

Date: Nov 15, 2023

**To: The Parliamentary Committee tasked with studying Euthanasia/MAID.** [AMAD@parl.gc.ca](mailto:AMAD@parl.gc.ca)

Cc: The Honourable Arif Virani, Minister of Justice and Attorney General for Canada [mcu@justice.gc.ca](mailto:mcu@justice.gc.ca)

Cc: MLA Hon. Niki Sharma, K.C. Attorney General [AG.Minister@gov.bc.ca](mailto:AG.Minister@gov.bc.ca)

Cc: MLA Hon. Adrian Dix, Minister of Health [HLTH.Minister@gov.bc.ca](mailto:HLTH.Minister@gov.bc.ca)

Re: Pending federal legislation on MAID MI-SUMC

Note: Status on Legislation at time of writing: Federal legislation for MAID MD-SUMC (Medical assistance in dying where a mental disorder (a syndrome characterized by clinically significant disturbance in an individual's cognition, emotion regulation, or behaviour that reflects a dysfunction in the psychological, biological, or development processes underlying mental functioning) is the sole underlying medical condition) has been delayed to approximately March 2024.

Dear Committee Members,

Pathways Serious Mental Illness Society (SMIS) is a volunteer-driven, non-profit society with offices on the north shore of Greater Vancouver providing free programs and services to families throughout the province who are supporting loved ones with a serious mental illness. The Society's mission is to alleviate the suffering caused by schizophrenia and other serious mental illness through mutual support, education, information, research, advocacy and skills development. The Society is about "families helping families". Pathways SMIS members, supporting those with serious mental disorders, have lived experience of the mental health services in Greater Vancouver, including involuntary admission and treatment under the BC Mental Health Act.

We completely support the Minister's decision to delay passing legislation to legalize MAID MI-SUMC in order to more fully explore the recommendations set out in the May 15 Final Report of the Expert Panel on MAiD and Mental Illness namely:

- determining incurability,
- irreversibility
- capacity
- suicidality
- and structural vulnerability impacts

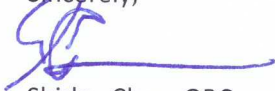
As you appreciate, there are many challenges for those suffering from mental illnesses. In addition to lack of mental health services and treatment, there are often amplifying issues such as addictions, financial insecurity, and homelessness. Many Pathways SMIS family members progress gradually and sometimes remarkably from periods of despair and severe illness to stability and well-being once treatment and support have been delivered. We want our loved ones to receive treatment and supports so they can be well and live with purpose. We fear that loved ones, in times of despair, could make an irrevocable decision to end their life should their struggles appear overwhelming, and MAID be made available to them.

In general, we do not think MAID should be available to persons with a serious mental illness; however, where an individual is cognitively capable of sound reasoning and judgement and with lengthy consideration wishes to exercise the option to end their life, we recommend MAID as an option. For our loved ones who request MAID with MD-SUMC we recommend implementation of these measures but only under these following recommendations:

1. Requestor's family members are genuinely involved in the MAID process so that a fulsome report of their illness and determining capacity is possible.
2. Reasonable attempts to address healthcare, housing, and social-economic needs that could underlie the request for MAID are demonstrably documented.
3. Where a requester refuses to provide consent to communicate with other clinicians or family members or access medical records without reasons that the assessor believes is in good faith or relevant, the assessor may decline continuance of the assessment.

We look forward to continued involvement with the pending legislation and below here are just two very powerful testimonials from Pathways SMIS members in support of our position.

Sincerely,



Shirley Chan, OBC  
President  
Pathways Serious Mental Illness Society  
[www.pathwayssmi.org](http://www.pathwayssmi.org)

#### Family Testimonials:

*"My daughter suffers from schizophrenia and addiction which has captured her life and robbed her of friends, family and purpose. As her primary support in the community, I am challenged daily to get her the help she needs to live. When I die, I hope she will continue to receive support from the health care system to live with dignity. I wish for a miracle cure for her illness and addiction. I would be conflicted should she choose to access MAiD but would respect her choice should she reach a point where her future is too lonely and bleak to continue."*

SC June27, 2023

*"My daughter who has Bipolar 1 has had two failed attempts at suicide brought about by untreated, unrelenting messages from her brain telling her that she and everyone else would be better off if she were dead. The last 10 years have been a struggle to find stability and a quality of life worth living. It is not easy with the lack of resources available to persons with mental illness. She has been relatively stable for the last few years but says that if MAiD were available back then she would have gone for it. She is glad that it wasn't. So am I. Our mentally ill loved ones do not need help dying. They need help living. We can do better. We must."*

CB Oct.8, 2023