Media Release

Canada Ranks 9th in Quality of Death Index

(7 July 2010) A report from the Economist’s Intelligence Unit, released July 14th ranks Canada as ninth in an international ‘Quality of Death’ index. “Despite the progress the hospice palliative care movement has achieved, the report shows that globally, huge disparities in the quality of care remain,” explains Sharon Baxter, Executive Director of the Canadian Hospice Palliative Care Association (CHPCA) and member of the Board of Trustees of the Worldwide Palliative Care Alliance.

Commissioned by Singapore based The Lien Foundation, the ‘Quality of Death’ index measures current hospice and palliative care environments across 40 countries in terms of the quality and availability of end-of-life care. The index scores countries across the following four categories:

- Basic end-of-life health care environment;
- Availability of end-of-life care;
- Cost of end-of-life care; and
- Quality of end-of-life care.

“This is the first report to rank end-of-life care on a global scale and it is important for federal/provincial/territorial governments, health care providers and Canadians alike to understand how Canada is doing compared to other countries and what we could do better,” explains Ms. Baxter.

As the world’s population ages, the demand for end-of-life care will continue to increase. According to the Worldwide Palliative Care Alliance (WPCA), while more than 100 million patients need palliative care annually, fewer than 8 million actually receive it. In Canada, only 16% to 30% of Canadians who die currently have access to or receive hospice palliative end-of-life care services depending on where they live.

Although ranking high in terms of availability to pain medications, Canada rates poorly on the cost of end-of-life care for families. Canadian families frequently shoulder 25% of the total cost of palliative care due to costs associated with home based services such as nursing and personal care services. When asked, most Canadians indicated that they would prefer to die at home surrounded by their loved ones yet many cannot afford this. As the demand for home care increases in Canada, it has not necessarily been followed by an increase in funding for these programs.

“Despite our progress over recent years, this report clearly shows that hospice palliative end-of-life care needs to be an even greater priority in Canada in order to support an aging population,” explains Wendy Wainwright, President, CHPCA. “We have considerable knowledge and
experience in providing hospice palliative care. All Canadians have the right to have equal access to this excellent care at the end of their lives.”

To download a copy of the full report, visit: www.qualityofdeath.org

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ii Canadian Institutes for Health Information. *Health Care Use at the End of Life in Western Canada* (Ottawa: CIHI, 2007).
iii Costs associated with resource utilization during the palliative phase of care: a Canadian perspective, Palliative Medicine, Dec 2009.
iv Canadian Institutes for Health Information. *Health Care Use at the End of Life in Western Canada* (Ottawa: CIHI, 2007).