



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

re: Access to Palliative Care

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 palliative care. I encourage you and your government to address inequities in the health care system that prevent some dying people from accessing palliative care.

Over the last four years, our church has been reflecting on what it means to journey faithfully with those who are dying. In the process, we have come to recognize life is a sacred journey: both being born and dying are truly sacred times. The physical, psychosocial and spiritual care we provide for those who are dying, and their families, is an essential element in upholding dignity and equality. We affirm that everyone has the human right to assistance in dying. We affirm the vital importance of faithful end of life care, including good palliative care and diligent support for those who are making difficult decisions.

Over the last four years, our church has learned that serious inequities exist in accessing specialized palliative care. For example, there are differences between urban and rural settings, there are variations in care standards between provinces and there are ongoing challenges to providing health care for more remote Indigenous communities. The reality is these services are not available everywhere across the country and in many cases the demands for this care can exceed the resources available.

The World Health Organization definition of palliative care is:

Palliative care is an approach that improves the quality of life of patients and their families facing the problem associated with life-threatening illness, through the prevention and relief of suffering by means of early identification and impeccable

assessment and treatment of pain and other problems, physical, psychosocial and spiritual.

We recognize that there is good basic palliative care that happens all the time as part of “regular” medical care. However, the time has come to address the inequities in access to specialized palliative care.

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 offering the faithful support of caring community as we journey with those who are dying.

Delegates also asked me to write to you, communicating our church’s support for access for all to dignified, quality palliative care, and encouraging you and your government to address inequities of access in the health care system.

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