



## ENGAGING MEDIA

Writing a letter to the editor or an opinion editorial (op-ed) can be a useful way to share your opinion and knowledge about an issue that is important to you with the local community and policy makers. They provide an opportunity to reach a much wider audience with your message, sway hearts, change minds and even have the potential to reshape public policy. Be a voice for people who have a disability by demonstrating your opposition to Bill C-7 and the changes to MAiD.

### Suggested Topics

Please consider writing a letter to the editor or op-ed on one of the following topics to support advocacy efforts in opposition to Bill C-7:

- 1. Building an inclusive Canada:** People with disabilities have been fighting tirelessly to be equal and included members of society. Sadly, through its proposed amendments to Bill C-7, government has abandoned their commitment to build an inclusive and accessible Canada. Bill C-7 risks setting Canada's disabilities movement back by decades.
- 2. Meaningful engagement of people with a disability and their families:** For too long the disability community has not been meaningfully engaged or had their voices and concerns taken seriously. Instead of hearing the concerns of the disability community, government is rushing Bill C-7 through the parliamentary process, during a global pandemic, and at a time when people with disabilities are already experiencing significant hardship. Government should not expand access to MAiD.

### Tips for writing an opinion piece

Below are tips and tricks for writing letters to the editor and/or op-eds for your consideration.

- 1. Be straightforward, focus on one specific issue at a time, and state your point at the beginning.** Editors are more likely to publish a piece that states an opinion right away (in the first few lines or in the first paragraph). Tell readers right away why they should care about the issue that you are tackling.
- 2. Back up your arguments with facts.** Every argument that you make in an opinion piece should be illustrated with examples including facts, figures, references, etc., but don't use too many of them. One powerful example is often more compelling than a list of facts.
- 3. Keep it brief and make sure it flows.** Most newspapers have strict criteria on word counts. Aim for a length of *650-750 words for an op-ed* and about *200 words of a letter to the editor*.
- 4. Offer specific recommendations and a call to action.** An opinion piece is not a news story – it is your opinion about how to improve an issue or situation. The best opinion pieces have a clear, persuasive, and well-argued call to action. They should answer the question: What do you want the reader to do, think or feel because of your piece?
- 5. Embrace your personal voice.** Speak authentically and use your experience to help bring to life the opinion you are offering. In doing so, your words will ring truer and the reader will care more about what you are saying.
- 6. Use short sentences and paragraphs.** Look at other opinion pieces that have been published, particularly those from your target outlet, and use the same style, relying on simple declarative sentences. Cut long paragraphs into two or more shorter ones to help make your points clearer.
- 7. Avoid jargon.** If a technical detail is not essential to your argument, don't use it. Simple language does not mean simple thinking. Create a clear and simple message, using everyday language to ensure readers understand your position.

8. **Use the active voice.** An active voice is nearly always better than a passive one. It is easier to read, and it leaves no doubt about where you stand on the issue and what you are recommending. For example, instead of saying “It is hoped that government will not move forward with changes to MAiD” say instead, “I hope government will not move forward...”
9. **Acknowledge the other side.** Don’t just focus on why your opponents are wrong and why you’re right. Opinions that acknowledge their opposition come across as more credible and balanced.
10. **Make your ending a winner.** In addition to having a strong opening paragraph to “hook” readers, it is also important to summarize your argument in a strong final paragraph or statement. Many readers will scan the headline, skim the article, and then read the final paragraph and byline. It is critical to make sure that your key take-away is clear in your ending.