

Hospices Provide the Care People Want and Need

Keep the Dying out of Hospital, Save \$200M/Year, With Excellent Care

For Immediate Release
November 27, 2023

(Toronto) – “Community hospice palliative care is highly cost effective care, but the impact on the wellbeing of people is priceless,” say Hospice Palliative Care Ontario President and CEO, Rick Firth. “We all experience dying, death and loss, but it’s uniquely personal and potent, and hospice palliative care is often needed to navigate the journey with meaning, peace and wellbeing, whether you are facing end of life or losing a loved one.”

Once again, the Elephant in the Room visited Queen’s Park, this week. It is an annual opportunity for MPPs to talk about the difficult subject of dying, death and loss, and be reassured that the journey can be a positive and meaningful one, with the right care in the right place.

“Often people don’t need hospital care at the end of life, but they need extra medical, practical, psychosocial and spiritual support, both for the one dying and the caregiver.” adds Firth. “Visiting at home hospice services wrap around home care to provide practical and psycho-social supports to both the patients and their families, that make staying at home more viable. And if more care is needed, a hospice residence is a desirable place for patients and families to both be supported.”

In Ontario, hospice residences are small home-like settings where those at the end of life can receive wholistic care and home-cooked meals, and their families can receive grief and bereavement support. At home hospice visiting programs help people to stay at home, sometimes right to the end of life. Hospices are funded in large part by community fundraising, which has been especially challenging in recent years. But one time funding increases have helped keep hospices out of deficit and having to cut services. This year, hospices are asking for the one-time funding increase to become part of permanent base funding, and to provide hospice at home services with \$4 million dollars provincially to stabilize the sector.

“The one-time funding is appreciated but hospices need the certainty to recruit and retain staff. There has been no permanent base funding increase since 2016, and both the costs and the need for care have risen,” explains Mr. Firth. “People of all ages die and need our services, but the fact is that the aging population means more people are dying each year and this is the care they need and want.”

The Auditor General, the Ontario Medical Association and the Canadian Cancer Society have all warned that more hospices are needed to meet the growing demand for end-of-life care. HPCO says the Government can maintain an increase in annual funding to hospices of more than \$45M a year and support health care system capacity savings of \$200M by keeping people out of hospitals and in more comfortable and appropriate hospice settings.

“Hospice is about helping people live well right to the end. Anyone who has experienced hospice care with a loved one knows that dying and loss need not be a frightening and negative experience, it can be a healing and memorable time.” said Mr. Firth.

Mr. Firth says Ontario has been a leader in hospice care and it’s the best story in Ontario’s health and social care. Hospices have strict standards and accreditation. Family members who’ve experienced hospice at home or care in hospice residences sing the praises of hospice. Caregiver surveys give hospice care satisfaction ratings of over 97%, the highest in healthcare.