



## Catholic Diocese of Victoria Office of the Bishop

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February 24, 2016

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

On February 3, Cardinal Thomas Collins appeared before a joint parliamentary committee examining the question left open by the Supreme Court of Canada regarding physician-assisted suicide/euthanasia to present the position of the Catholic Church with regard to two specific issues: first, protecting ‘conscience rights’ for health care workers; and second, seeking a national strategy for palliative care and support services for the vulnerable.

One of the pillars on which our Diocese is founded is *health care*. We have a long history of taking care of people, providing loving assistance for the sick, and compassion and comfort for those who are dying; we are committed to promoting high quality palliative care.

It is therefore critical that any assisted suicide/euthanasia legislation protect the conscience rights of individuals and institutions. Doctors, nurses, care aids and any other health care workers must be free to refuse to participate in physician-assisted suicide/euthanasia, without prejudice. Hospitals such as St. Joseph’s General Hospital in Comox and Mount St. Mary Hospital in Victoria, which must follow the Catholic Health Alliance of Canada’s *Health Ethics Guide*, and other institutions who choose not to participate in euthanasia or assisted suicide, must be guaranteed continued participation in our provincial health care system without penalty, prejudice or reduction in support.

You can help us send a strong, cohesive message to Parliament by ***signing a postcard asking the government to safeguard conscience rights for health care workers and institutions***. In your pews is a postcard addressed to the Federal Minister of Justice, asking her to protect the conscience rights of individuals and institutions in any assisted suicide/euthanasia legislation. Please sign the card and return it to the ushers. Your parish will mail these cards on your behalf.

Our loved ones, and those who value the right to freedom of conscience, and our Lord, are counting on you. I thank you for helping us speak in unity to ensure that conscience rights of our health care workers and institutions are protected.

In Communion,

Most Reverend Gary Gordon  
Bishop of Victoria

“The strong message from the Supreme Court is unmistakable: some lives are just not worth living. We passionately disagree.”  
~ Cardinal Thomas Collins