

BRITISH COLUMBIA HUMANIST ASSOCIATION

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Kathy MacNeil, President & CEO
Island Health
1952 Bay Street
Victoria BC V8R 1J8

March 28, 2018

Re: Comox Valley complex care beds RFP

Dear Kathy MacNeil

We are concerned that Island Health risks undermining the fundamental principles of the Canada Health Act and the its duty of religious neutrality by awarding new complex care beds in the Comox Valley to a faith-based facility that objects to medical assistance in dying (MAiD). We strongly urge Island Health to reject bids from faith-based facilities in response to the March 9, 2018 request for proposals.

Despite recognition by the Supreme Court of Canada that Canadians in grievous and irremediable suffering have the right to access MAiD, many British Columbians still face barriers in realizing that right. Facilities that forbid the practice on their premises exacerbate these barriers and undermine the principles of universality and accessibility that underpin the Canada Health Act.

Further, the Supreme Court of Canada wrote in *MLQ v Saguenay (2015)* that the state, and therefore its agents including public health authorities, has “a duty of religious neutrality.” We consider it an abrogation of that duty to provide government funds to faith groups, particularly those that use their faith to discriminate in service provision (including what services they provide).

A patient’s ability to access healthcare shouldn’t be dependent on the religious faith of the owners of a building.

Sincerely

Ian Bushfield
Executive Director

cc The Hon Adrian Dix, Minister of Health