



March 15, 2024

The Honourable Mark Holland  
Minister of Health  
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The Honourable Arif Virani  
Minister of Justice  
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The Honourable Ya'ara Saks  
Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health  
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Dear Ministers:

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 the Government of Canada to address inequities of access in the health care system that prevent some vulnerable people from accessing timely and quality services.

Recently, the Government of Canada announced that it is seeking [another pause on medical assistance in dying \(MAID\)](#), while indicating that the system isn't ready. The need for additional resources for mental health care services is not a new challenge, and it is a need that goes beyond those who are considering MAID.

In 2019, the ELCIC committed to [journeying faithfully with those who are dying](#), including showing respect for people's choices regarding medical assistance in dying (MAID). At that time, we recognized that whether people suffering from mental illness will have access to MAID would be an emerging issue in Canada's ethical and legislative discussions. And we recognized that 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 access to dignified, quality mental health care services compromises this decision making process for all healthcare, for overall well-being, and for discernment when considering MAID.

Pausing the expansion of MAID may be prudent, or even wise. However, “the system not being ready” points to a larger issue of lack of access to mental health care services that affects many vulnerable people. We are aware that youth who identify as LGBTQ2SIA+ persons experience bullying and mental health issues with above average frequency. We are aware that many people who experience homelessness or lack of adequate housing are also suffering from mental illnesses. Access to mental health services supports both healing for individual persons and the building of safer, more equitable neighbourhoods.

I urge you and the Government of Canada to increase your efforts to provide access for all to dignified, quality mental health care services.

Yours in Christ,



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

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