



Proposal

Release & Implementation of the Provincial Strategy and Action Plan for End-of-Life Care in British Columbia

To: Honorable Kevin Falcon, Minister of Health Services for British Columbia
From: BC Hospice Palliative Care Association (BCHPCA)
Date: November 3, 2009

Background

The British Columbia Hospice Palliative Care Association (BCHPCA) has worked closely with your predecessors in the Ministry of Health Services to improve access to high-quality end-of-life care throughout the province, regardless of location or medical condition. This proposal will:

- a) Summarize the work that has already taken place; and
- b) Explain our rationale for requesting that you release the *Provincial Strategy and Action Plan for End-of-Life Care in British Columbia*, in strategic partnership with BCHPCA.

History

May 2006: The Ministry of Health Services released the *Provincial Framework for End-of-Life Care*. The framework provided health authorities and other providers with general principles to guide their planning and delivery of high-quality end-of-life care for all British Columbians. Following release of this document, health authorities sought to align their work with the guidelines, and positive changes were implemented in pockets of the province.

Summer 2008: The Ministry of Health Services acted on the recommendation of the Provincial End-of-Life Standing Committee to build upon the Provincial Framework by developing an action plan. Through a collaborative effort between stakeholders (including extensive input from members of BCHPCA¹), the *Provincial End-of-Life Strategy and Action Plan for British Columbia* was developed. The plan clearly articulates the top three priorities for the Province, and the strategies and specific actions to support these priorities.

Spring 2009: The former BC Minister of Health Services, George Abbott, anticipated release of the *Provincial End-of-Life Strategy and Action Plan for British Columbia*. The release was suspended due to the Provincial election in May 2009, and the subsequent changes to the cabinet.

Today: A call to Action

It is time to capitalize on the work that has been collectively been done, for the benefit of BC residents and their families. **We ask the BC Government to release the *Provincial-End-of-Life Strategy and Action Plan***, in strategic partnership with BCHPCA.

¹ All of the subject-area experts in the Provincial End-of-Life Standing Committee --and most of the palliative care experts and educators involved in this project -- are highly-engaged members of BCHPCA.

Why is the *Provincial Strategy and Action Plan for End-of-Life Care in British Columbia* needed?

The need for the strategy is well-documented within the *Provincial End-of-Life Strategy and Action Plan for British Columbia*. The bottom line is that every year in BC, tens of thousands of dying people suffer needlessly because they do not have access to appropriate palliative care services. The good news is that we know why this is happening, and we know what we can do about it, *without having to add a large number of new palliative specialists*.

- Historically, palliative care has been available only to people who are dying from cancer. This group represents about 28% of the approximately 30,000 deaths per year in BC. Palliative services for this population are generally provided by palliative specialists.
- There is strong evidence to support the benefits of a “palliative approach” for people who are dying from other chronic diseases, such as chronic lung disease and advanced heart disease. The palliative approach includes pain management, symptom management and psycho-social care for dying people and their families.
- The *Provincial End-of-Life Strategy and Action Plan for British Columbia* endorses an evidence-based, population-based strategy of building capacity for the “palliative approach” among *primary health care providers and volunteer caregivers* in communities of all sizes throughout BC. This will result in improved access to palliative services, for people in all regions and settings, regardless of their underlying medical condition.
- End-of-life planning is fragmented and inconsistent across BC. The *Provincial End-of-Life Strategy and Action Plan for British Columbia* calls for a provincial approach to Advance Care Planning. Once implemented, more patients will be actively engaged in expressing their wishes and stating preferences about their care.

It is estimated that for every death that occurs at least five other individuals are directly impacted. Release of the *Provincial-End-of-Life Strategy and Action Plan for British Columbia* will enable those of us who care for dying patients and their families to share and implement best practices across the province in a consistent, coordinated, and comprehensive way.

Why a Strategic Alliance with BCHPCA?

BCHPCA has the expertise, experience and structure to support the dissemination and implementation of Plan – and to do so in a cost-effective manner. Here is what we offer:

1. Credibility. BCHPCA is an established, trusted, wide-reaching provincial organization whose purpose is to ensure the best possible quality of life for all British Columbians affected by life-limiting illness, death, caregiving and bereavement. We are the voice for, and of, hospice palliative care and end-of-life care in BC.

2. Access to broad-based Membership. Our membership consists of 300+ organizations and individuals from across BC, representing the multi-disciplinary nature of palliative care. The organizations represented in our membership employ 3,000 professional and 5,000 volunteer caregivers who work together to provide care to dying patients and their families.

Our members include:

- Physicians and other health care professionals such as nurses, social workers, and home support workers;

- Administrators and volunteers from 65 hospice societies and other community organizations;
- Representatives from the 5 regional health authorities and the BC Cancer Agency;
- Palliative care educators from public and private settings.

3. Established Communication Structures

- BCHPCA offers real-time communication with front-line palliative care providers, administrators, educators and the public, through e-mail distribution lists, BCHPCA web site, annual provincial palliative care conference, and annual meetings with representatives from each region.

4. Provincial leadership - Standards

- BCHPCA led the development of provincial standards for hospice volunteers.
- We are currently working on minimum standards for palliative care education for health care professionals.
- We had extensive involvement in development of the *Provincial Framework for End-of-Life Care* and the *Provincial End-of-Life Strategy and Action Plan for British Columbia*.
- The subject-area experts on the End-of-Life Standing Committee were all highly-engaged members of BCHPCA.

5. Provincial leadership - Education

- BCHPCA developed a Train the Trainer program for the education of volunteers, in support of the established standards for hospice volunteers.
- Through the BC Learning Centre for Palliative Care, which is housed under the BCHPCA umbrella, we develop, disseminate and deliver continuing education programs for health care professionals; e.g., *Primary Care Collaborative Workshop for Palliative Care*.

6. Resource efficiencies

- BCHPCA's network approach reduces the "silo" effect and facilitates sharing of resources, both human and financial.
- As a non-profit association, we are eligible for non-profit grants and private donations.

What Government Can Do

At the Health Care Leaders' Conference last month, you invited health care leaders to tell you what government needs to do, to enable us to innovate and save.

Minister Falcon: The single, most important thing that you can do for dying patients and their families is to release the *Provincial End-of-Life Strategy and Action Plan for British Columbia*, in strategic partnership with BCHPCA.

This will enable us to unleash, share and implement best practices across the province in a consistent, coordinated, and comprehensive way. We know that if we point everyone in the same direction, and then facilitate the pooling of people's time, expertise, money, and volunteer efforts, we will achieve our dream of providing high-quality hospice palliative and end-of-life care to every British Columbian.