

"It's the only way I know how to avoid becoming a nameless statistic." - Disability advocates and organizations call for immediate government action to support life in community

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Toronto, ON—At a press conference on March 15th 2023 39 year old Michal Kaliszan spoke publicly about the shortcomings of Ontario's options for in-home disability support. Michal would best be supported with around the clock attendant care, though he will soon have to risk living at home with just 6 hours of support a day, moving into long term care, or MAiD (medical assistance in dying).

A complex labyrinth of uncoordinated, inflexible, and underfunded support programs from Ontario's Ministry of Health has placed Mr Kaliszan in a critical situation. Despair for his future has led Michal to considering the use of Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD) rather than be exposed to the indignities of institutional care that were laid bare during the pandemic.

"My situation is dire," says Michal Kaliszan, "I find myself facing a healthcare system that is immensely complex and uncoordinated with complicated and conflicting rules that result in artificial silos and limitations."

Michal was diagnosed with Spinal Muscular Atrophy shortly after his birth. This has resulted in significant physical limitations. He has only limited use of fingers that enables him to navigate his electric wheelchair and his computer. Michal relies on direct funding for attendant care and support. His current support is not enough to sustain a good quality of life in his home and community, and the Ministry of Health's only offered solution is institutionalization. Michal has been able to survive since the recent passing of his mother, his primary caregiver, in October 2022 with the help of his uncle from Poland who came to assist on a six month visa. That visa is due to expire in a few weeks, leaving Michal without options.

On March 15, Seniors for Social Action Ontario and the Disability Justice Network of Ontario called on the Ontario Ministry of Health to work with Michal to coordinate a care plan that allows him autonomy, independence, and his *Charter* right to life, liberty and security of the person.

"Michal has two weeks. We believe that we have the capacity, the funding and creativity to create systems where Michal can live in community in safety. There is no dollar amount for the autonomy, dignity and freedom we are all promised and deserve. Let Michal live, be cherished and celebrated." - **Megan Linton, Disability Justice Network of Ontario**

"Since the passing of his mother last October Mr Kaliszan's pleas for additional support and assistance has been neglected and ignored. The effects of ableism ring loud and clear. Forcing people such as Michal in institutions is the priority of this government and that is reprehensible. All of us are at risk of such treatment". - **Doug Cartan, Seniors for Social Action Ontario**

**Call to action - Mr. Kaliszan and disability rights organizations are calling on the provincial government to rectify the situation caused by their funding and care structure. Mr. Kaliszan, and all people with disabilities in Ontario, have a right to live their lives with dignity in community.**

"I am dismayed at the harm brought upon me and my mother by a system that could have chosen to help but instead chose inaction and adherence to the status quo."

