



MEDIA STATEMENT

June 16, 2017

(Comox, BC) – with the passing of C-14 federal legislation last May that decriminalized euthanasia and assisted suicide (Medical Assistance in Dying), it is evident this is a profound issue and there are deeply held feelings and many differing points of view. St. Joseph's has worked with openness and respect to provide compassionate care to those at the end of life, including patients who may request MAiD. Conscientious objection to MAiD isn't an issue just with faith-based health care providers, numerous professions and non-faith-based providers have concerns and are working through the complexities of this new legislation.

The Canadian health care system has evolved to include several faith-based organizations. There is a variety of faith-based and culture-based health services available that represent the diversity of Canadian life and values. These organizations have a long history of providing care across the country and in British Columbia. Their goal is to respond to the needs of local communities in tending to the sick, the elderly, the poor and the marginalized by providing compassionate and professional care to all in need, regardless of their beliefs.

Not providing MAiD is in keeping with the provision in British Columbia for denominational health organizations to provide services that are compatible with their values and ethics. The Master Agreement between the Province of BC and the Denominational Health Association (a registered non-profit association) was signed in 1995.

Should a patient choose to seek MAiD, St. Joseph's staff respectfully, and with compassion, works with the patient, providers and the health authority to provide a safe and timely transfer, which is done at the request or direction of the patient. British Columbia has effective processes for transferring patients to other hospitals for numerous medical needs, and minimizing patient discomfort and pain is always the highest priority.

Requests for MAiD are taken extremely seriously and we work closely with the patient to discuss and plan his or her care needs. Given the newness of the legislation, we continue to learn and refine our processes relative to responding to requests for MAiD.

A new hospital is nearing completion in the Comox Valley and, when opened in October 2017, will be owned and managed by Island Health. This facility will provide MAiD in the community.

St. Joseph's has a history of moral tradition of compassionate care that neither prolongs dying nor hastens death. Our commitment has always been, and will continue to be, the provision of care that is founded on a philosophy of care with compassion. We are committed to providing excellence in end of life care, working as a team of dedicated healthcare professionals.

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