**Dear Colleagues:**

I am writing today about a very important issue on behalf of the Study Commission on Doctrine (SCOD).  During the last several months, SCOD has concerned itself with formulating a response from Free Methodists to the recent Supreme Court ruling on physician-assisted suicide.  We want our response to be respectful and consistent with the Free Methodist’s position on the sanctity of life and the dignity and worth of all persons.  Taking our cues from the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC), it was decided to delay sending this response until after the election was over.

If possible, I would appreciate it if you could arrange for me to speak to your congregation by downloading at <https://vimeo.com/144797720> .

The password is **PAS**

**Background**

On February 6, 2015, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that Canada’s long-standing law against physician-assisted suicide (euthanasia) was unconstitutional in cases where a competent adult has clearly consented to the termination of life, and has a “grievous medical condition that causes them enduring, intolerable suffering.”  The Supreme Court has given Parliament twelve months to enact new legislation consistent with this ruling.

**What’s at Stake?**

Our concern is that lifting the ban on physician assisted suicide undermines the worth and dignity of all people as made in the Image of God, regardless of one’s age, wellness, abilities or physical/mental capacity.   We are further concerned that this ruling may open the way to situations where people consent to physician assisted suicide because of depression, cognitive impairment or outside manipulation, where they otherwise wouldn’t.  We also wish to protect doctors from situations where they may be required to assist in ending someone’s life, or making a referral to that effect, against their own conscience.

We are calling on parliament to draft this legislation with the most stringent safeguards as possible, to ensure that physician assisted deaths are a rare exception, rather than a commonly available option for terminal illness.  We are also urging them to make effective palliative care and end-of-life pain-management a primary concern.

**The Response we are hoping for:**

**Prayer:**

         for our leaders in government who have the responsibility of law-making.

         for the Supreme Court of Canada who have made this ruling.  Pray

         for doctors who are called upon to treat people suffering grievous illness or chronic pain.

         for hospice workers, chaplains, palliative care nurses and all those who care for the sick and the dying.

         for those whose suffering or illness is so profound that they see no other hope than to request help in ending their life.  Pray God’s mercy, wisdom and guidance for them.

**Letters**

         **A letter from your Official Board:** to the Prime Minister, the Minister of Justice and the local Member of Parliament to voice a Free Methodist perspective on this issue.

         **Letters from individuals:** to the Prime Minister, the Minister of Justice and the local Member of Parliament.

The attached letter is SCOD's response.  On page 2, there is guidance for how to properly prepare letters.

**Online Endorsements of the Joint Statement made by the EFC and the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops:** we would also like to encourage pastors and church leaders to urge people to read and sign the joint statement on euthanasia and assisted suicide online.  The statement (and instructions for how to add your signature to the statement) is available at the following link <http://www.euthanasiadeclaration.ca/declaration/> You will see that I have signed on behalf of the Free Methodist Church in Canada.

Dear **See below for proper letter writing protocol**

In recent months, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that Canada’s long-standing prohibition against physician-assisted suicide is unconstitutional in cases where “a competent adult person (1) has clearly consented to the termination of life; and (2) has a grievous and irremediable medical condition that causes enduring suffering that is intolerable to the individual.” As we understand it, the Supreme Court has given Parliament twelve months to respond by enacting legislation consistent with the constitutional parameters set out in its ruling.

We, the undersigned, are writing to you on behalf of [*your church’s name*], a congregation of the Free Methodist Church in Canada, to express our commitment to the fundamental sanctity of human life and the consequent worth of all persons. We reject the idea that some lives are not worth living or that chronic disease or diminished physical capacity somehow diminishes the value of a life. While we understand the Supreme Court’s position that an absolute prohibition of physician assistance to hasten death is unjust, we are extremely concerned that the legalization of physician-assisted suicide could serve to undermine a commitment to the sanctity of human life and call into question the dignity and worth of all persons. We are especially concerned that lifting the prohibition against physician-assisted suicide may present a serious risk for those in our society that are already vulnerable, such as the elderly or those whose mental capacities have been compromised.

We therefore respectfully urge you, as our elected representative, to make every effort to see that Parliament prepares a legislative response to this Supreme Court ruling which duly emphasizes the sanctity of human life and the worth of all persons. In particular, we call on the government to draft legislation that: 1) includes stringent safeguards to ensure that the practice of physician-assisted suicide is an exceptional rather than a commonly available option for terminal illness; 2) defines terms like “competence,” “consent” and “intolerability” with such clarity and specificity that it prevents situations where people may consent to physician-assisted suicide because of depression, cognitive impairment, or outside coercion or manipulation; and 3) protects physicians from situations where they would be compelled against their conscience either to assist in ending someone’s life or to refer their patients to a doctor willing to do so.

We further call on the government to do all it can to ensure that the Canadian health care system is providing the best possible palliative care and fully-adequate pain management to all who require it. As a Christian denomination ministering in Canada for over 130 years, the Free Methodist Church has a long history of providing care, compassion, and support for the suffering and the dying. Our parish ministers, chaplains and dedicated lay-people have walked with people through chronic disease, disability and terminal illness, consistently bearing witness to our conviction that human life can have dignity and purpose, even in the face of pain and suffering. Our sincere belief is that the value and worth of human life rests primarily in our relationship with a God whose love sustains us throughout life, even to the end.

On behalf of the members of our Free Methodist congregation, we thank you for your dedication in serving the interests and needs of your constituency. We regularly pray for you as our representative in Parliament. May Almighty God give you wisdom as you respond to this urgent and complex issue.

Prayerfully,

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Rev. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Pastor | \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Chair, Official Board |

*cc names of other officials in your locality to whom you are copying this letter. See below*

**The Prime Minister**

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, P.C., M.P.

Prime Minister of Canada

The House of Commons
Parliament Buildings
Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0A6

Dear Mr. Trudeau,

**The Minister of Justice**

The Honourable Jody Wilson-Raybould P.C., M.P.

The Minister of Justice

The House of Commons
Parliament Buildings
Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0A6

Dear Ms. Wilson-Raybould,

**Your Member of Parliament**

MPs are addressed as follows, when writing:

**Cabinet Ministers:** The Honourable Jane Smith, PC, MP

**(Note: PC denotes that they are members of the Privy Council)**

**Other Members of Parliament:** Ms Jane Smith, MP

For your MP’s postal and email addresses, check [www.parl.gc.ca/Parliamentarians/en/members](http://www.parl.gc.ca/Parliamentarians/en/members).

**Online Endorsement of the Joint Statement made by the EFC and the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops:** I urge you to read and sign the joint statement on euthanasia and assisted suicide made by the EFC and the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops.

The statement and instructions for adding your signature to the statement is available at the following link <http://www.euthanasiadeclaration.ca/declaration/>