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Toronto Cardinal Frank Leo poses in an undated photo at the Vatican. In letters to Canadian P

Toronto Cardinal Frank Leo poses in an undated photo at the Vatican. In letters to Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney and members of Parliament April 20, Leo asked them to "choose life and not death" by voting for a measure to restrict using Canada's assisted dying law for individuals solely living with a mental illness, not a terminal illness. (OSV News/Courtesy Archdiocese of Toronto)

by The Catholic Register, OSV News

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In letters to Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney and all members of Parliament from the Toronto area, Cardinal Frank Leo asked that they "choose life and not death" and build a civilization that cares when voting on the Right to Recover Act.

The measure, Bill C-218, proposes to amend Canada's criminal code to permanently prohibit medical assistance in dying, or MAiD, for individuals solely living with a mental illness, not a terminal illness. The bill aims to reverse the scheduled March 17, 2027, expansion of MAiD eligibility.

Parliament was supposed to debate the legislation in April, but its order of precedence in the House has been pushed back. No date for debate has been set. The measure was introduced last year by Tamara Jansen, a Conservative member of Canada's Parliament.

In his April 20 letters, Leo, Toronto's archbishop, reminded the prime minister and MPs that a society "is rightly judged" by its care for its most vulnerable members. He said many Canadians are "increasingly troubled" by the expansion of MAiD since legislation was passed legalizing the practice in 2016.

According to Canada's sixth annual report on MAiD, issued in November 2025, there have been 76,475 MAiD provisions in the nation since the program's 2016 legalization.

"Our Catholic faith opposes the taking of any life and it is with great disappointment and anguish that we have seen our country expand (MAiD) at a rapid and alarming rate," Leo wrote. Assisted suicide and euthanasia, he told Carney and MPs, are "contrary to the dignity of the human person."

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Leo and the Archdiocese of Toronto are the driving force behind the nationwide Help Not Harm campaign, launched in March. This campaign calls for a letter-writing drive to MPs to vote in favor of Bill C-218.

"We are encouraging parishes and faithful to continue their efforts through the month of April and until a date for the vote is announced," Neil MacCarthy, director of public relations and communications, told The Catholic Register, Canada's national Catholic newspaper based in Toronto.

By mid-April, some 5,000 letters had been sent through the Help Not Harm portal.

"There is growing anxiety that the normalization and expansion of assisted suicide risks undermining a culture of compassion, weakening investments in palliative support and diminishing the collective commitment to accompany those suffering," wrote Leo.

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The cardinal also called on Carney to allow Liberal MPs a free vote when C-218 comes before Parliament.

"This legislation raises profound questions of conscience that transcend partisan alignment and touch on deeply held moral, ethical and spiritual convictions," Leo wrote. "I ask you to choose life and not death; to help build a civilization that cares for those suffering and does not eliminate them, but instead surrounds them with dignity, compassion and love."

He also asked Carney and Minister of Justice Sean Fraser that they "consider measures that restrict any further expansion of assisted suicide in our country and instead prioritize investments in palliative care, mental health support and resources for those who are increasingly marginalized and isolated, especially seniors and Canadians living with disabilities."

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