

The Catholic Women's League of Canada

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Protection of the Charitable Status of Pro-Life and Religious Organizations

In December 2024, the Standing Committee on Finance's Pre-Budget Consultations for 2025 submitted Recommendations 429 and 430 that would see the charitable status of pro-life organizations and faith organizations revoked.

For pro-life organizations to lose charitable status as a result of Recommendation 429, they may no longer be able to provide often-needed prenatal services for pregnant women, potentially increasing their seeking access to abortion services. This is like the concern that arose when the government in power required applicants for the Canada Summer Jobs Program to attest to views compromising their belief system. It reflects the hypocritical stance of some who seek to extend charitable tax treatment to agencies that assist women in having abortions but not to organizations that help them keep their babies.

Recommendation 430 would remove the privileged status of "advancement of religion" as a charitable purpose. This recommendation would deny two of every five charities their tax status, significantly affecting the Canadian charitable sector. It will be difficult, if not impossible, for the government to replace this loss of social services, poverty alleviation and community-building. The loss of charitable status would threaten the existence of many faith organizations and may violate the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

Expansion of Medical Assistance in Dying to Include Advance Requests

In February 2023, Canada's Special Joint Committee on Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD) recommended amending the *Criminal Code* to allow for MAiD based on advance requests under certain circumstances, including Recommendation 21, which would allow for amending the *Criminal Code* to allow for advance requests following a diagnosis of a serious and incurable medical condition, disease or disorder leading to incapacity such as dementia.

The concern regarding advance requests for MAiD centres around key ethical, legal and practical challenges. Because this legislation did not receive Royal Assent before the proroguing of parliament, it will have to be reintroduced, which is a highly anticipated certainty. Members of parliament (MPs) must know that advanced consent for MAiD is highly unpopular legislation for many Canadians, including League members. Instead, there needs to be a call to focus on resourcing life-affirming services such as palliative and hospice care.

- Persons who have made an advanced request for MAiD with their current health status and diagnosis might no longer be able to confirm their wishes at the time of death. This means that if a person's wishes change, they won't be able to express them, given the effect of their illness.
- Advanced requests rely on written documents describing a person's future condition and suffering. There is concern that doctors and family members might interpret the request differently from what the patient would have wanted.

- There is concern that advanced requests could lead to undue pressure, especially for older adults or those with disabilities, consistent with the concept of ableism and distortion of suffering. People might feel obligated to request MAiD to avoid burdening families or the healthcare system.
- Canada’s current MAiD laws emphasize the importance of ongoing consent, which advanced requests challenge. There are ethical concerns among some healthcare professionals that carrying out MAiD based on an old request without current confirmation could be seen as involuntary. There is a risk that the assumption that death can be a “benefit” by others for patients who never explicitly requested it in their current, altered state.
- Advanced requests are often discussed in the context of Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias. Predicting suffering in these cases is complex. Some people may still enjoy life when they reach the point they previously feared. There is a risk of treating cognitively challenged individuals as objects of past instructions rather than persons who still merit a re-assessment of their present well-being.

GUIDE TO USING TALKING POINTS, PETITION AND LETTER-WRITING RESOURCES

Talking Points: these are points of information to guide conversations you may have with your MP, be it at your front door or a town hall meeting in your community.

Petitions: The petitions may be used to collect signatures from members within your parish council, other League councils, or your parish. If the petition is circulated outside your parish council, advice and permission must be obtained through your spiritual advisor, pastor or, in some circumstances, your bishop.

- The petitions have been developed to be submitted as a government petition—a paper petition or an e-petition.
- A petition must contain a minimum of 25 valid signatures with addresses as indicated on the petition forms.
- Some signatures and addresses must appear on the first sheet with the petition’s text.
- There is no minimum age requirement for anyone signing a petition, but the person must be a Canadian citizen or resident of Canada.
- Each petitioner must sign, not print, their name directly on the petition and must not sign for anyone else. If a petitioner cannot sign because of illness or a disability, this must be noted on the petition and signed by a witness.
- A petition must contain original signatures written directly on the document and not pasted, taped, photocopied or otherwise transferred to it. Signatures and addresses may appear on the reverse of the petition. The address must be written directly on the document, as in the signature. Including other contact information (such as telephone numbers or email addresses) is permitted but not required.

Letter Writing Campaigns: Two template letters for each topic are available, one for the council’s use and one for an individual’s use, whichever is preferred.