



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

**ONE** HEART  
VOICE  
MISSION

Oct.11, 2015

External Panel on Options for a Legislative Response to Carter v. Canada  
Dr. Harvey Max Chochinov, Chair  
Professor Catherine Frazee  
Professor Benoît Pelletier

RE: – **Consultations on Legislation for Assisted Dying**

Dear Dr. Chochinov, Prof. Frazee and Prof Pelletier,

I greet you on behalf of close to 10,000 members of the Catholic Women's League of Canada in the province of Alberta and the Northwest Territories. Thank you for receiving input on "Legislation for Assisted Dying" in Canada. We have two main concerns – that of assisting people to die and the other regarding the protection of physicians' and other health care worker's freedom of conscience.

We believe that we, in Canada, need to continue to respect human life and protect it at all stages from conception at fertilization to natural death, especially in a society that more and more sees everything, and everybody as a commodity. Our country has a tradition of caring for the sick and vulnerable. The decision to allow Physician Assisted Dying as a constitutional "right" to suicide is wrong, the taking of any innocent life is wrong. If this "right" is allowed the lives of the vulnerable, the depressed, those with physical or mental illness, and those with disabilities are put at risk, as described in a recent statement by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCB):

*"In the face of the terrible suffering that can be caused by illnesses or depression, a truly human response should be to care, not to kill. Likewise, the response to the anguish and fear people can experience at the end of their lives is to be present to them, offering palliative care, not intentionally to cause their death. The need for palliative care should be one of the most pressing preoccupations of our country and its institutions. This is where the energies and resources of our elected leaders should be directed. This is why [I] advocate making high-quality palliative care, long-term care, and home care easily accessible to all Canadians.<sup>1</sup>*

Secondly, to mandate physicians and health care workers to provide the services, or at the least a referral for assisted dying if requested, goes against the Canadian Constitutional Fundamental Freedom; the Freedom of Conscience and Religion. Again from the same statement by the CCCB:

*“We must at all cost uphold and protect the conscience rights of the men and women who work as caregivers. Requiring a physician to kill a patient is always unacceptable. It is an affront to the conscience and vocation of the health-care provider to require him or her to collaborate in the intentional putting to death of a patient, even by referring the person to a colleague. The respect we owe our physicians in this regard must be extended to all who are engaged in health care and work in our society's institutions.”<sup>1</sup>*

We must respect the dignity of all human beings in Canada. We must continue to build a society that values compassion and protects the right of those who are most defenseless.

I appreciate the opportunity to share my values and concerns on the issue of legislation for assisted dying.

Sincerely,

Cathy B.

President,

Alberta Mackenzie Provincial Council

The Catholic Women’s League of Canada

*1. Sept. 18, 2015 Statement on Assisted Suicide issued by the Plenary Assembly of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops*