



10 March 2025

The Hon. Mark Holland, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Health
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0A6
mark.holland@parl.gc.ca
hccminister.ministresc@hc-sc.gc.ca

Dear Minister,

I am writing on behalf of the Permanent Council of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCB) in response to the Government of Canada's "[national conversation](#)" on expanding Medical Assistance in Dying ("MAiD") to introduce advance requests. The CCCB firmly opposes euthanasia and assisted suicide. They are an egregious violation of the inherent dignity and value of human life. The Catholic Church in Canada is deeply concerned by the rapid expansion of euthanasia, which has led our country to be the world's fastest-growing assisted dying jurisdiction and ranked second globally for "MAiD" deaths as a percentage of total deaths.¹ **We strongly urge and implore the federal government to halt any further expansion of "MAiD" and focus instead on advancing compassionate, life-affirming palliative care.**

Inadequacies with the survey:

The federal government's decision to engage citizens on questions about "MAiD" through an online consultation was in itself positive; regrettably, this consultation was limiting because it presumed agreement regarding points on which the Catholic Church and others disagree. The survey asked respondents to rank the importance of "safeguards" or "conditions" if advance requests were to be permitted for "MAiD". Yet, no conditions surrounding the deliberate ending of a human life can be deemed "safe," for this contradicts any reasonable understanding of protection from harm. Furthermore, since many questions in the survey implied agreement with advance requests, it automatically excluded from participation anyone who recognizes the inviolable sanctity of all human life, the moral necessity of informed consent, and the requirement to offer alternative forms of treatment when these are applicable.

Failure of "safeguards":

While "MAiD" was purportedly introduced for "rare occasions,"² and for those with terminal illnesses, it has become increasingly normalized.³ The so-called "safeguards" that were put in place have quickly

¹ "Policy Brief: The Risks of Advance Requests for Medical Assistance in Dying ("MAiD')." 2024. Cardus. 12 December 2024. [https://www.cardus.ca/research/health/policy-brief/policy-brief-the-risks-of-advance-requests-for-medical-assistance-in-dying-"MAiD"/](https://www.cardus.ca/research/health/policy-brief/policy-brief-the-risks-of-advance-requests-for-medical-assistance-in-dying-).

² "CMA Examining Supreme Court Ruling Striking down Ban on Doctor-Assisted." 2015. Longwoods.com. 6 February 2015. <https://www.longwoods.com/newsdetail/4968>.

³ "From Exceptional to Routine." 2025. Cardus. 23 January 2025. <https://www.cardus.ca/research/health/reports/from-exceptional-to-routine/#>.

eroded and ultimately proven to be ineffective. Citing documents shared by Ontario's Office of the Chief Coroner, a recent research article identified 428 euthanasia deaths in Ontario between 2018 and 2023, which were non-compliant according to regulatory standards.⁴ Vulnerable Canadians are seeking "MAiD" due to inadequate pain management, lack of social support, loneliness, or fear of being a burden.⁵ The poor and disabled are particularly at risk, making up a significant portion of those receiving (Track 2) "MAiD." Moreover, if the eligibility criteria are expanded in order to allow access to "MAiD" by those for whom mental illness is the sole underlying condition – a highly contested proposal⁶ – the ability to guarantee "safeguards" will become even more challenging.⁷ Even healthcare providers involved in assessing or administering "MAiD" are expressing their concerns about euthanasia deaths stemming from insufficient social, mental health, and healthcare support.⁸

The above highlights the irony of the term "safeguards": there is indeed nothing safe about euthanasia and assisted suicide; rather, these practices undermine the protection of our shared humanity and disproportionately affect vulnerable populations.

The problem of advance requests:

Advance requests for euthanasia raise several serious concerns:

- They set a dangerous precedent by allowing individuals to be euthanized without their immediate consent and enabling third parties to make subjective decisions about when they should die.
- They place already vulnerable individuals, particularly those with dementia, at even greater risk. At early stages of the disease, individuals may not fully understand the complexities of future illness and, therefore, may be unable to make informed decisions.
- They potentially force individuals to evaluate their future quality of life prematurely. No one can predict with certainty how they may feel at any point in the future. Recent reports indicate that some individuals who requested "MAiD" later changed their minds and withdrew their requests.⁹

Improving the quality of and access to palliative care:

Instead of expanding euthanasia and assisted suicide, Canada must begin to prioritize truly compassionate alternatives that affirm the value of human life, such as by improving access to quality palliative care, mental health support, and social services. At a recent [International Interfaith](#)

⁴ "A Pattern of Non-Compliance." 2024. The New Atlantis. 20 November 2024.

[https://www.thenewatlantis.com/publications/compliance-problems-"MAiD"-canada-leaked-documents](https://www.thenewatlantis.com/publications/compliance-problems-).

⁵ "Fifth Annual Report on Medical Assistance in Dying in Canada 2023." 2024. Health Canada. December 2024.

<https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/hc-sc/documents/services/publications/health-system-services/annual-report-medical-assistance-dying-2023/annual-report-medical-assistance-dying-2023.pdf>

⁶ Kirkup, Kristy. 2024. "Majority of Provinces, Territories Ask for Indefinite Pause to "MAiD" for Individuals with Mental Illness." The Globe and Mail. 30 January 2024. [https://www.theglobeandmail.com/politics/article-"MAiD"-mental-illness-canada-provinces/](https://www.theglobeandmail.com/politics/article-).

⁷ cf. "Open letter from the Permanent Council to the Government of Canada on Permitting Persons Living with Mental Illness to Access Euthanasia/Assisted Suicide." 9 May 2023. [https://www.cccb.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/2023-05-05-Open-letter-to-Government-"MAiD"-final.pdf](https://www.cccb.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/2023-05-05-Open-letter-to-Government-)

⁸ "Some health care workers in Canada grappling with patients requesting euthanasia." 2024. PBS. 16 October 2024. <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/some-health-care-workers-in-canada-grappling-with-patients-requesting-euthanasia>

⁹ "Fifth Annual Report on Medical Assistance in Dying in Canada 2023." 2024. Health Canada. December 2024.

<https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/hc-sc/documents/services/publications/health-system-services/annual-report-medical-assistance-dying-2023/annual-report-medical-assistance-dying-2023.pdf>

[Symposium on Palliative Care](#), clinical healthcare participants strongly advocated that, in the Canadian context, it would be imperative to implement the 67th World Health Assembly (2014)'s call for WHO member states to “strengthen palliative care as a component of comprehensive care throughout the life course” by establishing palliative care as an essential medical service under the Canada Health Act.¹⁰ The CCCB's *Horizons of Hope*, which educates people on the benefits of palliative care, could be utilized as a key contribution to such an effort.¹¹

I want to assure you that we remain open to further dialogue with the government on this crucial issue. The CCCB will continue to support and advocate for compassionate, life-affirming care for all.

Sincerely,



+William T. McGrattan
Bishop of Calgary
President of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops

cc. The Right Hon. Justin Trudeau, P.C., M.P., Prime Minister of Canada
The Hon. Arif Virani, P.C., M.P., Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada
The Hon. Pierre Poilievre, P.C., M.P., Leader of the Conservative Party of Canada;
Leader of the Official Opposition
Mr. Jagmeet Singh, M.P., Leader of the New Democratic Party
Mr. Yves-François Blanchet, M.P., Leader of the Bloc Québécois
Ms. Elizabeth May, O.C., M.P., Leader of the Green Party

¹⁰ World Health Assembly. 2014. “Strengthening of Palliative Care as a Component of Comprehensive Care Throughout the Life Course.” 24 May 2014. <https://iris.who.int/handle/10665/162863>

¹¹ “Horizons of Hope: A Toolkit for Catholic Parishes on Palliative Care.” 2021. <https://www.cccb.ca/faith-moral-issues/suffering-and-end-of-life/horizons-of-hope-a-toolkit-for-catholic-parishes-on-palliative-care/>