

News Release

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Canadians call for Palliative Care to be enshrined in Health Act *Lay Panel representing Canadians reach consensus at national conference*

After hearing from more than 1,500 Canadians in a national survey and meeting with experts for three days in Ottawa, a citizens' lay panel has delivered a Consensus Statement, calling for palliative care to be enshrined in the *Canada Health Act*, woven into the health care system and guaranteed for all Canadians. Led by veteran journalist Don Newman, the panel called for a stronger, integrated approach to home care, allowing Canadians to be supported at home in their final days.

Covenant Health Palliative Institute and 13 of Canada's leading [national health organizations](#) led the *Palliative Care Matters* Consensus Development Conference that was held November 7-9, 2016, in Ottawa. The lay panel of 12 Canadians heard scientific evidence from an academic expert panel and made several recommendations in their Consensus Statement to improve palliative care in Canada.

An Ipsos survey conducted this summer on behalf of the initiative clearly showed that Canadians prefer to die at home, with 90 per cent responding that patients should have the right to receive care in their own home at the end of life and 86 per cent indicating that the public health system should cover the costs of palliative care so everyone can access it as needed.

The panel asserted it is critical palliative care become an insured service under the *Canada Health Act*, and made 20 specific recommendations, including that:

- The *Canada Health Act* be amended to include integrated, palliative home care with portable universal access and support for patients and caregivers, customized to patients' medical and psycho-social needs;
- The federal government provide substantial and sustained funding for the development of a national strategy, including capacity building, standards development and monitoring, and research;
- Every physician in Canada be able to provide basic palliative care and that accrediting and licensing bodies and professional colleges ensure competencies are taught and tested; and
- A wide-spread public awareness campaign about palliative care support the implementation of a national palliative care strategy.

"Chairing such a diverse and discerning lay panel has been a tremendous privilege and learning opportunity. Support for Canadians and their families at end of life is one of the most important issues we face as a civil society," said Don Newman, Chair, Lay Panel, *Palliative Care Matters*. "Ensuring that the suffering of our fellow citizens is alleviated is at the heart of a civil society. It isn't enough to care;



Canada must turn its caring into legislation that ensures that palliative care is a part of the Canadian health system and receives the attention and resources it needs.”

“We have been so inspired by the participation of people across the country in this initiative. Through this conference we have been able to enrich this lived experience with the work of thought leaders to create a shared vision for the future of palliative care. We hope that health providers and policy makers reflect thoughtfully on the consensus that was reached here,” said Karen Macmillan, Co-Chair, Senior Operating Officer at Covenant Health.

“Governments across Canada are talking about palliative care as part of the Health Accord. This is a once in a generation opportunity to make a difference in palliative care and the Lay Panel’s recommendations should be part of the change Canadians want and deserve,” said Fred Horne, Conference Co-Chair, and former Alberta health minister and health policy consultant.

Specific recommendations for each of the [six questions](#) posed to the academic panel may be found in the [Consensus Statement](#).

The *Palliative Care Matters* initiative began with listening to Canadians through focus groups and the Ipsos Research survey and it continued with the Lay Panel members, chosen for their ability to represent the views of broad groups of Canadians.

The third and final phase of the initiative will be a report in early 2017 from the Conference Board of Canada which reviews the Consensus Statement and outlines how the recommendations can be implemented.

Covenant Health is Canada’s largest Catholic health care organization and its Palliative Institute is committed to relieving suffering for patients and their families.

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