



**Pastoral Statement for the Catholics of Canada
on the report issued by the Special Joint Committee of the Government of Canada,
entitled *Medical Assistance in Dying: A Patient-Centred Approach***

Dear brothers and sisters,

The Special Joint Committee of the Government of Canada on “Physician-Assisted Dying” this past February 25 released its report, *Medical Assistance in Dying: A Patient-Centred Approach*. The report, in part, recommends:

- That assisted suicide be available to those with psychiatric conditions (Recommendation 3)
- That psychological suffering be among the criteria making an individual eligible for assisted suicide (Recommendation 4)
- That within approximately three years assisted suicide be available for adolescents and possibly also children who can be considered “mature minors” (Recommendation 6)
- That all health-care practitioners be obliged at the minimum to provide an “effective referral” for clients seeking assisted suicide (Recommendation 10)
- That all publicly funded health-care institutions in Canada provide assisted suicide (Recommendation 11)

In addition, the report fails to show how palliative care and home care can provide true options for those tempted by suicide, nor does it call for a national plan to prevent suicides. Suicide rates are five to seven times higher for First Nations youth in Canada than for non-Aboriginal youth, while suicide rates among Inuit youth are among the highest in the world, at 11 times the national Canadian average.

The teaching of the Catholic Church and the stance of the Catholic Bishops of Canada are clear. Suicide is not part of health care. Killing the mentally and physically ill, whether young or aged, is contrary to caring for and loving one’s brother and sister. The dignity of the human person and the flourishing of the human community demand: 1) protection and respect for each human life from conception to natural death, and 2) freedom of conscience and religion for each person as well as each institution. Social wellbeing, personal security and the common good – together with religious faith – involve safeguarding, not endangering, the lives of those suffer.

The above recommendations and the thrust of the report completely fail to be “patient-centred” or to assist and support the dying and the vulnerable. To borrow from the words of Pope Francis, the report’s recommendations are the approach of a “throw-away” society. They do not reveal the face of God’s mercy.

Together with my brother Bishops, both Catholic and Orthodox, as well as with leaders from the Evangelical Protestant, Jewish and Muslim faith communities, and many of other faiths or of no faith, I urge you to inform your elected officials why euthanasia, assisted suicide and the above recommendations are completely unacceptable.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Douglas Crosby". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross at the beginning.

(Most Rev.) Douglas Crosby, OMI
Bishop of Hamilton
President of the Canadian Conference
of Catholic Bishops

February 26, 2016