



March 28, 2016

Honourable Brandy Payne, M.L.A.  
Associate Minister of Health  
423 Legislature Building  
10800 97 Avenue  
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6

RE: [ABHealth.Consultation@gov.ab.ca](mailto:ABHealth.Consultation@gov.ab.ca)

Dear Minister:

Thank you for inviting Covenant Health's feedback regarding physician-assisted death. The Supreme Court ruling and the legislative frameworks that will be drafted over the coming months will bring unprecedented and momentous change for health care. These changes will require everyone to work with openness and humility focused on a common goal to support those at end of life.

We commend the Government for engaging in a public consultation process to seek the input of all Albertans as Alberta Health takes on this responsibility. We support the Government in serving and protecting patients, health care providers and our most vulnerable.

We are providing the following in response to your request for input:

- Our official **Submission to the Advisory Committee on Physician-Assisted Death** which outlines our position and our advice to Government on this important issue.
- Question and Answer (Q + A) which is based on Covenant Health's Response to the Provincial/Territorial Expert Advisory Group on Physician Assisted Dying ((November 2015) and covers aspects of the issue included in the [Alberta Consultation survey](#).
- Q + A on the Catholic health response to Physician Assisted Death (March 2016) that addresses many topics that have arisen in recent media coverage of the impact of physician assisted death in Canada.

Catholic health care has a long-standing moral tradition of compassionate care that neither prolongs dying nor hastens death. As Canada's largest Catholic healthcare organization, Covenant Health will not participate in physician assisted death because it is not in keeping with our values or ethical guidelines. The dignity of the person and the belief that all life is sacred is at the heart of everything we do; it shapes our decisions at the bedside every day.

We will continue to respect the law and provide assistance to people at end of life. We will respond with compassion and respect to anyone who requests physician assisted death without discrimination or coercion, seeking to understand their request and exploring with them their options—including timely transfer of care for further assessment.

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We believe the Province must consider the rights of caregivers and health care organizations whose conscience or religious conviction prevents them from being involved in physician assisted death. We feel it is critical this legislation specifically protects and respects the freedoms of all Albertans.

As we have so often done throughout our 150-year history, we are confident we can find solutions that allow us to continue to walk with our patients, respect their choices and coordinate care across providers.

Covenant Health has also posted further information and resources to its [website](http://www.covenanthealth.ca/newsroom/news-bank/news-events-bank/covenant-health-response-to-physician-assisted-death/), which can be accessed at the following link: <http://www.covenanthealth.ca/newsroom/news-bank/news-events-bank/covenant-health-response-to-physician-assisted-death/>

Thank you again for your invitation to comment. We would welcome the opportunity to provide you and members of the advisory committee a tour of our palliative and hospice programs and to introduce you to clinicians, and, most importantly, the patients and families who are willing to share their experience what these services have meant to them personally.

We appreciate every opportunity to discuss the rights of patients, professionals, and institutions to ensure the system meets the needs of those we serve. In humility, we seek to work together with Government to find creative solutions in navigating the many unknowns we all face as a society in responding to this momentous change.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Patrick Dumelie".

Patrick Dumelie  
President and CEO