

**NEWS RELEASE**

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**Conscience protection still at risk with assisted death legislation:  
Coalition for HealthCARE and Conscience**

**OTTAWA, ONT. (April 14, 2016)** – The Coalition for HealthCARE and Conscience recognizes that federal legislation tabled today on physician-assisted death has rejected disturbing recommendations from the parliamentary joint committee regarding access to assisted suicide.

However, the coalition, which represents more than 100 healthcare facilities (with almost 18,000 care beds and 60,000 staff) and more than 5,000 physicians across Canada, is concerned that the bill doesn't protect the conscience rights of health care workers or facilities that morally object to performing or referring for what is being referred to as "medically assisted death."

By making no reference to conscience rights in the legislation, it appears that the federal government intends to leave it up to individual provincial and territorial governments to determine whether to protect health care workers and institutions and how to do so.

"No other foreign jurisdiction in the world that has legalized euthanasia/assisted suicide forces health care workers, hospitals, nursing homes or hospices to act against their conscience or mission and values," says Larry Worthen, Coalition member and Executive Director of the Christian Medical and Dental Society of Canada. "These conscience rights must be preserved. As we review this legislation, we will continue to advocate for the vulnerable and for conscience protection, which is provided in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms."

A strong majority of Canadians are on side with the coalition's beliefs on conscience protection. A recent Nanos Research poll found that 75% of Canadians agreed that doctors "should be able to opt out of offering assisted dying," compared with 21% who disagreed.

Members of the coalition fully support the right people clearly have to accept, to refuse and/ or discontinue the use of life-sustaining treatment and to allow death to occur. They also hold strong moral convictions that it is never justified for a physician to help take a patient's life, under any circumstances.

"Our health care workers journey with those who are sick and suffering each day. We will continue to do this in a caring and compassionate way," Worthen says. "We help patients at the end of life, what we object to is ending their life."

The coalition contends Canada can significantly reduce the number of people who see death as the only possible option to end their suffering by improving medical and social services.

"Our worth as a society is measured by the support we give to the vulnerable," said says Worthen. "We need increased access to palliative care, chronic disease and mental health services to help individuals who are suffering across the country."

The coalition continues to urge Canadians with concerns about assisted suicide legislation to visit [CanadiansforConscience.ca](http://CanadiansforConscience.ca) where they can communicate directly with their elected members of provincial or federal parliament.

The coalition represents several like-minded organizations committed to protecting conscience rights for health practitioners and institutions. Members of the coalition include the Catholic Archdiocese of Toronto, the Christian Medical and Dental Society of Canada, the Catholic Organization for Life and Family, the Canadian Federation of Catholic Physicians' Societies, the Canadian Catholic Bioethics Institute, Canadian Physicians for Life and the Catholic Health Alliance of Canada.

**About The Coalition for HealthCARE and Conscience:**

The Coalition for HealthCARE and Conscience represents a group of like-minded organizations, including representing more than 110 healthcare facilities (with almost 18,000 care beds and 60,000 staff) and more than 5,000 physicians across Canada , that are committed to protecting conscience rights for faith-based health practitioners and facilities. We were brought together by a common mission to respect the sanctity of human life, to protect the vulnerable and to promote the ability of individuals and institutions to provide health care without having to compromise their moral convictions.

To learn more, visit [CanadiansforConscience.ca](http://CanadiansforConscience.ca)

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