OUR POSITION ON QUEBEC’S MEDICAL AID IN DYING LAW
November 2015

Quebec’s Act Respecting End-of-Life Care, permitting medical aid in dying, will come into force on December 10, 2015. This law sets out the conditions under which a terminally ill patient can request their death be hastened with medical assistance.

Key points about the law & its implementation

- The law requires Quebec’s public hospitals and CLSCs to provide this service to patients. The law specifically gives community-based palliative care hospices, such as the West Island Palliative Care Residence, the choice of whether to offer such services or not.
- As ratified by our Board of Directors, the West Island Palliative Care Residence will not offer medical aid in dying to its patients but respects the right of patients to choose this option at other facilities.
- The law requires residences to clearly inform patients on admission whether they offer such service or not and we do so since June 5, 2014.
- We will also ensure that patients know they may change their mind at any time and ask for medical aid to die and that this right will be respected by our team.
- After discussions, if a patient still wants medical aid to die, they will be transferred to a facility where they can receive this service. We will expedite the transfer to the best of our ability and until a transfer occurs we will continue to provide palliative care.

Key points about palliative care

- Palliative care does not include any type of physician-assisted death.
- Palliative care does not hasten (or prolong) death.
- Palliative care strives to end suffering, not life.
- All patients deserve access to information about end-of-life options, including medical aid in dying.
- In order to ensure they have valid choices at end of life, Canadians need universal access to palliative care, including good pain and symptom management.
- Medical aid in dying will be best provided by those specifically trained in delivering it but this is not a specialty that is part of palliative care.

Our role as a palliative care residence

- Provide the highest-quality palliative care, particularly pain and symptom management, and support families.
- Educate patients & families who ask about end-of-life options, including medical aid in dying.
- Respect each other’s opinions and patient wishes, as always.
- Keep personal opinions separate from our ability to listen to patients.
- Continually seek to understand patients’ needs.