



November 4, 2015

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau  
Prime Minister of Canada  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, ON  
K1A 0A6

Dear Prime Minister,

On behalf of the Catholic Bishops of Canada, I congratulate you on your recent election and on being sworn in today as the twenty-third Prime Minister of Canada. We assure you of our prayers and our hope to collaborate with you and all the members of your Cabinet on issues of importance for the common good of the citizens of our country and of the international community.

We would like to echo the words of Pope Francis to the diplomatic corps accredited to the Holy See in expressing our “hope for a common commitment ... to pursue reconciliation, peace and the defence of the transcendent dignity of the person.” We recognize the immense challenges facing our country, our cultures, our society, and thereby also our faith communities. Equally important, we are convinced that solutions to these problems can be found through dialogue and encounter, respect and mutual trust, a renewed spirit of cooperation, and a mutual determination to promote integral human development, political stability and peaceful civil coexistence.

It is in this spirit that we wish to convey to you today our hope that we will be able to exchange and reflect with you and your Government on significant issues of common concern. There are five of immediate and pressing urgency:

- We encourage the Government of Canada, in cooperation with other states and in collaboration with our country’s provincial, territorial, and municipal governments, as well as with representatives of civil society and of faith-based agencies and interest groups, to take responsible action on the urgent climatic, environmental and social challenges facing the world, as outlined so forcefully by Pope Francis in his encyclical *Laudato Si’*, issued this past May 24. The whole of society needs to be involved, including industry, if there are to be fair, binding and truly transformational climate agreements both nationally and internationally.

- Shortly after the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada released its summary report with its Calls to Action in June, an initial response was issued by our Conference, which is the national assembly of the Catholic Bishops of our country. Our statement confirmed our intention to follow up on those Calls to Action addressed specifically to our Church, and at the same time conveyed a number of concerns shared by many other Canadians, Indigenous and non-Indigenous. We highlighted the need for improved Aboriginal access to education, the epidemic of murdered and missing Indigenous women, the need for environments supportive of Indigenous families and communities, and the importance of strengthening the ability of Canadian justice and correctional systems to respond to Aboriginal realities.
- Shortly before the election, we had signalled in a letter to you and the other leaders of the national political parties our wish, shared with other Churches and religious communities, for continued efforts by the Government of Canada, as well as collaboration among all members of Parliament, to respond to the current refugee crisis by expanding, accelerating, and facilitating the private sponsorship of refugees during this time of urgent need.
- An effective and enduring solution to the global crisis of refugees and displaced persons requires a determined international effort to resolve the ongoing conflicts in the Middle East and Africa, as well as Ukraine. Each of these not only involves immense human suffering, but threatens international peace and stability. Our Conference will continue to encourage the federal government to work with other nations and with the international community in protecting populations under attack and in finding diplomatic ways to sustain peace and ensure justice.
- In a few months, our nation will face the end of the one-year deadline given by the Supreme Court of Canada to find a legislative response to its decision on physician-assisted suicide. I recently submitted the concerns of the Catholic Bishops of Canada to the Expert Panel on Options for a Legislative Response to *Carter v. Canada*. Together with other religious leaders – Christians as well as members of other world religions – we consider physician-assisted suicide ethically and morally wrong. The Court’s decision is divisive; polls indicate almost two-thirds of Canadian physicians would refuse to assist in such suicides. In contrast, there has been near unanimity in the Canadian Parliament on the need to focus on improving access to palliative care. At the unanimous request of my brother Bishops, I request that the Government of Canada invoke the *Notwithstanding Clause*, in order to protect the interests of the sick, the elderly, the disabled, the socially and economically vulnerable, as well as those who care for them, including their loved ones and health-care professionals. We are convinced that our nation and its legislators need to take more time to look closely at the Court’s decision and the grave social risk of embarking on policies of assisted suicide and euthanasia.

We look forward to future opportunities to discuss these and other concerns with you and your ministers. Once again, together with my brother Bishops, I assure you of our prayers and our best wishes which accompany you, and of our hope to dialogue with you and your Government in mutual respect and trust.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Douglas Crosby". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross at the beginning.

(Most Rev.) Douglas Crosby, OMI  
Bishop of Hamilton and  
President of the Canadian Conference  
of Catholic Bishops