



ARCHDIOCESE OF KINGSTON
Office of the Archbishop

February 26, 2016

Mark Gerretsen, MP
Kingston and the Islands
841 Princess Street
Kingston, Ontario
K7L 1G7

Dear Mr. Gerretsen:

I am writing today regarding the Supreme Court decision in *Carter vs Canada*, which legalized physician-assisted suicide. As a result of that decision, you and your fellow Members of Parliament now have the difficult task of developing new legislation.

As Archbishop of Kingston, I want to clearly indicate that the Roman Catholic community cannot support in any way the deliberate taking of human life. To provide, or participate in the provision of, assisted suicide or euthanasia is not compatible with the principles and values of Catholic health care.

While we certainly want to be present to – and support – those who are in the process of dying, we believe that this is best carried out by providing a professional standard of palliative care which supports the physical, spiritual, emotional, and psychological dimensions of the end-of-life experience. While we are determined to work to alleviate human suffering, this can never involve intentionally eliminating those who suffer.

I ask you, as the elected representative for Kingston and the Islands in the House of Commons, to do everything within your power to limit the social and moral harm of the *Carter vs Canada* ruling. In particular, I would emphasize the need for:

- improved patient services – including palliative and mental health care – and support for people with disabilities;
- protection for the vulnerable, e.g. minors and people with psychiatric conditions;
- provisions to ensure that physicians, nurses, and other health care professionals will not be required to refer for, or perform, assisted death or be discriminated against because of their moral convictions;
- protection for health care facilities like hospitals, nursing homes, and hospices which are unable to provide assisted death on their premises because of their organizational values.

As a Member of Parliament, you are entrusted with a great responsibility. We are counting on you to do your utmost to protect the dignity of human life, as well as the rights of conscience for health care workers and institutions.

Sincerely yours,

† Brendan M. O'Brien
Archbishop of Kingston