



# Press Release

## **Harper Government Cuts Funding for a National Strategy for Dying Canadians and their Caregivers**

*For immediate release – September 14, 2006*

Ottawa – In the May 2006 Federal Budget, The Honourable James M. Flaherty, Minister of Finance announced that “the President of the Treasury Board will identify savings of \$1 billion in 2006-2007 and 2007-2008.” While not specific about where these savings will take place, it is clear that all federal departments will be affected by this reduction in spending. With regard to the ongoing development of a national strategy for end-of-life care, it is expected that the Secretariat on Palliative and End-of-Life Care (Health Canada) will see substantial budget reductions for the 2006-2007 fiscal year. In 2005-2006 the Secretariat was funded at the level of \$1.7 million dollars. The continued national coordination and leadership provided by the Secretariat on Palliative and End-of-Life Care is essential as Canada moves forward to address the end-of-life care needs of all Canadians.

Since 2001 the Secretariat on Palliative and End-of-Life Care has been actively involved in the development of a National Strategy for Palliative and End-of-Life Care. This important initiative includes five priority areas for quality end of life care: Best Practices and Quality Care, Education for Formal Caregivers, Public Information and Awareness, Research, and Surveillance. A substantial cut in funding to the Secretariat will mean that many of the ongoing initiatives are at risk of being severely cut back or even eliminated.

The Canadian population is aging. Statistics Canada has reported that at present, 75% of the 225,000 Canadians who die each year are age 65 or over. In addition, Statistics Canada estimates that by the year 2020 there will be a 33% increase in the annual number of deaths in Canada. Currently only 15% of Canadians have access to high quality hospice palliative care. The federal government must take a leadership role in ensuring a long-term, adequately funded, comprehensive and sustainable National Strategy for Palliative and End-of-Life Care that will address the issues of services, resources, education, research, and support for patients and families.

“It now seems clear that the federal government is not as committed as it once was to providing national leadership and coordination for a national strategy for palliative and end of life care.”, says Diana Rasmussen, Quality End-of-Life Care Coalition of Canada

representative on the Coordinating Body of the National Strategy for Palliative and End-of-Life Care. She goes on to say, “The National Strategy Working Groups have accomplished so much in the past few years, I am disappointed that the work may not continue and we will slide backwards with regard to the provision of end of life care services in Canada. Canadians deserve better from their federal government.”

The Quality End-of-Life Care Coalition of Canada calls upon the federal government to maintain the current \$1.7 million level of funding to the Secretariat on Palliative and End-of-Life Care, and to commit to a long-term sustainable funding solution for the future.

The Quality End-of-Life Care Coalition of Canada believes that all Canadians have the right to quality end-of-life care that allows them to die with dignity, free of pain, surrounded by their loved ones, in the setting of their choice. The Coalition believes that to achieve quality end-of-life care for all Canadians there must be a well funded, sustainable national strategy for palliative and end-of-life care. It is the mission of the Quality End-of-Life Care Coalition of Canada to work together in partnership to achieve this goal.

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Members of the Quality End-of-Life Care Coalition of Canada:

ALS Society of Canada  
Canadian AIDS Society  
Canadian Arthritis Patients Alliance  
Canadian Association for Community Care  
Canadian Association for Pastoral Practice and Education  
Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists  
Canadian Association of Social Workers  
Canadian Association of the Deaf  
Canadian Breast Cancer Network  
Canadian Cancer Society  
Canadian Healthcare Association  
Canadian Hospice Palliative Care Association  
Canadian Nurses Association  
Canadian Society of Palliative Care Physicians  
Caregiver Network Inc.  
CARP: Canada's Association for the Fifty Plus  
Catholic Health Association of Canada  
Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada

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