Welcome to the Dying With Dignity Canada 2019 Election Toolkit

In fall 2019, Canada will choose its next federal government and set the stage for the upcoming four years of our country’s politics. In the lead-up to this election, we are asking you — supporters of the right to end-of-life choice — to reach out to the candidates in your local riding. Let the people vying to be your representative in Parliament know that you care about end-of-life choice and the constitutionally-protected right to access medical assistance in dying (MAID). This is your opportunity to have your voice heard!

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At the end of the toolkit, you’ll find the 2019 election leave-behind sheet: The future of end-of-life rights in Canada.

Election calls to action

In the 2019 election, DWDC is calling on all parties and candidates to make the following three commitments:

- At the beginning of the next session of Parliament, pass an amendment in memory of Halifax’s Audrey Parker that would give people who have been assessed as eligible and approved for assisted dying the option to receive it after they have lost capacity.
- Lift the ban on advance requests for assisted dying, which discriminates against people with capacity-eroding conditions such as dementia.
• Uphold the end-of-life rights and choices, including the right to medical assistance in dying, of all Canadians in accordance with the Constitution, including the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Important information
This election toolkit is non-partisan, meaning that we do not endorse or oppose any party or individual candidate. Instead, it’s designed to help you motivate candidates of all stripes to take a stand in support of end-of-life rights.

In the months leading up to Election Day, please share this toolkit with your friends, family, colleagues, and community — anyone you think might want to get involved. If you have any questions, comments, or updates on the engagement steps you’ve taken, please send us an email at election@dyingwithdignity.ca. We’d love to hear from you!

Dying With Dignity Canada is the national human-rights charity committed to improving quality of dying, protecting end-of-life rights, and helping suffering people avoid unwanted suffering. Our CRA Charity Registration Number is 11889 0086 RR0001.
How to Arrange Meetings with Candidates

An in-person conversation shows a candidate that voters in their riding are passionate and knowledgeable about the right to medical assistance in dying (MAID). By engaging with the people who could be elected to represent your community in Parliament, you are setting the groundwork to influence policy on issues that are important to you.

Researching the candidates in your neighbourhood

First things first: finding out the names and contact information of the candidates running for office in your riding. Click here (Elections Canada site) to enter your postal code and find the name of your riding. You can research that riding's candidates online, or email us at election@dyingwithdignity.ca to receive their contact information. Take note of the information for all the major parties — elections can be unpredictable, and building relationships with different candidates increases your chances of influencing decision-making following the election.

Asking for a meeting

When reaching out to the candidate’s office to request a meeting, remember that their schedules will be very busy in the months leading up to the election. It’s better to propose a concise 15- or 20-minute meeting than to be turned down for requesting an hour of their time. To ask for a meeting via phone, call the candidate’s office and clearly state that you are a constituent in their riding, and you are interested in discussing the issue of end-of-life rights. Make sure your request is polite and friendly, as well as non-partisan.

If you prefer to send an email, here is a draft message you can amend to request a meeting:

Subject: Constituent meeting request re: end-of-life rights [insert your postal code]
Dear Mr./Ms./Dr. [candidate last name],

I am writing to request a brief meeting with you to discuss end-of-life rights and choices, including the right to medical assistance in dying. As a voter and resident of your riding, I would appreciate 15 to 20 minutes 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 phone number/email/contact information]

Be polite but persistent — you may have to reach out again within a couple of days to follow up. If the candidate is not available for an in-person meeting, ask the office if you could schedule a time to meet on the phone, or if there are any upcoming public events you could attend. A suggested meeting agenda can be found on page 4, and questions to ask candidates at a debate or public forum can be found on page 7.
Meeting Agenda

Before your meeting, review our meeting leave-behind sheet on page 11, which includes our election asks and key points about end-of-life rights. If you’re meeting a candidate in person, be sure to bring a few copies to guide your conversation and to leave with the candidate.

Suggestions for structuring the meeting

**Introduce yourself and why you’re passionate about end-of-life rights.**
- Introduce yourself as a concerned voter who is passionate about upholding and protecting end-of-life rights
- Feel free to mention DWDC and your involvement with the organization

**Current state of affairs:**
- Medical assistance in dying (MAID) is a right in accordance with the Constitution, including the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*
- There are flaws in Bill C-14, the 2016 federal assisted dying law, that harm and violate the rights of people who want access to MAID
- After a person has gone through the rigorous process of being assessed by two clinicians in order to access MAID, they still have to confirm their wish for MAID immediately before it is provided. If they cannot give consent, the procedure cannot go ahead
- This late-stage consent requirement means people are faced with a cruel choice between ending their lives too early and potentially losing the option to access MAID because of a loss of capacity. Some people are refusing pain medication out of fear that it will compromise their ability to fulfill the late-stage consent requirement
- Bill C-14 also discriminates against people with capacity-eroding conditions such as dementia. Without the ability to make an advance request for assisted dying, many people facing a dementia diagnosis will be unable to access their right to MAID

Since Bill C-14 requires Parliament to conduct a legislative review of how MAID is working at the beginning of the fifth year (likely the summer of 2020) after the law’s passage, this is a critical issue that will cross your desk over the next year if you are elected.

**We’re calling on you to:**
1. Pass an amendment in memory of Halifax’s Audrey Parker that would give people who have been assessed as eligible and approved for assisted dying the option to receive it after they have lost capacity
2. Lift the ban on advance requests for assisted dying, which discriminates against people with capacity-eroding conditions such as dementia
3. Ensure that Canada’s assisted dying laws, present and future, respect people’s rights in accordance with the Constitution and the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*
Questions and final remarks
- Ask if there are any questions from the candidate (you can review some commonly asked questions on our FAQs page of the toolkit)
- Let them know that more information about Audrey Parker is available at dyingwithdignity.ca/audrey_parker

Thank the candidate for their time
- Remember to provide them with a copy of the leave-behind sheet at the end of this Election Toolkit

After the meeting
If the candidate makes the time to meet with you one-on-one, thank them for their consideration by sending a thank you email. You can find a draft on page 6 of this toolkit.

Congratulations on engaging with candidates in your riding and raising your voice for end-of-life rights! Please give us a brief update on how the meeting went by sending a short email to election@dyingwithdignity.ca. We love learning about how our supporters are defending end-of-life choice in their local communities!
Thank You Letter/Email

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

Dear Mr./Ms./Dr. [candidate last name],

My name is [name] and I am a resident of [your neighbourhood/riding]. We met [date] to discuss the importance of end-of-life choice and the upcoming federal election. Thank you for taking the time to meet with [me/us/our group] — [I am/we are] pleased to hear that you are concerned about the issue that [I/we] raised. We want to ensure that Canada protects end-of-life rights for those who are vulnerable and suffering, and if elected, we are calling on you to:

1. Pass an amendment in memory of Halifax's Audrey Parker that would give people who have been assessed as eligible and approved for assisted dying the option to receive it after they have lost capacity
2. Lift the ban on advance requests for assisted dying, which discriminates against people with capacity-eroding conditions such as dementia
3. Ensure that Canada's assisted dying laws, present and future, respect people’s rights in accordance with the Constitution and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms

Since Bill C-14 (the medical assistance in dying legislation) includes a mandatory Parliamentary review to take place in mid-2020, this is a critical issue that will cross your desk over the next year if you are elected. [I/we] appreciate our conversation and your openness to discussing this critical issue.

[Optional:] I have attached a copy of the leave-behind sheet that we discussed; please do not hesitate to reach out if you have any questions.

Thank you again for meeting with [me/us]. [I/we] greatly appreciate your time and your interest in protecting end-of-life rights in Canada.

Thank you again,

[Your name]
[Your postal code]
[Your phone number/email/contact information]
Questions to Ask Candidates at a Debate or Public Event

When attending a public debate or event, it helps to be prepared with questions. The three below will help you gauge candidates’ positions on DWDC’s main election calls to action when time is limited. It may also be helpful to identify yourself as a voter within the candidates’ riding. We ask that you do not speak on behalf of DWDC at public events or to the media unless you have received approval from the national office to do so.

1. In 2015, the Supreme Court of Canada established medical assistance in dying as a right for people who are suffering intolerably as a result of a grievous and irremediable medical condition and who clearly consent to the termination of life. Do you support the Charter-protected right to medically assisted death as decided in the Supreme Court’s 2015 Carter ruling?

2. According to Bill C-14, the federal assisted dying law, even after a person has gone through the rigorous process of being assessed by two clinicians as eligible for assisted dying, they still have to confirm their wish for the procedure to continue immediately before it is administered. This has caused immense hardship for patients and their loved ones. Some people refuse much-needed pain care because they fear it will make them too confused to re-state their wish for MAID. Others, like Halifax’s Audrey Parker, choose to end their lives days or weeks earlier than they would otherwise like because they fear losing capacity and with it, the option of a peaceful, assisted death. No one should have to choose between dying too early and waiting until it’s too late. Will you support an amendment in honour of Audrey Parker that would allow people who’ve been Assessed and Approved for the procedure to waive the late-stage consent requirement?

3. Currently, the federal assisted dying law forbids people from making advance requests for assisted dying. That means that they don’t have the option of making a request for assisted dying that could be honoured months or years in the future, after they have lost the ability to speak for themselves. This rule discriminates against people who want the option of an assisted death in the face of a diagnosis of dementia or another condition that robs people of their capacity as a matter of course. Do you support allowing people diagnosed with a severe medical condition to make an advance request for assisted dying?

If possible, bring copies of the leave-behind sheet on page 11 to distribute to candidates and interested attendees. The Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) section on page 8 has more information and tips on answering questions about MAID and managing difficult conversations. Please email us at election@dyingwithdignity.ca with any comments, questions, or your reports on your interactions with the candidates in your riding.
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

How would an advance request for MAID work?

- An advance request for MAID would be distinct from an advance directive or living will.
- That’s in part because allowing advance requests for MAID would require an amendment to the federal law, while the rules for advance directives are set by the provinces and territories.
- An advance request would be a standalone and binding request for MAID that could be honoured after the person requesting it loses capacity.
- We believe it’s up to MPs, in consultation with experts in the field as well as people whose rights are at stake, to develop a system for advance requests that ensures fair access while also protecting people who don’t want, or can’t make an informed request for, MAID.
- According to a Feb. 2016 poll commissioned by DWDC and conducted by Ipsos, eight in 10 Canadians (85 per cent) support the right to advance requests for MAID.

What happens if someone with an advance request changes his/her/their mind?

- We believe that the option of completing an advance request is a right that would unburden many people suffering with a degenerative condition that will only get worse as time goes on.
- It is critical to implement safeguards, including a standardized legal document in which an individual’s wishes and intentions could be stated clearly. However, with careful consideration, responsive and patient-centred policy, and appropriate mechanisms for reporting and monitoring, we can implement a framework for advance requests that ensures that only those eligible people with an enduring request for MAID are allowed to receive it.

Does MAID hurt efforts to improve or expand palliative care?

- Assisted dying doesn’t hurt palliative care. The legalization of assisted dying often leads to new investments in palliative care. This is something we’re starting to see here in Canada.
- In Oregon, for example, nine in 10 people who used that state’s Dying with Dignity legislation were enrolled in a hospice program.
- Palliative care and assisted death are not an either/or option — both can work in conversation with each other, if that is what the patient chooses. Often, palliative care alone is not enough.
- A person should never have to choose between high-quality palliative care and their right to MAID. Residents of Canada want, and deserve, fair access to both.

“Won’t this lead to the killing of people because others think they’re a burden to society?”

- The right to assisted dying is rooted in two fundamental values: individual choice and compassion.
- The choice of an assisted death belongs to the person making the decision. No one else has the right to make that decision for them.
Forcing Canadians to endure unwanted, intolerable suffering is inhumane and wrong. As a compassionate society, we must offer information, choices, and support to people who face the prospect of a horrific death or a life of unendurable suffering.

“Assisted dying is wrong/I don’t agree with this/It’s against God’s will.”
- The choice of an assisted death is precisely that: a personal choice. We believe that every person has the right to die in a manner that reflects their wishes, values, and beliefs.
- In Canada, the right to assisted dying is supported by a vast majority of people in every major demographic group, including among people who identify as religious. According to a Feb. 2016 poll commissioned by DWDC and conducted by Ipsos, more than eight respondents in 10 (85 per cent) supported the right to assisted dying as defined in the Supreme Court’s *Carter v Canada* decision. Support topped 70 per cent among people who reported having a religious identity.

What is DWDC’s position on MAID for people with mental illness?
- The eligibility criteria laid out in the Supreme Court’s *Carter* decision does not explicitly limit access to individuals whose primary medical condition is physical. Nor does having a severe mental illness necessarily mean that a person is incapable of making free and informed decisions about their care.
- Suffering caused by severe mental illness is no less “real” than suffering caused by a physical illness, injury, or disability. In many cases, symptoms of severe mental illness are indistinguishable from those caused by a non-psychiatric medical condition.
- For these reasons, we believe that individuals with treatment-resistant mental illness should not be excluded outright from access simply because the underlying cause of their suffering is psychiatric. It is unfair and likely unconstitutional to discriminate against people on the basis of their diagnoses.
- That being said, we recognize that additional safeguards may be required in cases where the person’s sole/primary underlying condition is a severe mental illness.

What is DWDC’s position on MAID for mature minors?
- In many jurisdictions across Canada, mature minors already have the right to make important decisions regarding their care. This includes the right to consent to or refuse life-saving medical treatment.
- We believe it’s unfair to allow a 70-year-old with terminal cancer the choice of a peaceful death but deny a 17-year-old who has been given the same prognosis and demonstrates a clear capacity to make the decision as an adult.
- It may be appropriate to develop special eligibility criteria and safeguards to address concerns surrounding the provision of assisted dying for mature minors.
How do I respond if a conversation with a candidate or member of the public turns hostile?

- The DWDC team has found that confrontations or hostility are uncommon. Remaining polite, respectful, and calm is the best way to avoid or de-escalate any situation that seems confrontational.
- Show the other person that you are listening and understanding what is being said, and respond in a slow, calm voice. Try to keep your body language neutral (no pointing or sudden movements) and make eye contact.
- If you have a feeling that the interaction is getting more intense and you are worried about your or others’ safety, please remove yourself from the situation.

Where can I find more information on end-of-life rights, access to MAID, and information on getting more involved with the cause?

- You can always visit us online at dyingwithdignity.ca for information on the current rules, educational resources, opportunities to get involved, and personal stories.
- If you have any other questions or areas of interest, please feel free to send us an email: election@dyingwithdignity.ca or call (416) 486-3998, toll-free 1-800-495-6156.

Where can I find information or support for myself or a loved one who would like to learn more about MAID and end-of-life options?

- Dying With Dignity Canada's free-to-use Personal Support Program provides information and emotional support to individuals and families navigating their legal end-of-life choices.
- If you or someone you know are facing a difficult diagnosis and want more information about your options, including MAID, you can contact our Personal Support Program by emailing support@dyingwithdignity.ca or by calling us toll-free at 1-844-395-3640.
- More information about the program is available at dyingwithdignity.ca/find_support.

If you have any other questions or concerns, please email us at election@dyingwithdignity.ca.
Background on the right to medical assistance in dying (MAID)

- In 2015, the Supreme Court recognized MAID as a Charter-protected right for people who are suffering intolerably from a "grievous and irremediable" medical condition and who want to end their lives with the help of a clinician.
- The right to MAID remains out of reach for many suffering people because of unfair restrictions in Bill C-14, the federal assisted dying law.

What you can do

Support an amendment in honour of Halifax’s Audrey Parker that would protect the rights of people who’ve been Assessed and Approved for assisted dying.

- After a person has gone through the rigorous process of being assessed by two clinicians in order to access MAID, they still have to confirm their wish for the procedure to continue immediately before it is administered.
- The late-stage consent requirement means that many people who have already been Assessed and Approved are faced with a cruel choice: end their lives early, while they are still competent, or risk losing out on their right to access MAID.
- That’s what happened to the late Audrey Parker, the face of DWDC’s Assessed and Approved campaign. More information about Audrey is available at dyingwithdignity.ca/audrey_parker.
- 82% of Canadians support allowing patients who have been Assessed and Approved for MAID to receive it after they have lost capacity to consent (Ipsos Reid, 2016).

Commit to lifting the unfair ban on advance requests for assisted dying.

- Without the option to make an advance request for assisted dying, the right to an assisted death will be out of reach for many people who develop capacity-eroding conditions such as dementia.
- The few who do qualify may have to choose between accessing assisted dying sooner than they would like and waiting until it’s too late.
- 80% of Canadians support allowing people with a diagnosis of dementia to make an advance request for assisted dying that could be honoured after they've lost capacity to consent (Ipsos Reid, 2016).

Ensure Canada’s assisted dying law respects people’s rights in accordance with the Constitution and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

- The federal assisted dying law contains other provisions that discriminate against people on the basis of their age and/or diagnosis.
- MPs have a duty to ensure that Canada’s assisted dying rules respect people’s end-of-life rights and comply with the Constitution, including the Charter.

Why now?

- People in the Assessed and Approved category cannot wait any longer for action. No one should have to choose between ending their lives too early and waiting until it's potentially too late!
- Bill C-14 requires Parliament to commence a legislative review of the law by mid-2020. This is a critical issue that will cross elected officials’ desks over the next year. MPs will have the opportunity to take a strong stand for end-of-life rights!

If you have further questions, please contact Dying With Dignity Canada at election@dyingwithdignity.ca or at 1-800-495-6156.