



THE CASE FOR MORE FUNDING FOR ONTARIO HOSPICES
**SUBMISSION OF HOSPICE CARE OTTAWA TO THE FALL 2020 BUDGET
CONSULTATIONS**

Hospices provide a more dignified and respectful end of life experience at a third of the cost of acute care hospital beds. The hospice approach is needed more than ever as society is becoming more aware about the support and resources necessary to provide quality care at end-of-life. However, hospices in Ontario have been struggling financially and we need to change the funding model to address critical short and long-term financial strains.

That is why Hospice Care Ottawa is enthusiastically supporting the pre-budget proposal of Hospice Palliative Care Ontario submitted on September 4th. HPCO is asking the Ontario government to change the funding formula so that 100% of clinical costs are covered—right now hospices only receive from 50 to 60% of their costs from the government leaving them to face the enormous task of fundraising the remaining amount to pay staff and provide services.

Hospice Care Ottawa is a good example of the value proposition of hospices and the challenges they now face. In Ottawa, HCO provides high-quality care to patients during their end of life journey as well as grief and bereavement support for their families at no charge. We provide community programs from three facilities and operate two residences—the May Court Hospice with nine beds in Ottawa South and Hein House at Ruddy Shenkman Hospice in Kanata with 12 beds. Those 21-beds save the health care system at least \$4.4 million per year as we free up hospital beds and relieve hallway medicine and ER crowding while delivering holistic palliative care that is valued by patients and family.

COVID-19 has added to the challenge. During the pandemic, we have continued to operate COVID-free but this has come with a price. Staff costs have increased because most of our legion of about a thousand volunteers has had to stay home. We need to fundraise about \$2.2 million every year, or about 40% of our operating costs, to offer our services. However, fundraising has declined significantly with the pandemic. We may have had to curtail services had it not been for the federal government's emergency wage subsidy.

Though the pandemic has aggravated the situation, the financial strain has been ongoing. We feel that the HPCO proposal to cover 100% of our clinical costs would go a long way to resolving our issues and be a fair and sustainable solution. This would also allow us to open much needed hospice beds in East Ottawa to better meet the needs of our francophone community.

Hospices are a vital part of the health care system in Ontario, and with an aging population they are needed more than ever. Changing the funding model will mean we can continue to provide cost-effective health and social services at end of life. Together we can better position hospices as part of a more caring and compassionate health care future in Ontario.