

How to Get in Touch With Your Federal Elections Candidate

Toolkit

provided by the
Association québécoise pour le droit de mourir dans la dignité



Thank you for downloading our 2021 Federal Elections Toolkit

On September 20, 2021, Canadians will choose the next representatives who will go on to vote on our country's laws. As a member or supporter of the Association québécoise pour le droit de mourir dans la dignité, you can make your voice heard and elect a representative who will defend your values.

We have prepared this toolkit for you. It contains everything you need to ensure that medical assistance in dying (MAID) will be an important issue in the debate.

Note - Important Information

This toolkit is politically impartial. In other words, it is not designed to support or discredit any political party, nor any candidate. We have designed this toolkit to provide information to you and to help your candidates navigate decisions regarding end-of-life rights.

Please feel free to share this toolkit with your family, friends, acquaintances, and anyone else interested in issues relating to MAID. If you have any questions or comments regarding these tools or MAID, please reach out to us: info@aqdmd.org
Thank you for your commitment to this cause.

The AQDMD:

"The Association québécoise pour le droit de mourir dans la dignité works to ensure that legislation allows every citizen to choose and receive end-of-life care that includes medical assistance in dying, in accordance with their personal concept of dignity."

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Preface: Our History & Why We Need to Take Action

The history of medical assistance in dying

- **In June 2014**, and as part of its health prerogative, the Quebec government adopted a law allowing medical assistance in dying under certain conditions. The law came into force in December 2015.
- **In February 2015**, in the *Carter v. Canada* case, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that the provisions of the Criminal Code prohibiting medical assistance in dying were contrary to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The government had until June 6, 2016, to create new laws.
- **In June 2016**, the Parliament of Canada amended the Criminal Code and passed a federal law allowing all eligible adults in Canada to request medical assistance in dying.
- **In her September 11, 2019, decision**, Judge Christine Baudouin confirmed that the two legislative regimes (federal and provincial) determining who is entitled to medical assistance in dying were overly restrictive and discriminatory. She deemed them unconstitutional because of temporal limits imposed on the term “end of life,” in Quebec law, and the concept of a “reasonably foreseeable natural death,” in federal law.
- **On March 11, 2020**, the Quebec government stated that the “end of life” criterion would no longer be operational, but it did not change the law.
- **On March 17, 2021**, the Canadian Parliament amended the Criminal Code and removed the “reasonably foreseeable death” criterion. This meant that even people whose death was not foreseeable could benefit from MAID, as long as they met the other criteria.
- **In 2021–2022**, both levels of government will need to address the following three matters: requests for medical assistance in dying (MAID) made through advance medical directives, for patients with cognitive neurodegenerative diseases; access to MAID for persons with a mental illness; and access to MAID for mature minors.

Why take action?

In the federal election, you will cast a vote for the representatives who will make decisions regarding the evolution of end-of-life choices. Certain categories of people may want to

fight to block this right, or they may not want it to evolve. This is why it is essential that you make the most of this opportunity to get to know your representatives and to share your beliefs about end-of-life decisions.

Points to focus on during the elections

We are working to ensure that the next government, whatever it may be, will respect the commitments made by the Department of Justice and the Health Department in March 2021.

This means:

- Over the next 8 months: furthering the discussion around advance medical directives in the Criminal Code.
- Over the next 8 months: furthering the discussion around access to medical assistance in dying for mature minors.
- By March 17, 2023: adapting the Criminal Code as promised, regarding mental illness, and setting applicable guidelines before the deadline.

Sheet #1 - Finding the Candidate for Your Electoral District

Find the candidate for your electoral district

Go to this website: [Voter Information Service - Find your electoral district](#)

Enter information either by:

- Postal code: enter your home postal code
- Electoral district: choose a province from the drop-down list
- Name of candidate: choose a province from the drop-down list
- Map: choose a province from the drop-down list
- Location (village, city): choose a province from the drop-down list
- List (all of Canada or by province): choose a province from the drop-down list, then choose your electoral district

Or you can email us at this address: info@aqdmd.org, so that we can send you their contact information.

Get in touch with your representative

There are several ways to get in touch with the candidate in your electoral district:

- Meet them at an event
- Set up a meeting at their office in Parliament
- Set up a meeting in their electoral district
- Call their electoral office
- Email their electoral office
- Send them a message via their official Facebook page

The best time to contact your representative

It usually takes about 3 weeks to get a meeting. Offices in Parliament, in Ottawa, are open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and some offices open at 8 a.m. When Parliament is not in session (from mid-June to mid-September and from mid-December to the end of January), staff members' working hours are more flexible, but your representative could also be on holiday.

We therefore recommend that you regularly review the House of Commons calendar: [Calendar of sittings](#).

Who should you contact?

To make an appointment, you should speak to the person in charge of the MP's schedule. If this person is away from the office, ask when they will return and call them back.

Contact your representative by email

Sample email, to get in touch with your representative

Subject line: Interview request regarding Medical Assistance in Dying – (your postal code)

Mr./Mrs./Ms./Miss Firstname Lastname, M.P., House of Commons, Ottawa,

OR

Mr./Mrs./Ms./Miss Firstname Lastname, Deputy Minister of _____,

OR

Mr./Mrs./Ms./Miss Firstname Lastname

I am writing to you today in the hopes that we can discuss end-of-life rights and choices, especially regarding medical assistance in dying. As a resident of your electoral district, I would like to be able to speak with you during a brief 15- to 20-minute meeting to learn about your point of view on the matter, which will have an important impact on my choice of representative.

Please let me know when you would be available to plan this meeting.

Regards,

[Your name]

[Your postal code]

[Your phone number / email / contact details]

Sheet #2 - Preparing for the Meeting

Prepare for the meeting

Find out more about the parliamentarian, in order to have as much information as possible for a potential meeting. For example, you could research the following information: personality traits, education, interests, party policies, and their own stance on medical assistance in dying. All of this information is essential for developing a relevant case.

- Carry out research to gather general information about your elected representative and to understand their stance on medical assistance in dying and its evolution.
- Check out the official web page for members of government.
Each parliamentarian has an official web page presenting their profile. You can also run a Google search.
- Look over the news, like print news, radio programs, television, etc. Has your parliamentarian been mentioned in an article related to medical assistance in dying? You can review national and local media.
- Find your parliamentarian on social media. Search for their profile and get the latest news about them, by creating a Google alert or by following relevant hashtags (#).

Define roles and responsibilities before the meeting

Before your meeting with a parliamentarian, it is important to determine who will be a part of your delegation (if several of you are attending). Whether this is an individual or a group meeting, there are three steps to follow during the meeting: introduce yourselves, share information, then present a request.

Business cards

Make sure you have business cards with you. You will give these to the minister or parliamentarian, and to each staff member present at the meeting, usually one or two people, when meeting with a parliamentarian.

One-on-one meetings

If you are going on your own, it is important to establish your message ahead of time, so that you do not forget anything. Set goals: you know exactly what information you want to convey and what outcome you are hoping for. Furthermore, if you have seen information that intrigues you in your representative's biography or if you have a shared interest, make sure to mention this. Feel free to take notes and tell your candidate that you will inform those around you of the outcome of this meeting.

Sheet #3: Meeting Your Parliamentarian During a Planned Meeting

Once you've secured your date and arrived prepared for the meeting, here are some tips:

Share speaking time

Make sure you prepare your presentation well and deliver your message in your own words. It is important to pay attention to sharing speaking time, so that you can hear your parliamentarian's point of view and their party's views, depending on the themes addressed.

Share information

- During the introductions, introduce yourself and your team. If you represent a business, organization, or association, let them know. You can then bring context to your meeting: underline key points about the issue you are discussing (present the current situation and the latest MAID developments). Avoid presentations with slides, as you risk losing your parliamentarian's attention.
- When it comes to sharing information, ask your parliamentarian for their position on the various points that interest you (general stance on MAID, advance medical requests, mental illness, and mature minors).
- Next is the request, which must take into account the answers that you have been given: it may be about guaranteeing acquired rights or even obtaining change. It is also possible to ask the candidate to make a commitment or take a public stance on the matter. Try to get a firm commitment, and do not settle for vague promises. If the person is not ready to go further, try to establish at least the next step in the process. Getting a commitment can take a long time. You need to maintain communication and persevere!

Questions to ask your contact

- What is your stance on the issue of medical assistance in dying?
- Are you in favour of advance medical directives in certain situations, like the following example? In the event of a cognitive neurodegenerative disease like Alzheimer's disease, a person unable to consent to care may be eligible for medical assistance in dying, if they have expressed their wishes clearly and precisely through advance medical directives, while they still had the capacity to consent.
- In your opinion, should a mature minor have access to medical assistance in dying under certain conditions?
- In your opinion, should medical assistance in dying be available to people whose only medical condition is a mental disorder, as long as they are able to make decisions for themselves?

- With regard to advance medical requests for people who have a confirmed diagnosis of a cognitive neurodegenerative disease, like Alzheimer's disease: what framework should be created when expanding access to include this right?

Provide examples

This is where all of your prep work will come in handy. To appeal to their emotions, provide concrete examples that illustrate your values and the importance of your parliamentarian's support. Feel free to contact the AQDMD if you would like help with the preparation.

Respect the planned duration of the interview

Unless the parliamentarian has expressed that they want to continue the conversation, please respect the time allotted to you. Pay attention to staff behaviour that might alert you that your time is up. Be quick and make sure your words are relevant. Lastly, don't forget to thank your parliamentarian for the time they granted you. You can also leave them with informative documents that summarize your pitch.

At the end of the meeting

Thank your parliamentarian and send them an email or a thank you note that summarizes the commitments that were made or the steps to come.

Sheet #4: Making a Quick Presentation to Your Parliamentarian

Candidates attend many official events. You can use the opportunity to present your arguments at one of these brief meetings.

Sharing speaking time

You have approximately 60 seconds to convey your message to your parliamentarian during an unscheduled meeting. They have a busy schedule, due to their position, and receive many requests. This is why you have a maximum of two minutes to discuss the subject that matters to you. Make sure you prepare your presentation well (60 seconds at most, to start) and deliver your message in your own words. It is important to pay attention to sharing speaking time, so that you can hear your parliamentarian's point of view and their party's views, depending on the themes addressed.

Information to be provided quickly

- Who are you?
- What are you here for?
- What do you want?
- How can the candidate get involved?

Structuring the speech

1. Introduce yourself. If you represent a business, organization or association, let them know.
2. Underline the key points of the issue you are addressing (present the context and current development related to MAID).
3. If the parliamentarian has time to listen to you, provide more details.
4. Otherwise, ask them for their business card.
5. Request a meeting.
6. Ask for the names of the staff members that you should speak to.
7. Try to get a firm commitment, and do not settle for vague promises. If the person is not ready to go further, try to establish at least the next step in the process. Getting a commitment can take a long time. You need to maintain communication and persevere!
8. Thank your parliamentarian and send them an email or a thank you note that summarizes the commitments that were made or the steps to come.

Sheet #5 - Bringing Your Questions to a Candidate During an Event or a Debate

There are several reasons that a public debate or event is a good time to bring questions to your candidate. First, the media may be present to keep track of your conversation and the candidate's position.

Second, other people will attend this debate; they too may be informed about your candidate's opinion and can ask other relevant questions.

This is why it is essential to ask targeted questions related to the issue.

Examples of questions:

- **Are you open to allowing access to advance medical requests for people with a confirmed diagnosis of a cognitive neurodegenerative disease, like Alzheimer's disease? What should the framework look like if we are to provide access to this right?**
- On March 17, 2021, the Parliament of Canada passed Bill C-7, which amended the Criminal Code to allow people whose natural death is not reasonably foreseeable to obtain medical assistance in dying. Nonetheless, it continues to ban medical assistance in dying in cases where mental illness is the sole underlying medical condition. **Do you support the right to medical assistance in dying for these people?**
- The issue of mature minors eligible for medical assistance in dying is the subject of much debate. **What is your opinion on opening access to medical assistance in dying for mature minors who are suffering from an incurable medical condition, excluding mental illness?**

Sheet #6 - Following Up

After a meeting, the objective is to continue to show that you are a reliable source on the issue of MAID and that you can inform your parliamentarian of developments in the field. Here are the steps to follow:

Express your gratitude

In the week following the meeting, you can send a thank you note by mail. Sending an email does not have the same effect, as parliamentarians receive hundreds of emails every day. In your thank you note, it is important to include any additional information that you did not share or that you became aware of after the meeting.

What to include in a thank you note:

1. Mr./Mrs./Ms./Miss Firstname Lastname, M.P., House of Commons, Ottawa,
Mr./Mrs./Ms./Miss Firstname Lastname, M.P. for _____, House of Commons,
Ottawa,
Mr./Mrs./Ms./Miss Firstname Lastname, Deputy Minister of _____,
Mr./Mrs./Ms./Miss Firstname Lastname,
2. Express your gratitude for the meeting.
3. Highlight the important points of the conversation and the steps to come or the commitment that was made.
4. Closing sentence: Sincerely,

- Example of a thank you note -

Subject: [Date] meeting with Mr. / Mrs. [Your Name] – Medical Assistance in Dying

Mr./Mrs./Ms./Miss Firstname Lastname, M.P., House of Commons, Ottawa,
Mr./Mrs./Ms./Miss Firstname Lastname, M.P. for _____, House of Commons, Ottawa,
Mr./Mrs./Ms./Miss Firstname Lastname, Deputy Minister of _____,
Mr./Mrs./Ms./Miss Lastname,

My name is [name] and I live in [your neighbourhood / electoral district]. We met on [date] at [location] to discuss the importance of end-of-life choices and the upcoming federal election. Thank you for taking the time to meet [me / us / our group]. [I am / we are] delighted to know that you are concerned about the issue that [I / we] addressed. We want to make sure that Canada protects end-of-life rights for those who are vulnerable and suffering.

In addition, we are certain that you can act in favour of the points that we touched on during our discussion:

- [quote these points]
- [quote these points]
- [quote these points]
- [State the commitment that was made or that needs to be made.]

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions. Again, thank you for sharing your time with [me / us]. [I / we] greatly appreciate your time and interest in protecting end-of-life rights in Canada.

Thanks again,

[Your name]

[Your postal code]

[Your phone number / email / contact details]

Phone call

Once you have sent the thank you note, we encourage you to call your parliamentarian's office to reiterate your gratitude and tell them how much you enjoyed meeting them and their staff. Also, ask them if there is anything you can do in Ottawa or in their electoral district.

Social networks

Get in touch with your parliamentarian using social networks, including Facebook, LinkedIn or Twitter. When they make a post about MAID, you can share relevant posts and, at the appropriate time, feel free to leave a comment.

Update

Make sure to regularly update your parliamentarian, through periodic emails about the issue. If you publish an article or if an organization publishes an interesting press release or hosts events on the matter, any of which may be relevant to your parliamentarian, you can let them know.

Message From the AQDMD

We thank you for your commitment to the candidates in your constituency and for your dedication in defending the rights of people who are in their end of life! We would love to get an update on how the meeting went and how you felt. You can email us at this address: info@aqdmd.org. We look forward to receiving your feedback and are happy to see your involvement at a local level.