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### **Covenant Health commends landmark federal report for recommending integrated, national palliative care strategy**

*Canadians should have access to quality end of life care regardless of where they live or die*

Edmonton, Alberta--Covenant Health commends the important work of the Parliamentary Committee on Palliative and Compassionate Care, which released its landmark report "Not to be Forgotten: Care of Vulnerable Canadians" yesterday. Covenant Health contributed to the report--formally presenting to the committee in Ottawa, preparing a written submission and participating in round-table discussion.

"We wholeheartedly support the Committee's recommendations on Palliative Care and End of Life," says Karen Macmillan, Covenant Health executive lead for Palliative Care. "We are grateful for the opportunity to contribute to this critical national dialogue on the need for compassionate care for all vulnerable Canadians."

The six recommendations on Palliative Care include:

- the re-establishment of a national Palliative Care Secretariat with adequate funding to conduct and support research, and facilitate communication and collaboration across sectors
- the development of a flexible integrated model of palliative health care delivery that takes into account Canada's geographic, regional and cultural diversity, along with a funding mechanism
- a public awareness campaign on palliative and end-of-life-care

Dr. Gordon Self, Vice President, Mission, Ethics and Spirituality who co-authored Covenant Health's contribution, says the report has implications for every Canadian. "By virtue of the human condition, we are all vulnerable," he says. "The kind of compassionate society we become will be defined by how well we as a community engage this critically important dialogue and demonstrate a capacity to be with another in our vulnerability."

Serving as part of Alberta's integrated health system, Covenant Health works collaboratively with Alberta Health Services as a significant provider of palliative care in Alberta. Covenant Health operates 71 designated palliative care beds and provides quality care at end of life in rural and urban communities and in acute and continuing care settings. Covenant Health's Tertiary Palliative Care Unit at the Grey Nuns Community Hospital in Edmonton is a world-renowned teaching and research centre in palliative medicine, pain and symptom management.

Committee Co-Chair Joe Comartin, MP for Windsor-Tecumseh was in Edmonton today touring Covenant Health palliative care units and speaking to caregivers. "Through our study, we learned some troubling statistics that only 16-30% of Canadians who need palliative care are able to access it," he said. "I am heartened by the commitment of organizations like Covenant Health and proud of what the Committee has accomplished working across party lines to work cooperatively for vulnerable Canadians."

Covenant Health's comprehensive Palliative Care and End of Life Strategy aims to meet the needs of Albertans at the end of their life journey through investment in four key areas--education of health care professionals, volunteers and public; research; clinical services best practice and service planning and consultation services for front line providers.

"We believe that all Canadians should have access to quality end of life care regardless of where they live or die," says Karen Macmillan, "A co-ordinated, flexible, and integrated approach to palliative care is critical. And education and awareness are key to preparing Canadians for this important stage in their lives and for helping families and loved ones--and all caregivers--cope with the challenges, make informed decisions, and experience quality of life at time of death."

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**Covenant Health** is Canada's largest Catholic health care organization with over 14,000 physicians, employees and volunteers serving in 12 communities across Alberta. A major provider in Alberta's integrated health system, Covenant Health works with Alberta Health Services and community partners to positively influence the health of Albertans through a broad range of programs and services. [www.covenanthealth.ca](http://www.covenanthealth.ca)