

The Toronto Commandery

HOSPICE

To go gently into that good night: When quality of death can enhance quality of life—The Globe and Mail, Focus, March 17, 2012

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/life/health/end-of-life/where-quality-of-death-can-enhance-quality-of-life/article2372279/>

Lisa Priest's timely article on hospice care showed that a residential hospice offers a way to die in comfort with dignity and family support. She noted how hospices save provinces a significant amount of money and to ignore it would be irresponsible. She illustrated the diversity of people that a hospice helps: male, female, young and old dying from many causes. She addressed the nature of hospitals that are built to cure and discharge patients, while they are not geared for end of life care. Neither the cost nor the quality of life can be disregarded.

There are some bright lights in the hospice movement as new hospices have been established. But Toronto faces a problem that the article did not address.

While smaller communities have been able to build residential hospices, real estate costs and availability of land is a significant hindrance for hospice beds that would serve Toronto residents. Most exist at the generosity and foresight of larger institutions: Kensington Hospice had a chapel; Dorothy Ley Hospice and Emily's House are on land donated by hospitals. The demand for Toronto land makes hospice development prohibitive unless land is donated.



After an 8 year search, we were gifted a private donation of a \$2 Million parcel of land. Then we hit a new wall. City planners must approve such projects, but hospices are absent from their lists of approved land use and like many people, they do not understand the nature or impact of a hospice compared to a hospital. In a city where developers have difficulty finding land, municipal bureaucrats now tell us that, in their opinion, hospice is inappropriate land use for the land that we have been gifted and we should find another location.

There is no residential hospice care to serve the residents of North York, East York and

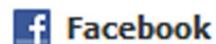
Scarborough, but planners do not seem to see that as their problem. The benefit to future patients and their families is of no relevance to "the Plan". The known savings to taxpayers are of little interest. Health care is a provincial responsibility and the Minister of Health is aware and in favour of the project. Her ministry has committed funding for nursing care. But after eight years looking for land, we now face a projected two years of pointless fighting with the city to get approval for the site, with no guarantees.

On one hand, Torontonians have come together to build a hospice that will be a help to a significant number of families at a time when they most need it. People have volunteered their time and made donations that will both help our Community and reduce health care costs, the most significant the tax burden that we carry. On the other hand, the government that "is here to help us" is standing in the way. City bureaucrats face us like guards – protecting what? The province has limited help because the Minister does not "want to underplay how challenging our fiscal reality is right now." Does that mean that times are so tough that the province does not want to save money? Is a \$10,000 saving

per person not worthy of action?

It is one thing for Canadians to voluntarily work together for a better community. It is another thing to redirect the efforts of those volunteers caring for the needy to lobbying or pleading with different levels governments to encourage them to work with a common focus. How does this make any sense for the well-being of Torontonians?

Philip A. Russel
President
The Toronto Commandery Hospice Inc.



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<http://www.ttch.org>