



February 4, 2018

To all parishioners of the Diocese of Sault Ste. Marie

**Re: Call for conscience campaign**

Dear friends,

In 2017, many Churches across the province were involved in the “Call for Conscience” campaign to advocate for the protection of conscience rights of doctors, nurses and other health care professionals who are asked to participate in assisted suicide/euthanasia. Despite more than 30,000 letters sent to Members of Provincial Parliament (MPP’s), this campaign did not achieve its desired goal: legislation that would protect health care workers from being forced to participate in causing the death of their patients. Health care workers in Ontario are being forced to choose between their careers and their conscience.

Ontario remains one of the few jurisdictions in the world without adequate protection for conscientious objectors. As a provincial election will be held this June, we need your help to highlight this issue for MPP’s and those seeking office. The 2018 Call for Conscience campaign pursues the following goals:

- 1) To renew the call to protect the right of health care professionals to abstain from any involvement in causing the death of their patients.
- 2) To provide protection for faith-based facilities that do not wish to participate in assisted suicide/euthanasia.
- 3) To ask elected Members of Provincial Parliament (MPP’s) and those seeking office to increase access and funding for palliative care in Ontario.

I encourage you to participate in this campaign by contacting MPP’s and candidates in your riding, as well as leaders of the Parties, to express your concern. You will find helpful information and documents, as well as sample letters at [bit.ly/ONCF2018](http://bit.ly/ONCF2018). Your Pastor will also make available to you copies of the sample letter that you may use. Another way of supporting the campaign would be to sign up on the Coalition for Health Care and Conscience website at [www.canadiansforconscience.ca](http://www.canadiansforconscience.ca). You would then receive monthly newsletters.

Yours in Christ,

+Marcel Damphousse  
Bishop of Sault Ste. Marie

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## Coalition for HealthCARE and Conscience

For more information please visit  
[www.canadiansforconscience.ca](http://www.canadiansforconscience.ca)



### The Problem

Assisted suicide has been legal in Canada since June 2016. Discussions are already taking place to expand the criteria to minors, people with psychiatric illness and those with dementia. This puts people who are lonely and isolated at risk of choosing euthanasia simply because they don't have anyone who cares and can give them hope.

#### Today in Ontario:

- Physicians and other caregivers are forced to participate in euthanasia against their will, by referring their patients.
- Pro-euthanasia groups are threatening to sue faith based hospitals unless they allow euthanasia on the premises.
- Only a third of the population has access to adequate palliative care, so they are being denied real choice on end of life issues.

This places physicians, nurses and other health professionals in an impossible situation – assist in the killing of their patients or lose the ability to care for patients at all.

This is happening despite constitutional protections for freedom of conscience and religion in the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (s.2).

The Coalition for HealthCARE and Conscience represents more than 110 healthcare facilities (with almost 18,000 care beds and 60,000 staff) and more than 5,000 physicians across Canada. Our members are unable to participate in taking a patient's life due

to moral, ethical or philosophical convictions.

### The Solution

The Ontario legislature has the power to protect conscience rights for individuals and facilities and to provide adequate palliative care and mental health services so that people will not see assisted suicide as their only option. Our efforts in Manitoba helped to ensure the province passed conscience protection legislation in November 2017.

In advance of the June 2018 provincial election in Ontario, we have the opportunity to ask candidates from all parties three important questions:

1. Will you support legislation to protect doctors, nurses and other health care providers who are being forced to participate in assisted suicide/ euthanasia through making a referral?
2. How will you protect facilities from being forced to offer euthanasia/assisted suicide on their premises?
3. How does your party plan to address the lack of quality palliative care in our province?

To get involved please participate in your Church's Sign up Sunday. We will be collecting contact information to help mobilize a large number of people to contact candidates for the 2018 Ontario Provincial election. If your church does not have a Sign up Sunday, please go directly to [canadiansforconscience.ca](http://canadiansforconscience.ca) to make sure your voice is heard.