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September 18, 2016

The Honourable Jane Philpott, M.P.
Minister of Health
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0K9

Dear Ms. Minister,

The Catholic Women's League of Canada, founded in 1920, is the largest national organization of women in Canada, with in excess of 83,000 members represented in every province and the military. The League has often received the commendation and keen appreciation of federal, provincial and municipal authorities for the voluntary services ably performed by its nationwide membership and is organized and pledged to serve all citizens of goodwill.

I am writing on behalf of members to urge the federal government to identify palliative care as an insured health service covered under the Canada Health Act and to develop a national strategy for uniform standards and delivery of palliative care as defined by the World Health Organization.

The World Health Organization defines that palliative care "... provides relief from pain and other distressing symptoms, affirms life, regards dying as a normal process, intends neither to hasten nor postpone death and integrates the psychological and spiritual aspects of patient care..."

Currently, high quality palliative care is neither included nor defined as an insured health service in the Canada Health Act and there are no uniform standards for palliative care and its delivery in Canada. The Canadian Hospice Palliative Care Association reports that, "Nearly every Canadian believes that hospice palliative and end-of-life care are critical and should be available to anyone in need..." yet only 16% to 30% of Canadians have access to or receive these services. Section 3 of the Canada Health Act states, "...the primary objective of Canadian health care policy is to protect, promote and restore the physical and mental well-being of residents of Canada and to facilitate reasonable access to health services without financial or other barriers" therefore it is imperative that palliative care becomes an insured health service covered under the Canada Health Act and a national strategy for uniform standards and delivery of palliative care is developed.

On behalf of members of The Catholic Women's League of Canada, I urge you to consider this amendment to the Canada Health Act. I look forward to your favourable response to this matter.

Respectfully yours,

Margaret Ann Jacobs
National President

c.c. The Rt. Hon. Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada