

For immediate release

Dying With Dignity Canada launches a campaign to end forced transfers in B.C.'s publicly funded health care facilities.

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Dying With Dignity Canada's (DWDC) Metro Vancouver, Victoria and Okanagan Chapters have launched a campaign to end forced transfers in B.C.'s publicly funded health care facilities.

A forced transfer occurs when a patient is made to move locations for an assisted death because the facility they are in forbids medical assistance in dying (MAID). This usually involves the patient leaving their community of care and being transferred from one health care facility to another. Already suffering, when their health is fragile, patients experience stress and feel stigmatized for their choice to access MAID and end their suffering.

British Columbians' access to MAID is being unfairly restricted by an outdated agreement, between the provincial government and the Denominational Health Association (DHA), known as the Master Agreement. It allows DHA member facilities to collect billions in taxpayer dollars and to refuse to allow health care services which they object to on religious or moral grounds. In many DHA facilities, this includes services such as MAID.

"Eligible British Columbians are being denied their constitutionally protected right to access MAID by some taxpayer funded health care facilities," Metro Vancouver Chapter Chair Alex Muir explains. "Under the Canada Health Act, and as affirmed by Supreme Court of Canada decisions, governments must offer reasonable access to all medically necessary services funded by the government."

Like the vast majority of Canadians, British Columbians strongly support MAID. A recent poll by Ipsos for DWDC shows support in the province at 89%, and three of four (74%) believe all health care facilities that receive public funds have an obligation to provide the full range of legal health care services.

British Columbians who want to get involved can contact their Member of the Legislative Assembly by visiting https://www.dyingwithdignity.ca/bc_stop_forcedtransfers

A forced transfer advocacy toolkit is also available for download on the website.

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Dying With Dignity Canada is the national organization committed to improving quality of dying and end-of-life choice.