



BISHOP OF HAMILTON

May 27, 2018

Dear Friends,

In the past months, there has been much attention on the federal government's refusal to provide summer jobs funding to organizations who will not attest to their support for, among other things, the right to abortion. Much has been said already of the many ways this policy is wrong and dangerous. There is the simple and unavoidable fact – which seems lost on the Prime Minister and the federal government - that abortion rights are, in fact, nowhere to be found in the Charter. There is also the sad irony that the Charter actually does guarantee the rights of conscience, religion, thought, belief, and opinion – protections designed to defend against the very type of government intrusion on display here. Many have pointed, rightly, to the profound danger of attempts to demonize and punish beliefs contrary to those the government deems acceptable.

What has received less attention is the practical outcome of this decision, which will be experienced most poignantly by those who rely on the programs that will not operate without this funding. An example here is illustrative. Since the early 1940's, Camp Brebeuf in Rockwood, Ontario, has welcomed children to experience the outdoors, meet new friends, gain valuable life and leadership lessons, and grow in their faith and service of others. More recently, Camp Marydale also follows this proud tradition. This Camp is known especially for their "one-to-one" program, which offers children with spina bifida, cerebral palsy, scoliosis, downs syndrome, autism, and hearing, visual and various other challenges the chance to experience summer camp like other children. Having seen the faces of these children at camp, having heard their laughter and joyful screams, and having listened to the moving testimony of their families and caregivers, it is clear that the dignity afforded by an experience away at camp makes a profound and lasting difference in their lives.

However, the federal government's insistence on this ideological test for summer jobs funding has put these programs, and many others, at risk. Imagine a disabled child being told they will not be going to summer camp – all because the government cannot abide that some dare to believe that life is worthy of defense at all stages.

We do not believe that those who rely on these programs should suffer because of the government's decision. To this end, I am calling for a special collection to be taken up in each of our parishes on **Sunday, June 3**. The funds raised from this collection will be distributed to Catholic charities whose programs are at risk as a result of their inability to attest to what the government demands.

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The Church's history provides us a litany of witnesses who have held to our faith in the face of political pressure. From the Christians of the early Church in Rome, to St. Thomas More, to the Japanese martyrs, to Archbishop Oscar Romero in more recent times, attempting to force Christians to bow to political pressure is nothing new. Now as before, we will serve all those in need. But the only one to whom we will bow in the process is the one whose kingdom is not of this world.

Sincerely in Christ and Mary Immaculate,

+Douglas Crosby, OMI

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Bishop of Hamilton

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