



The Catholic Women's League of Canada
ALBERTA MACKENZIE PROVINCIAL COUNCIL

ONE HEART
VOICE
MISSION

Monday, June 20, 2016

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau,
Prime Minister of Canada
(sent electronically to website)

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau,

I am writing to you as the president of The Alberta Mackenzie Council of the Catholic Women's League of Canada. I have been instructed by our membership of almost 10,000 women to urge the Federal Government to develop and promote hospice and palliative care strategies. These strategies would give access to all Canadians to quality, comprehensive and integrated palliative and hospice services, regardless of where one lives in our nation.

There is a pressing need for all Canadians to have greater accessibility to palliative care. It has become an urgent priority in the face of the impending legislation for euthanasia/assisted suicide in Canada. Palliative and hospice care allows individuals who are facing death not to be burdened by pain and suffering but to receive the necessary support that respects their human dignity both physically and spiritually rather than choosing physician-assisted death as a desperate last resort.

The Canadian Hospice Palliative Care Association notes "Only 16% to 30% of Canadians who die currently have access to or receive hospice palliative and end-of-life care services – depending on where they live in Canada. Even fewer receive grief and bereavement services." Also, "residential hospice palliative care programs are still at least 50% funded by charitable donations, and families must bear part of the cost of dying at home, in long-term care – almost anywhere outside a hospital." (Fact Sheet: Hospice Palliative Care in Canada <http://goo.gl/Oy9tI8>)

Physicians who provide palliative and hospice care, and who choose not to end their patients' lives, must be respected. There must be no coercion of patients or physicians to participate in physician assisted death. This also means that physicians who are opposed to ending the lives of their patients with physician-assisted death must not be required to facilitate, either by referral or other forms of participation, in the process. "Our worth as a society is measured by the support we give to the vulnerable," said Larry Worthen, Executive Director, Canadian Medical and Dental Society. "We need increased access to palliative care, chronic disease and mental health services to help individuals who are suffering across the country." (Coalition for HealthCARE and Conscience <http://goo.gl/wFrDym>)

Hospice palliative care is an approach that improves the quality of life of patients and their families facing the problems associated with life-threatening illness, through the prevention and relief of suffering by means of early identification and assessment and treatment of pain and other problems, physical, psychosocial and spiritual. Hospice palliative care provides relief from pain and other distressing symptoms, affirms life, regards dying as a normal process, and intends neither to hasten nor postpone death. Hospice palliative care is not specifically mentioned in the Canada Health Act; and is not accessible and available to all Canadians.

We, the members of the Alberta Mackenzie Provincial Council of the Catholic Women's League of Canada in 69th Annual Convention assembled, request the House of Commons in Parliament assembled to specifically identify hospice palliative care as a defined medical service covered under the Canada Health Act so that provincial and territorial governments will be entitled to funds under the Canada Health Transfer system to be used to provide accessible and available hospice palliative care for all residents of Canada in their respective provinces and territories.”

I await your response.

For God and Canada,

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