must be at the heart of any serious examination of the future of assisted dying in this country," Karen wrote in her powerful entry.

In addition, her commitment to the cause also led her to mention DWDC in Scott's obituary. She also recently signed up to join DWDC's Defenders of Dignity monthly-giving program.

"If it wasn't for Dying With Dignity Canada," says Karen, explaining her support for the organization, "none of this would have been possible."

—*Laura Satin Levin*

We thank the Doherty Family for encouraging loved ones to donate to DWDC in Scott's memory. If you have questions about mentioning DWDC in an obituary, please contact Laura Satin Levin, DWDC's fund development officer, at [1-800-495-6156 ext. 26](tel:1-800-495-6156) or at laura@dyingwithdignity.ca. To make a donation in memory or in honour of a loved one, visit dyingwithdignity.ca/tribute_donations.