



# Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

600-177 Lombard Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3B 0W5, Canada

August 7, 2019

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau  
Prime Minister of Canada  
[pm@pm.gc.ca](mailto:pm@pm.gc.ca)

re: Access to Mental Health Care Services

Dear Prime Minister:

On behalf of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC), I am writing to express support for just and universal access for all to dignified, quality mental health care services. I encourage you and your government to address inequities of access in the health care system that prevent some vulnerable people from accessing timely and quality services.

Over the last several years, our church has become increasingly aware of the need for additional resources for mental health care services.

We have been reflecting on what it means to journey faithfully with those who are dying, including how to respect people's choices regarding medical assistance in dying (MAID). We are aware that an emerging issue in our ethical and legislative discussions in Canada is whether or not people suffering from mental illness will have access to MAID. Regardless of how legislation develops, the pain of mental health is real and providing quality services is respectful and healthy for individuals, families, communities and society. The ELCIC affirms that all health and medical decisions should be made with the faithful support of a caring community, including personal relationships, professionals, institutions and providers of spiritual care. The lack of dignified, quality mental health care services compromises this decision making process.

We have been reflecting on how to uphold the dignity of people of varied sexual orientations, gender identities and gender expressions. In this process, we have become aware that youth who identify as LGBTQ2SIA+ persons experience bullying and mental health issues with above average frequency. Access to mental health services for young people supports both healing for individual persons and the building of safer, more equitable neighbourhoods.

Along with the Anglican Church of Canada, we have committed to learning about the issues that contribute to poverty, homelessness, and substandard housing and to raise awareness within our communities of the challenges to providing adequate housing. We are aware that many people who experience homelessness are also suffering from mental illnesses. Access to dignified, quality mental health care services is one element of addressing the root causes of inadequate housing.

In July 2019, the ELCIC met in convention. Delegates committed our members to offering safe space for conversation; to empowering members for spiritual care by developing skills for visiting, listening, prayer and self-awareness; and to being a compassionate church following a compassionate God.

Delegates also asked me to write to you, communicating our church's support for access for all to dignified, quality mental health care services; and to encourage you and your government to address inequities of access in the health care system that prevent some vulnerable people from accessing timely and quality services.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Susan C. Johnson", preceded by a small cross symbol.

The Rev. Susan C. Johnson  
National Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

cc: Hon. Andrew Scheer, Leader of the Official Opposition  
Hon. Jagmeet Singh, Leader of the NDP  
Hon. Elizabeth May, Leader of the Green Party  
Yves-François Blanchet, Leader of the Bloc Québécois  
Hon. Maxime Bernier, Leader of the People's Party of Canada  
National Church Council, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada