



CANADIAN COUNCIL of CHRISTIAN CHARITIES
ADVANCING MINISTRY TOGETHER

May 2, 2016

Via email to just@parl.gc.ca

Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights Parliament of Canada

Dear Sirs/Madams:

End of life issues involve moral choices. There are a number of religious charitable organizations, such as palliative care hospitals, who refuse, based on deeply held moral and religious reasons, to be involved or associated with physician assisted dying. Other religious organizations are directly involved in providing counselling services for those who suffer from depression and are suicidal. Our country has long respected religious conscience that refuses to intentionally take the life of another human being. For example, conscripted conscientious objectors, who refused to bear arms, were granted exemptions in the last world war.

Recently, in the *Loyola High School*¹ case, the Supreme Court of Canada recognized the communal aspects of religious freedom. While the majority did not specifically decide whether religious corporations had religious freedom, Chief Justice McLachlin and Justice Moldaver (both speaking for the minority opinion) would have unequivocally accepted the Charter's religious freedom protection of religious corporations. They noted:

The individual and collective aspects of freedom of religion are indissolubly intertwined. The freedom of religion of individuals cannot flourish without freedom of religion for the organizations through which those individuals express their religious practices and through which they transmit their faith.²

Government's fiscal support of religious charities does not give government license to violate their religious scruples. Government funding stems from the government acting in the public interest. It has no right to violate the conscience of religious corporations. We take the position that no religious organization ought to be forced to take the life of

¹ *Loyola High School v. Quebec (Attorney General)*, 2015 SCC 12, [2015] 1 S.C.R. 613

² At paragraph 94.



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another human being no matter how moral or right, in the opinion of government, it may seem to be.

We suggest the Canadian public would be best served with a policy that respects and encourages religious institutions to be true to their convictions on the matter of physician assisted suicide as they compassionately serve the needs of their patients and clientele. The conscience is the very pith and substance that sustains these instruments of mercy and worthy of respect.

Therefore, we support the recommendation made by Christian Legal Fellowship that calls for an amendment to the *Income Tax Act* that would protect the charitable status of registered charities that refuse to provide euthanasia or assisted suicide on their premises; or who engage in suicide prevention initiatives and/or publicly express views that suicide is harmful, ought to be prevented, and/or that the participation by one individual in the death of another is intrinsically morally and legally wrong.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission.

Yours truly,

Rev. John Pellowe, MBA DMin
Chief Executive Officer