

TDC 2025.02: The Federal Government to Follow Through with the Formation of a Health Canada Office of Palliative Care.

1 RESOLVED, that the Toronto Diocesan Council of The Catholic Women’s League of Canada in
2 its 104th Annual General Meeting assembled through the national council of the Catholic
3 Women’s League of Canada urge the Federal government, to follow through with the formation
4 of a Health Canada Office of Palliative Care to coordinate universal, early, equitable access to
5 comprehensive community Palliative Care across Canada; and be it further

6 RESOLVED that this resolution be forwarded to the Ontario Provincial Council of The Catholic
7 Women’s League of Canada for consideration at the 2025 provincial annual meeting of
8 members/convention.

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Gifted by Peel Region of The Catholic Women’s League of Canada

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1 The report ‘Access to Palliative Care in Canada, 2023’ indicated that only 58% of the 89,000 2021-
2 22 deaths, accessed Palliative Care (PC), a 6% increase from 2018. Of these only 36% of PC
3 recipients had their desired setting of home (CIHI 13). Further noted is the ongoing need for access
4 earlier during the illness, in conjunction with therapies intended to prolong life (HC, a 5); as half
5 of the PC recipients died within 22 days of their diagnosis (CIHI 14). Of those Canadians living
6 with Dementia, only 39% received PC and older Canadians were noted as less likely to have access
7 (CIHI 15; 16). With 21% of our Canadian population over 65 years (WHO c 2); and 92% of them
8 living in private dwellings with one or more life limiting illnesses, there is an inevitable looming
9 demand for increased early integrated PC access (Public Health Agency of Canada, (PHAC) 3; 6;
10 8).

11 The WHO definition of Palliative Care (PC) states:

12 [It is] an approach that improves the quality of life of patients - adults and children – and
13 their families who are facing problems associated with life-threatening illness. It prevents
14 and relieves suffering through the early identification, impeccable assessment and treatment
15 of pain and other problems, whether physical, psychosocial, or spiritual (WHA 1).

16 The 2014 World Health Assembly (WHA) resolution ‘Strengthening of Palliative Care as a
17 Component of Comprehensive Care Throughout the Life Course’ in part urged member states to
18 “integrate evidence-based, cost-effective and equitable palliative care services ... with emphasis
19 on primary care, community and home-based care, and universal coverage” (WHA 3). PC was
20 then recognized as a right to health (WHO a 2). Between 2014 and 2023, the Federal government
21 developed regulatory changes to the Criminal code that led up to the enactment of Bills C-14 and
22 C-7; and “required the Minister of Health to publish annual reports” (Government of Canada 1).

23 The 2018 Framework and 2019 Action Plan on Canadian Palliative Care aspired to train and
24 educate healthcare workers and caregivers; provide supportive resources for care providers and
25 caregivers; research PC and collect pertinent data and increase equitable access for vulnerable
26 Canadians (Health Canada. (HC) a 14; HC b 1). Palliative Care experts emphasize the value of
27 “develop[ing] national palliative care standards and quality indicators tied to health care funding”
28 (Expert Palliative Care Panel 3).

29 Recognizing the complexity of implementing the PC framework, Health Canada stated that they
30 would “establish the Office of Palliative Care (OPC) to provide high level coordination of
31 activities going forward. ... [to be] resourced internally through existing funds within Health
32 Canada” (HC a 28; Parliamentary Budget Officer, (PBO)1). Although “12 of 13 provinces and
33 territories have published PC frameworks (HC a 6; Appendix B); and national, regional and local
34 organizations are slowly improving access, currently there is no Health Canada Office of Palliative
35 Care to provide coordination across Canada.

36 PC is still not universally accessible to many (CIHI 13-14). The WHA report provided
37 governments with actionable indicators guiding implementation of national PC (WHO b xi).
38 Health Canada is urged to follow through with the creation of an Office of Palliative Care to guide
39 provinces and territories with the provision and monitoring of national Palliative Care standards.

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Action Plan

- 1 1. Write letters to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Health and to local MPs urging
2 the government to follow through with formation of an Office of Palliative Care for the
3 creation of national policies and standards to direct provincial and territorial governments
4 in providing vulnerable Canadians with access to early comprehensive community PC.

- 5 2. Increase communication education and advocacy efforts in parishes, schools and
6 communities through guest speakers, hosting the CCCB Horizons of Hope program,
7 participating in 12 Hrs. of Prayer for Palliative Care and / or distributing pertinent
8 postcards / information.

- 9 3. Continue to monitor / follow-up with pertinent government bodies on the progress related
10 to this resolution.

- 11 4. Consider using your gifts to begin a conversation / partnership for action to promote /
12 advocate for increased access to Palliative Care in your parish /community / province.