26 November 2026

An Open Letter to Parliamentarians on Bill C-41
Protecting Human Dignity Through Care and Compassion

Dear Prime Minister Carney, Senators and Members of Parliament,

As Archbishop of Toronto, I write today regarding Bill C-41, the ***Medical Assistance in Dying Safeguards Act***, out of concern for those facing illness, suffering and the loss of independence. These realities touch families in every community across our country and call for a compassionate response rooted in an unwavering commitment to human dignity.

Along with very many other Canadians and faith leaders, I welcome the bill's provisions maintaining the exclusion of euthanasia where mental illness is a person's sole underlying medical condition. In any given year, we know that 1 in 5 Canadians experience a mental illness. Those experiencing profound psychological suffering need treatment, support and hope. Parliament must preserve this protection before the existing exclusion expires on March 17, 2027.

However, the bill combines this necessary and praiseworthy measure with a deeply troubling expansion: permitting euthanasia through advance requests after a person has lost the capacity to consent.

Protecting people with mental illness should not depend on accepting a further expansion of euthanasia. I respectfully urge you to separate these measures, advance the mental illness exclusion independently, and remove the provisions authorizing advance requests.

I seriously question the ethical basis of permitting such requests to be acted upon years after they were made, when a person can no longer understand, confirm or reconsider their decision. How confidently can anyone anticipate their future experience of illness? How will others, including family members and healthcare providers, honestly and adequately interpret suffering and responses when a person can no longer explain them?

Fear of future dependence is understandable. Yet what we fear may differ from what we experience with appropriate care and loving support. A person living with dementia or Alzheimer's disease remains deserving of love and protection. The dignity of human life at all stages must always be acknowledged and protected. It must never be undermined, rejected or in any way compromised. Life does not become disposable when it becomes vulnerable.

The dignity of every person does not diminish with memory loss, disability or dependence. The Catholic Church opposes euthanasia and assisted suicide because deliberately ending a human life can never be an acceptable response to suffering. This is distinct from refusing excessively burdensome and disproportionate treatment, which Catholic teaching permits while maintaining appropriate care.

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In 2025, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities urged Canada not to expand euthanasia through advance requests. Our response must include better access to mental health services, palliative care and dementia care, along with practical support for caregivers. No one should fear abandonment when they can no longer advocate for themselves. Healthcare professionals and institutions must be free to provide care without being required to participate in euthanasia (MAiD). This freedom of conscience must be upheld.

To those who are suffering, and to their families and caregivers, I offer this heartfelt assurance. You are loved, your lives matter, and your need for support never diminishes your dignity. Our communities must make that assurance tangible through prayer, compassionate presence and practical assistance. I echo the concerns of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, whose public statement and brief outline the many dangers of proceeding with Bill C-41 in its current form.

Dear parliamentarians, I urge you to use Bill C-41 to preserve the exclusion for cases in which mental illness is the sole underlying medical condition and to reject the proposed expansion to permit advance requests. Now is the time to show leadership and work together to ensure that people receive the compassionate care they need. Life is a sacred and unique gift, and no government has the right to legislate in a way that diminishes it.

May we work together to build and strengthen a Canada where every person can count on compassionate care and protection throughout every season of life.

Sincerely Yours in Christ,



Frank Cardinal Leo
Metropolitan Archbishop of Toronto

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