

VIDEO LINK

On Monday, June 5th, 2017 the Empowerment Council (in collaboration with CAMH) led an event to facilitate discussion about whether Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD) legislation should be made available to those whose sole reason for the request would be a diagnosis of mental illness. **Please watch a video recording of the event and the panelists' discussion here:**

www.youtube.com/watch?v=rsNQomwa8WE

The intention of this event was to re-situate and center the conversation away from professional opinion and towards the experiences, knowledge, and expertise of mental health service users – and we were successful! The discussion was facilitated by **Lucy Costa** of the Empowerment Council. **Michele Warner** (legal counsel for CAMH) provided context for current MAiD law. The panelists consisted of people with lived experience who held varying positions about MAiD.

Our Panelists:

- ✚ **Mark Henick**, National Director of Strategic Initiatives for the CMHA and senior member of the board of directors for the Mental Health Commission of Canada.
- ✚ **Graeme Bayliss**, journalist and Digital Media Producer at TVO and former managing editor at The Walrus magazine.
- ✚ **Lisa Walter**, visual artist and educator who has spoken in public many times about mental health and the arts, and has presented at major conferences regarding service users co-teaching with service providers.

Following our panel discussion, audience members contributed their own opinions in a robust and thoughtful conversation on themes including dignity, consent, suffering, spirituality, empathy and equity. There was general consensus among audience members on a number of topics, including:

- the experience of mental health care being substandard compared to physical health care;

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- the importance of the social determinants of mental health, such as companionship;
- the importance of further conversations about the collection and use of data on MAiD in Canada, and in countries with laws that permit assistance with death;
- the critical importance of allowing mental health service users to lead conversations about the future of MAiD;
- the need for further discussion to ensure that all service user perspectives are heard, especially the voices of racialized, immigrant and Indigenous communities, as the debate evolves.

The Empowerment Council received very positive reviews and feedback after the forum !

NEXT STEPS:

The Empowerment Council will continue to try to center the voices of mental health service users as the MAiD legislation rolls out, or as professional committees are struck to discuss MAiD. We strongly feel these discussions **must** include the people most impacted by the legislation. We hope to bring forth a more unified client framework on the implications for people with psychiatric disabilities individually, and for the community as a whole. If you are a mental health client and wish to contribute to this discussion or learn more about client perspectives on MAiD, visit our site at mentalhealthandassisteddeath.wordpress.com There you will find articles and videos provided by mental health service users, as well as a section on relevant legislation and policy that may help with setting the context.

If you have comments on this topic, please email us at lucy.costa@camh.ca