

MAiD for mental illness

The law allowing medical assistance in dying (MAiD) on the basis of mental illness alone was passed in 2021 with a built-in delay. **The provision allowing MAiD for mental illness alone will take effect on March 17, 2027, unless a bill is passed to stop it.**

This spring the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities issued a strongly-worded report recommending that Canada repeal Track 2 MAiD, "including the 2027 commencement of Track 2 MAiD for persons whose 'sole underlying medical condition is a mental illness.'" (Track 2 MAiD is for individuals whose natural death is not foreseeable.)

1 in 10

Canadians wait 4 months or more for community mental health counseling

Canadian Institute for Health Information

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There is limited knowledge about the long-term prognosis for many conditions, and it is difficult, if not impossible, for clinicians to make accurate predictions about the future for an individual patient.

Final Report of the Expert Panel on MAiD and Mental Illness, 2022

Suicidality, despair and a closed view of the future are symptoms of some mental disorders. As the government's Expert Panel on MAiD and Mental Illness stated, "In considering MAiD requests for persons who have mental disorders, it must be recognized that thoughts, plans and actions to bring about one's death may also be a symptom of the very condition which is the basis for a request for MAiD." *There is no clear way to distinguish between suicidality and a desire for death via MAiD.*

Vague and subjective wording

- Canada's MAiD laws have vague and subjective terms which are left to the interpretation of individual doctors. For example, what kind of "serious" illness, disease or disability makes someone eligible for euthanasia? What mental disorders will make someone eligible for MAiD? Will it be those listed in the DSM-5, such as anxiety, depression, autism, PTSD? Assessing patients on a case-by-case basis means there are no universal protections.

Additional safeguards? None. There are no new safeguards in the law for those with mental illness as their only underlying medical condition.

- Mental illness is complex and doesn't necessarily follow a predictable trajectory. There is no requirement in law that the person requesting MAiD be assessed by a psychiatrist. A doctor assessing a request for MAiD is required to consult with a medical practitioner who has expertise in the condition causing the suffering. However, the law does not require direct input or assessment by a psychiatrist.
- Canada does not require MAiD be a last resort after all reasonable treatment options have been exhausted. Canada's MAiD law only requires that eligible patients be *informed* of the means available to relieve their suffering and seriously consider them. In the Netherlands, a patient and doctor must agree there are no reasonable alternatives.

It is unconscionable that in Canada it may be easier to access euthanasia than to access treatments and supports to live.

Please support Bill C-218 to stop MAiD on the basis of mental illness alone.