


# BEYOND

Issue 12 - April 2025

The Bereavement Authority of Ontario magazine

An elderly couple, a man with glasses and a woman, are looking at a laptop screen. The man is in the foreground, looking slightly to the right. The woman is behind him, looking at the screen. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

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- Verify with the family or funeral home before spending your money

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### About *Beyond*

Beyond is an all-digital, family focused magazine providing useful and interesting stories about the bereavement care industry and why it matters to you.

It is the magazine of the Bereavement Authority of Ontario, a government delegated administrative authority focused on protecting and informing families.

[www.TheBAO.ca](http://www.TheBAO.ca)

**Subscribe** to *Beyond*. It's free!

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## Our Licensed by the BAO badge is one way to know you are dealing with a professional

*Registrar's Blog*

*By Jim Cassimatis, CEO/Registrar,  
Bereavement Authority of Ontario*



Scams, phishing, identity frauds and privacy breaches make the news only when they involve thousands of names or millions of dollars.

So ubiquitous in modern life, we've come to expect a certain amount of scamming in our lives.

How long has it been since you received a fake text on your mobile phone or recorded message saying the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) has a tax refund for you?

Or that a major Canadian bank requires you confirm your account details by clicking on a link?

Last week, yesterday?

The CRA and major banks in Canada don't send those kinds of texts, of course, but many individuals and untrustworthy companies do just that. It's their business model 24/7/365.

Grieving families also have to contend with copied obituaries asking people to light a candle or buy a gift on behalf of a deceased person – all without the approval or knowledge of the person's family.

Sometimes called ‘obituary piracy’ this issue is one specific to consumers of the bereavement sector we oversee. The sector is comprised of reputable professionals at funeral homes, transfer services, cemeteries, crematoriums and alkaline hydrolysis facilities.

There are a few convenient ways the public and people in grief can verify licensed professionals and business operators in the province.

## Licensed by the BAO web badge



For several years, the Bereavement Authority of Ontario (BAO) has made our ‘Licensed by the BAO’ logo available to licensed funeral homes and other bereavement sector businesses and individuals as a means for you to see, at a glance, that they are professionals required to follow the law. That law is the Funeral, Burial and Cremation Services Act, 2002, which the BAO administers on behalf of the provincial government.

You’ll find the BAO badge on the website of a licensed business, often in the bottom portion of their homepage.

Some have called it a badge of honour, but it has a more practical purpose these days.

That web badge, or logo, tells you and your family that this business is licensed by us, the regulatory body that the government has delegated to oversee the profession to ensure legal compliance for you – the public and the consumer.

Check the homepage of any funeral establishment, for example, and look for the ‘Licensed by the BAO’ badge.

Licensed bereavement professionals are principled people who must – and do – comply with the law, regulations and required reports to the BAO.

We deal with the outliers, who break the law. (We do that through inspections, licence conditions, suspensions and revocations. With 9,600 business and personal licensees in Ontario, it’s rare that we have to do that.)

## Verification

The Licensed by the BAO badge is for licensed professionals and businesses only. If you don't see it on their website, you may contact us before dealing with the funeral home or other bereavement businesses.

There are ways a person could fake or copy and use our web badge, of course. We encourage people to report wrongful use or suspicion of wrongful use to us.

If in doubt about a bereavement business or professional, there are fail-safe ways to verify.

You may check our online BAO [Public Register](#), or contact us directly on our [website](#), by email [Info@TheBAO.ca](mailto:Info@TheBAO.ca) or – the old-school way – by phone at 647-483-2645, toll free at +1 844-493-6356.

If you don't get a person on the phone directly, please leave a message. We return our calls promptly.

Thank you for your vigilance.



# BAO alerts public to persistent issue of unauthorized copying of loved ones' obituaries

There are companies out there that continue to make money by reposting obituaries without the permission, or even the knowledge, of grieving families.

Such companies sell items including candles, flowers, or a tree planting in memory of a deceased person. But the families of the deceased do not receive anything. They aren't even contacted.

That's why – yet again – the Bereavement Authority of Ontario (BAO) is alerting the public about companies that are 'pirating' or copying obituaries to their websites selling items which the public may think is done on behalf of the grieving families.

People generally find out about unauthorized obituary notices – of their fathers, mothers, grandparents and others – when they happen across them online.

A company called Afterlife.co was doing this until 2019 when a federal court judge ordered it to pay **\$20 million as the result of a class action lawsuit.** The company later ended its operations. In recent years, Echovita was formed by one of the directors of Afterlife.co. Echovita appears to be doing a similar thing, and there are others.

### Verify

Before you spend any money on in-memoriam gifts, donations or services, verify the identity of the seller.



Only trust death notices and obituaries posted on BAO-licensed funeral establishments. They will be the funeral homes you know in your community.

To be doubly sure, scroll to the bottom of the funeral establishment's website homepage and you'll see the 'Licensed by the BAO' badge, that only licensed businesses are allowed to display.

Call the funeral home if you like. They will welcome your call, as they despise these practices.

Still not sure? Check out the [BAO's Public Register](#) to see whether a business is licensed by the BAO, or email us at [Licensing@TheBAO.ca](mailto:Licensing@TheBAO.ca).

## About the BAO

The Bereavement Authority of Ontario (BAO) is a government delegated authority and not-for-profit corporation administering provisions of the Funeral, Burial and Cremation Services Act, 2002 (FBCSA). Accountable to the Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery and Procurement and the government, the BAO is responsible for the protection of the public interest. The BAO regulates, ensures compliance with the law, provides resources and services to licensed:

- Funeral establishment operators, directors and preplanners;
- Cemetery, crematorium and alternative disposition operators;
- Transfer service operators; and
- Bereavement sector sales representatives across Ontario.

The BAO is wholly funded by licensee fees (not tax dollars).

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# No need to travel to Rome or London to visit historic church gravesites – we have them right here in Ontario

*By Stuart Lyall Manson*

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**T**hroughout history, special burial spots were accorded to those who made significant impacts on their communities.

In a cemetery context, such a location might be a prominent plot with a large tombstone. In other cases, a burial might be within a major church.

St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, Italy, is probably the best example of the church-burial practice. Dozens of former Popes are buried within this magnificent 17th-century structure.

Another example is Westminster Abbey in London, England, containing the remains of several monarchs of the United Kingdom. The thousand-year-old abbey also contains the remains of the Unknown Warrior,

an anonymous soldier killed in the First World War who represents the nation's sacrifice in that conflict.

If you live in Ontario, you need not travel across the ocean to see examples of historically significant burials within churches. There are many right here at home.

## **St. George's Cathedral, Kingston**

St. George's Cathedral in Kingston is the burial location of Charles Poulett Thompson, also known as Lord Sydenham. When he died in 1841, he was the Governor-General of the Province of Canada – a colonial jurisdiction that included most of what is now central Canada.





*St. George's Cathedral in Kingston  
(Lord Sydenham, 1841)*

Kingston was the temporary capital of the Province of Canada, which required Sydenham's frequent presence in the city. In the autumn of 1841, the Englishman fell awkwardly from his horse. The painful injury that he sustained became badly infected and he died barely a week past his 42nd birthday.

The pages of *The Kingston Herald* of Sept. 21, 1841 – the margins containing thick black lines to express mourning – contained the details of Sydenham's death. It also noted his desire to be buried in Kingston, and the official intention to honour him by placing his mortal remains within the local Anglican church.

A week later, the same newspaper described the funeral, which was attended by 7,000 people including

politicians, soldiers, clergy, and members of the public. Sydenham's body was conveyed to St. George's Church, where he was to be buried, on an artillery carriage.

The military also formed a large part of the funeral proceedings: "On the approach of the corpse each soldier rested on his arms reversed, presenting an effect worthy of the occasion," observed one reporter, who also noted that the military band played a "sublime requiem" by the composer Handel.

Modern visitors to the church, which became a cathedral in 1862, can see the location of Sydenham's burial. In the centre of the main aisle is a brass plaque upon which are written the words "Sydenham 1841."

## St. Mary's Cathedral, Kingston

In the City of Kingston also stands St. Mary's Cathedral, a gothic masterpiece of architecture. Buried in the crypt of this building is Alexander Macdonell, a fascinating character in Scottish and Canadian history. His remains, however, were not always buried here.

Macdonell was born in Scotland and came to Canada in 1804. He was a Roman Catholic priest who soon established himself in St. Raphael's in Upper Canada's easternmost county of Glengarry. (He is not to be confused with another clergyman, also named Alexander Macdonell, who previously founded the Roman Catholic church there in the late 18th century.)

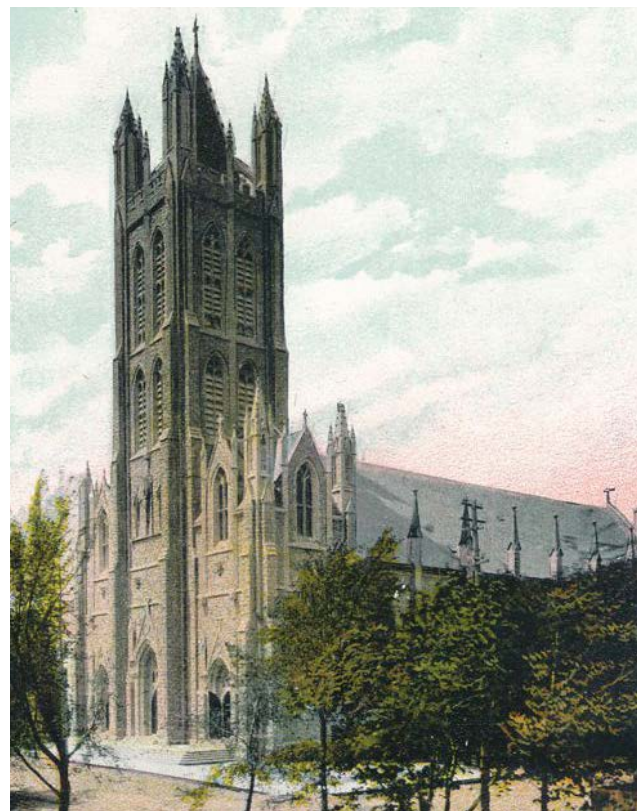
His stone dwelling in St. Raphael's still stands – known as The Bishop's House – which in the last decade was saved from demolition by a devoted volunteer group.

He was famous for his advocacy of military matters. Back in Scotland he was the driving force behind the creation of the Glengarry Fencibles, in which he also served as chaplain. Later, here in Canada he repeated that experience with the Glengarry Light Infantry Fencibles, a new regiment that helped repel numerous American invasions throughout the War of 1812.

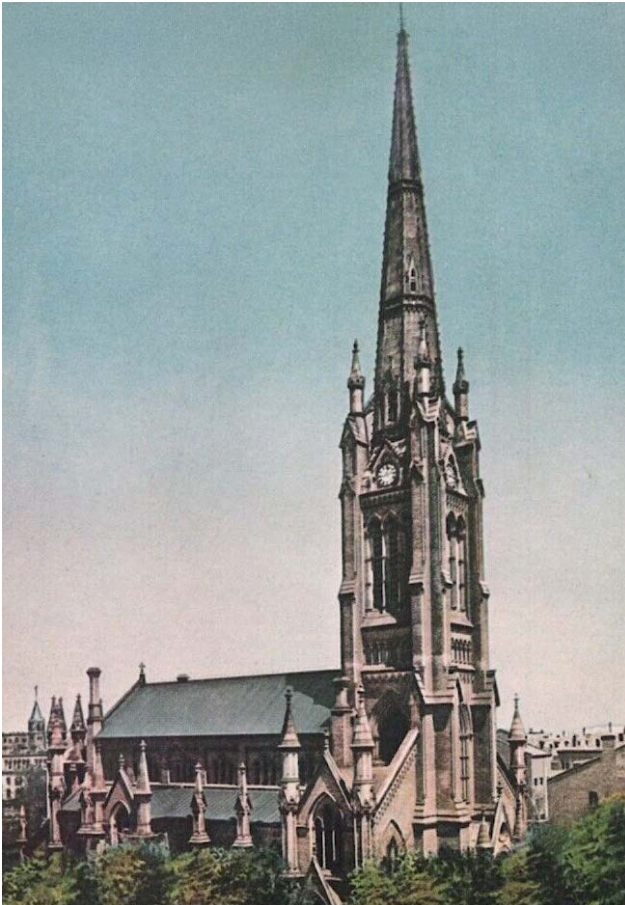
Macdonell eventually became the Roman Catholic Bishop of Upper

Canada. He died in 1840, at 79 years of age, while touring his native Scotland. He was originally buried in St. Margaret's Convent in Edinburgh. After some lobbying by his Canadian bishop successors, his remains were exhumed and reinterred in St. Mary's Cathedral in Kingston in 1861, after first travelling through Macdonell's beloved Glengarry County where they received the deep respects of his old parishioners.

In the crypt of St. Mary's Cathedral is a hefty marble plaque, with fine gold lettering, commemorating Macdonell's final resting place. It also provides his basic biographical details, including the Scottish geographical bookends to his life: His birth in Glen Urquhart in 1760 and his death in Dumfries in 1840.



*St. Mary's Cathedral in Kingston  
(Alexander Macdonell, 1861)*



*St. James' Cathedral in Toronto  
(John Strachan, 1867)*

## **St. James' Cathedral, Toronto**

In downtown Toronto, St. James' Cathedral rises high above the pavement, but it is dwarfed by the skyscrapers of Canada's largest city.

Beneath the ecclesiastical structure is buried John Strachan, one of the earliest Anglican clergymen of Ontario.

Strachan wasn't always an Anglican; he started his career as a Presbyterian minister in Scotland. Like others at the time, he saw more opportunities within the Anglican Church, which had the benefit of being the official church of the British Empire. His decision was a good

one: Strachan eventually became the Anglican Bishop of Upper Canada.

Strachan came to Canada from Scotland in 1799 and soon became prominent for his role as headmaster of a small but mighty boys' school situated in Cornwall. The school educated many of the future and prominent leaders of early Ontario.

His career blossomed thereafter, culminating in the aforementioned position of Anglican Bishop of Upper Canada. He was also heavyweight in the early politics of the colony: Following the War of 1812 he was a long-term appointee to the Executive Council, a Cabinet-like government body that administered the colony.

Strachan died on All Saint's Day (November 1) in 1867. With the whole City of Toronto in mourning, he was buried beneath the chancel of St. James' Cathedral, the cornerstone of which he himself had laid in 1850.

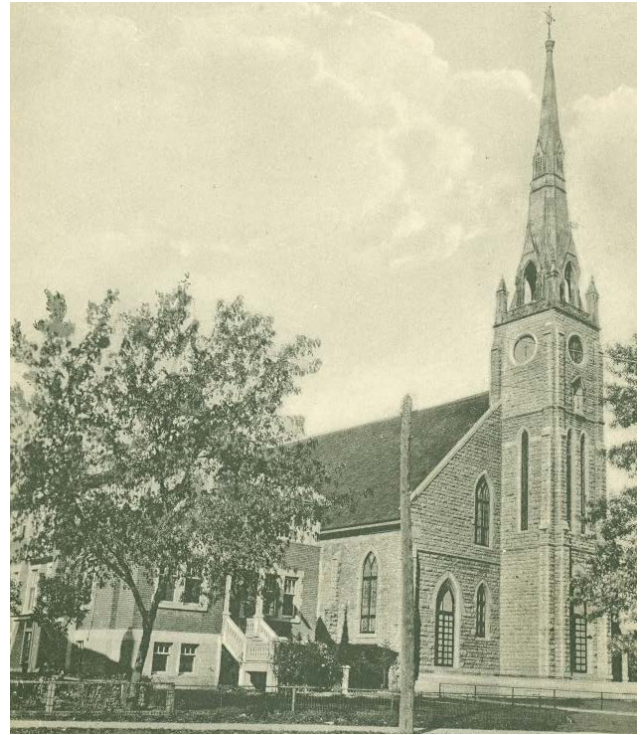
According to a reporter with *The Hamilton Spectator*, the music of one of Handel's compositions played while "the coffin had been gently lowered into the dark and narrow receptacle prepared for it; the clergy gathered round to take a last sight of the casket which contained the mortal part of one who had been among the brightest jewels of England's Church in Canada, the earth rattled upon the coffin-lid, and the body was committed to the earth."

## Nativity Co-Cathedral, Cornwall

Burials within churches were not the exclusive domain of governors or bishops. *Cocathédrale de la Nativité de la Bienheureuse Vierge Marie* (Nativity Co-Cathedral for short), the spiritual centre of Cornwall's French-Canadian population, is the final resting place of its first French priest, Father Paul-Antoine de Saunhac.

While Cornwall started as a largely English-speaking community, its industrial development in the late 19th century attracted many French-Canadian workers from Québec, most of whom were Roman Catholic. Previously there were plenty of Roman Catholics in Cornwall – descendants of Scottish Loyalists or Irish immigrants – but this new linguistic population required a French clergyman, and Father de Saunhac fit the bill.

A native of France, de Saunhac had served the church elsewhere in Canada before being appointed to the position in Cornwall in 1888. It is fitting that Father de Saunhac is buried beneath the church because he was the catalyst behind its construction. Moreover, rather than relying completely on contractors, de Saunhac drew up the plans, hired the stonemasons, and managed the project directly.



*Cocathédrale de la Nativité de la Bienheureuse Vierge Marie*  
(Paul-Antoine de Saunhac, 1904)

Father de Saunhac served the congregation for many years. The Catholic Register announced his death in its April 7, 1904 issue, which summarized his impact on the community in one sentence: “During the fifteen years of his pastorate in Cornwall, his congregation, largely composed of working people, built and finished a magnificent church of cathedral proportions, and under this monument to his work his remains will be interred.”

Indeed, The Cornwall Freeholder newspaper noted that, following a period when de Saunhac's remains laid in state in the local Hotel Dieu Hospital, he was “laid to rest in a specially constructed vault under the

altar.” In 1975 a special tombstone was installed, which detailed his life and contributions. It was around this time that the church was elevated to co-cathedral status.

The location of de Saunhac’s burial, which is out of public view, includes a stone and wooden enclosure delineating the sacred spot separate from its surroundings.

Every person entering the front doors of the church, however, may cast their eyes upon a solid brass plaque bearing Father de Saunhac’s name, which cites his 1904 death and notes that he rests in peace.

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# Who has the authority to make death care decisions?

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This question comes up regularly for families and for licensed bereavement care professionals at funeral homes, transfer services, cemeteries, crematoriums and alternative disposition facilities.

The [Bereavement Authority of Ontario Consumer Information Guide](#) spells out who the decision-maker(s) would be for death care arrangements.

Generally, the person(s) appointed as the Estate Trustee(s) has the legal authority to make such decisions. Ontario has statutes and common law to determine who may act as the legal representative(s) when a person passes away without a valid will.

The ultimate decision maker will be specific to the circumstances of each case but will generally default to a court-appointed Estate Administrator or the deceased's next of kin. Here is a partial list of who may act as the legal representative:

1. Estate trustee, also called an executor or executrix, who is named in the will (or an administrator appointed by the court)
2. Spouse
3. Adult children (age 18 and older)

Laws with respect to the handling of the deceased person's body are different than the use and inheritance of interment rights. If you are the legal representative, the service provider may ask you to show photo identification and proof of your authority, such as a valid will or court order, before making arrangements.

For more information please read pages six and seven of our guide, provided free at licensed businesses and on our [public website](#).



## You may pre-arrange or pre-pay for arrangements – your choice

Making pre-arrangements – with or without pre-payment – can solve issues of who has the authority to determine the services for a deceased family member.

It also reduces added stress on families at a time of grief.

Our [Consumer Information Guide](#) includes a section on this topic, starting at page 17.

## Why plan ahead?

- It saves your family and friends from having to make many difficult decisions during a time of grief.
- It gives you a say in planning your own arrangements.
- It gives you time to assess and compare your options.
- Pre-paying may reduce or eliminate the financial burden on your family.
- You may pre-pay for services, or merely pre-arrange services with a BAO-licensed provider at no upfront cost.

# Ontario

## What to do when someone dies

The Government of Ontario's web section, called 'What to do when someone dies', provides valuable information.

It covers these topics:

1. Who to call first
2. Organ and tissue donation
3. Arrange the funeral
4. Death registration
5. Get a burial permit
6. Get a death certificate
7. Wills and estates
8. Who to notify of death
9. Return an accessible parking permit
10. Cancel a driver's licence and request refund
11. Oversee the deceased's finances

Learn more on each at this [webpage](#).

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# A personal reflection on Medical Assistance in Dying in Canada

- Medical Assistance in Dying (MAID) became legal in Canada in June of 2016. As a result, Canada's Criminal Code exempts doctors and nurse practitioners who provide, or help to provide, MAID.

*By Celia Chandler*

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**O**n Nov. 19, 2018, my husband, Jack, consented to a medically assisted death. Jack's cancer had progressed, diminishing his quality of life; he was grateful he could prevent further suffering and die on his own terms, as he had lived. I am profoundly grateful, too.

Jack and I first discussed Medical Assistance in Dying (MAID) in 2014. One morning our dog awakened in a pool of urine after rapidly declining in the weeks prior. We felt sad as we left the vet, but grateful we'd facilitated the best death we could. How unfair that in [1993, the Supreme Court](#) denied Sue Rodriguez the right to hasten her death, cementing Canada's anti-MAID position. We couldn't give each other what we gave our Boxer.

We were both healthy at the time.

A year later, Canada was poised to hear another Supreme Court decision about euthanasia. Kay Carter, who suffered from a degenerative disease, started her legal fight when she was denied a physician-assisted death in Canada. She ended her life in Switzerland in 2012, but her daughter continued her case, hoping to overturn the Rodriguez ruling.

The February 2015 [Carter](#) decision did just that, calling criminalization of physician-assisted suicide unconstitutional, saying competent adults with grievous and irremediable medical conditions should have the right to ask a doctor to help them die. The court gave government a year to develop legislation.





## Diagnosed

Two months later, Jack, my partner of seven years, was diagnosed with Stage 3 lung cancer. He was treated aggressively with chemo and radiation through the first half of 2016, arresting the cancer's advance.

In June 2016, Parliament set conditions for MAID, and safeguards against abuse. Jack and I didn't dwell on it, but we were pleased some Canadians would have a choice to control the end of their lives.

We cautiously resumed normal life. Through 2017 Jack felt good although his cigarette addiction cast a smokey cloud over our future.

By early 2018, though, Jack's health was failing. In April they discovered the cause — cancer had metastasized to the brain. More radiation shrunk the tumour but by summer, he spoke in a whisper and choked at every meal. Mid-September 2018, scans showed cancer in his spinal fluid: eight to 16 weeks, they said. Death didn't frighten Jack, but a fatal choke

did. MAID moved to the centre of his radar.

If Jack's voice had allowed, he'd have echoed the 2013 pre-death plea of Toronto physician, Donald Low. "I wish [the people who oppose medically assisted death] could live in my body for 24 hours and I think they would change that opinion."

We followed news about [Audrey Parker](#), the 57-year-old who opted for MAID early to avoid losing capacity to consent. Audrey's Amendment removed this requirement three years later but not soon enough for Jack whose capacity was also slipping.

On October 16, at his request, I made a call about MAID. Within hours, MAID provider, Dr. Ed Weiss called me back. Two days later, Ed assessed Jack and deemed him eligible. Two neighbours witnessed Jack signing the MAID application, beginning the 10-day cooling period then required by the law. On October 19, we had a hospital bed delivered and met with the funeral director at home to plan a celebration of Jack's life. Everything happened fast.

## Signed application

Jack had signed a MAID application but still considered more tests and treatment for symptoms. Jack, who'd talked his whole life about euthanasia, wasn't fully resolved.

On October 24, a second doctor confirmed eligibility: Jack had intolerable suffering, a grievous and irremediable condition with death reasonably foreseeable, and, most importantly, the mental capacity to opt for MAID.

As capacity worsened though, I feared the window would close. Every few days I asked if he was ready. He shook his head, not yet. Sometimes he was so muddled he said I could make the decision when it was time.

Back then, MAID was very new. Outside my close circle, I felt on shaky ground talking about it, especially if his slip from reality would deem him ineligible. I continued providing exhausting and stressful at-home care to a man hanging on to independence and hope. Jack finally saw that further testing and treatment were not worth the effort of getting to the hospital. The penny dropped: it was MAID or a frightening cancer death.

***Then he asked me  
if I'd be OK.***

***With great effort, I  
said: "Of course."***

On November 15, Jack awoke and said, "I'm ready." Then he asked me if I'd be OK.

With great effort, I said: "Of course." Death was inevitable. Ending his suffering was better for us both.

I began planning despite worrying whether he'd pass the capacity test.

On MAID day morning, Jack slept on and off in his basement hospital bed surrounded by his smoking room, beer tap, 52-inch flat screen, and toilet. I Netflixed beside him. In his awake moments we cuddled, discussing how lucky we'd been to meet. He sipped a smoothie and ate a little Jell-O — it's what had become a standard day.

## Family gathered

Then family gathered. He said the things to each that I'd hoped he could say but wasn't sure he'd be able to. We toasted life (Jack, double G&T; the rest of us, Prosecco).

At 5:45, with the doctor scheduled to arrive at six, Jack nodded off. I panicked: had the gin made this all for naught?

When Dr. Weiss arrived, Jack awoke thankfully. Ed greeted Jack warmly and respectfully and introduced himself to everyone else. He asked for a moment alone with Jack but recalled us quickly — all systems were go.

I sat on the bed with Jack's legs across mine. Others stood bedside. Ed explained the three meds: one to sedate, one to slow everything down, and one to end his life. It would take 10 minutes.

Grinning, Jack whispered, "So are we doing this thing or what?"


As the first med entered his blood, Jack pulled me close so my right ear was over his heart, his left arm around my back. I could see Jack's right arm as Ed flushed the IV line and changed the meds. It never flinched. Whatever ambivalence he'd had was gone.



I felt Jack's breathing stop, and then his heart. He was no longer suffering.

■ Celia Chandler is a former lawyer turned writer whose articles have appeared in the Toronto Star and on her website, [celiachandler.com](https://celiachandler.com).

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here!



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so your family  
doesn't have to  
do it for you.**

**Then rest easy.**

You'll be glad you did and so will they.  
Read our free [Consumer Information Guide](#)  
describing death care options.

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