



MAIN MESSAGES — END-OF-LIFE DECISION MAKING

- Canadians do not talk enough about the end of life. On a personal level, many of us do not plan for it, and as a nation we have failed to develop coherent policies or set sufficient standards for the end-of-life care delivered every day all across the country. We need to plan for end of life personally and as a society.
- Canada performs poorly in ensuring access to high quality palliative care. Governments should increase efforts to achieve goals for standards of palliative care established in multiple reports and commissions.
- Uncertainties about the legal status of withholding and withdrawal of potentially life-sustaining treatment without the consent of the individual should be resolved. The legal uncertainties about palliative sedation should be resolved and practice guidelines should be developed and implemented.
- Autonomy is a paramount value in Canadian public policy. Dignity is a value whose meaning is obscure and which can, and is, used on both sides of the assisted dying debate. The evidence from years of experience and research where euthanasia and/or assisted suicide are permitted does not support claims that decriminalization will result in vulnerable persons being subject to abuse or a slippery slope from voluntary to non-voluntary euthanasia.
- Assisted suicide and voluntary euthanasia should be legally permitted for competent individuals who make a free and informed decision that their life is no longer worth living. Canada should have a permissive yet carefully regulated and monitored system with respect to assisted death.