



BY EMAIL ONLY

Saint-Sauveur, Québec, July 15, 2022

Honorable Prime Minister Justin Trudeau
Prime Minister of Canada

Honorable Prime Minister,

Further to our letter dated May 4, 2022 (attached), to which we have not had any response from you, we are writing once again regarding the need for healthy housing across Canada for people experiencing the disability of multiple chemical sensitivity (MCS).

In our last letter we wrote about a practical solution to address a growing need, which is healthy housing, and our housing project, ECOASIS. We did not mention that this unmet need is a driving factor for people with MCS who choose medical assistance in dying (MAiD)^{1,2} to get out their misery which is caused by neglect and lack of appropriate housing. Besides Sophia and Denise, we have had many people with this condition contacting our organization to report similar situations and seeking MAiD as a solution to their despair.

¹ <https://www.ctvnews.ca/health/woman-with-chemical-sensitivities-chose-medically-assisted-death-after-failed-bid-to-get-better-housing-1.5860579>

² <https://www.ctvnews.ca/health/woman-with-disabilities-nears-medically-assisted-death-after-futile-bid-for-affordable-housing-1.5882202>

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Allow us to introduce you to David Wilkinson, a 59-year-old man. He has worked hard all his life and has been an exemplary citizen. Life was great until he developed MCS. Disbelief and horror were his first reactions and he did everything to manage his life and keep working, despite not being able to get appropriate medical help, support, care, or proper information. Instinctively he skirted exposures that triggered symptoms that define the disability of MCS, and went onwards in the hope that this ‘monster’ would go away. But of course, a health condition cannot be willed away. A mould exposure and exposures from scented plug-ins in a newly rented apartment tipped him into a level of MCS that was so severe that he became homeless overnight, and has been homeless since.

What does that mean for a man like David, who has always worked hard for a living and has paid his taxes on time? What does homelessness look like for this man with MCS?

He realized he could not live indoors, so he bought a tent and soon realized that it was not easy to live in a chemicalized tent and that exposures from emissions were everywhere: smoke, scent and chemicals from laundry, cleaning, barbeque, pesticides, etc., made him unable to stay safe even outdoors. He was forced to move into his car.

It is dangerous living in a car for so many reasons including security, lack of comfort and a health risk (for instance, what does one do in a heat wave?), while being unable to cook or clean.

At present, after many efforts to find safe housing failed, David has called to apply for MAiD. As he explained to us, ‘there is no hope for me, I cannot find a place to live that does not make me very ill’, ‘at least I will have a dignified death’, ‘I would hate to freeze to death in winter’. He is painfully aware that winter is approaching – and so are we.

We have looked high and low for a place for him to stay, and it is currently impossible to find healthy housing in our chemicalized world, where everyone uses the products on store shelves, and where so many of them are perfumed. We also have to look at the location of the housing: is it close to farming? Heavy traffic? Industry? It becomes a nightmare searching for healthy housing. And if found, it is almost always beyond the affordable price range.

This problem is solvable. We are developing a healthy housing project as mentioned in our letter dated May 4, 2022, and are looking towards your support to make this pilot project a reality for this disability. We would be happy to work together and find other solutions as



well. As it stands, this problem is unsustainable and is leading many people with disabilities to take their own lives. We continue to urge you to act now to address this issue.

We also want to share with you, what this lack of services, resources and care for the MCS community is doing to us (employees, volunteers, board members) at the Association. As a primary (and often only) resource this community feels comfortable contacting for support, our phone lines are extremely busy with people sharing their crises and looking for solutions. Aside from the stress and burden on individuals contacting the call center, calls to crisis call centers³ can result in severe stress and negative outcomes for the responder. For us, there is a steady stream of emergencies, with no resources to provide the caller. Often, we have to be inventive and find solutions from thin air. All this results in a far greater stress than that experienced by responders in a call center. And yet, if we did not provide this service, who will?

This letter to you is a plea from the heart.

We have a healthy housing project (letter attached). Can we please have the political will to see this become a reality? Sophia, Denise, David and everyone else with the disability of MCS who are too tired to speak up while in this situation of homelessness, cannot and should not be ignored. We are ready to work for this community and to care for them. We need your help to make this happen.

We thank you for your attention to our letter and we await your early, positive response.

Sincerely,

Rohini Peris
President and CEO

Michel Gaudet
Vice-President & Executive Director

³ Willems, R.; Drossaert, C.; Vuijk, P.; Bohlmeijer, E. Impact of Crisis Line Volunteering on Mental Wellbeing and the Associated Factors: A Systematic Review. *Int. J. Environ. Res. Public Health* 2020, 17, 1641.
<https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17051641>https



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