



October 2011

Newsletter

POLO FOR PALLIATIVE CARE

For the 14th year, The Emerald Chukker had a great day on September 18, 2011. The event has grown to be a full blown day of fun with a delicious lunch, polo games throughout the afternoon, pipers from the 25th Service Battalion and intermission music by The Welsman Brothers Band.

The net proceeds of the event go to The Toronto Commandery Foundation to support the hospice.



If one adds the 198 palliative care beds in the 12 hospitals across the city, one can see that more hospice beds are needed to replace end of life pain and suffering with comfort and care, to say nothing of reducing the patient burden and cost from hospital emergency rooms and pain clinics across Toronto.

GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE

Provincial assistance for nursing care has recently been increased to approximately \$80,000 per bed annually. Unfortunately all hospices still depend on Community support to build and maintain their buildings and provide all the non-nursing personnel required. By donating to a hospice, one is helping the hospice relieve pain and lift the health care tax burden that is becoming unmanageable for the province.

SITE PROGRESS

The most daunting task facing us to date has been finding a location for the hospice that would enable us to serve north and east Toronto residents. We would like to acknowledge and thank James Fryett, Architect. Jim and his firm have visited sites with us to help evaluate appropriateness and associated costs, whether we are looking renovating or building new. Although sites are currently being evaluated and negotiated, the search for alternatives has not stopped.

THE NEED

We are often asked about the need for hospice in our community. Currently there are no residential hospice beds in North York, East York or Scarborough. In the whole of Toronto, Dorothy Ley (10), Perram House (8) and the Kensington Hospice (10) bring us to 28 beds for the city. The Philip Aziz Centre (Pediatrics), after years of red tape, has just put a shovel in the ground.

VOLUNTEERS

A cornerstone of the hospice movement is the use of volunteers to reduce costs, so when we are ready to go we will need volunteers. There will be a training program for everyone who volunteers.

PATIENCE

As all hospices have learned, the process of establishing a hospice is a long one. Nevertheless, every dollar donated is there helping to build the necessary funds.

As year-end approaches, many of you will be reviewing your annual giving and we hope that you remember the hospice. One can donate by VISA or MasterCard, on line at CanadaHelps.org or by cheque and tax receipts will be issued promptly.

Hospice Need Is Recognized, But Little Done To Address It

Written by Luc Rinaldi, The Catholic Register Wednesday, 24 August 2011 08:22

TORONTO - For six years, the Toronto Commandery Foundation has been trying to find a site for a hospice that will allow terminally ill people to die with dignity.

But as the foundation has discovered, though everyone seems to agree on the need, no one wants to address it.

The foundation, a charity established with the co-operation of the Order of St. Lazarus, has spent its entire existence searching and negotiating for a site in North York to host a 10-bed end-of-life care facility. Though unsuccessful so far, there are no plans to stop looking any time soon.

"We've got all these oncologists saying we need a hospice, but there's just nowhere for them to go," said Jacqueline Wood, director of the foundation.

The Toronto Commandery Foundation was created out of this need, shared by a vast majority of Canadians. According to the Canadian Palliative Care Association, three-quarters of the 220,000 Canadians who die every year are

in hospital or long-term care, while only 15 per cent have access to palliative or hospice care. On average, the cost of a bed in a hospice per day is \$439, while a bed in a hospital or long-term care is nearly double.

Progress is being made, however, to make hospice care available to more Ontarians. Since 2005, the Ministry of Health has committed more than \$120 million to end-of-life care, creating 6,000 more spots for terminally ill patients.

"(End-of-life care) is an important component of the health care system," said Andrew Morrison, spokesperson for the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. "It's an area that often has an unfortunate outcome, nevertheless, it aims to reduce the suffering and improve the quality of life of patients."

Palliative care is also a major part of the ministry-sponsored Integrated Client Care Project, a multi-year initiative still in development that aims to increase the efficiency of various branches of health care.

The Ontario government has committed to cover nursing costs of the Toronto Commandery Foundation once its hospice finds a home. But the problem still remains finding a location. The foundation has been unable to arrange to use land owned by any of its three preferred sites: North York General Hospital, Sunnybrook Hospital and St. John's Rehab Hospital.

"We've done everything that we can do," said Wood, who has volunteered and worked in hospice care for 26 years.

"We've looked at 13 locations. We've put together a complete business plan."

But for Wood, it's not about money.

"We believe you take care of life from birth to death," she said. "It's the holistic approach of hospice that people need." This approach focuses on allowing terminally ill people to spend their last days doing "whatever they'd like to do." The

Toronto Commandery Hospice would be a home-like setting, complete with a kitchen, dining room and living room, Wood explained, where each guest has their own room.

"You try to fulfill their spiritual needs... even if it's just holding their hand," she said. "They can laugh and joke and even have a drink for God's sake."

In the past quarter of a century, Wood has seen plenty of people in their last days in hospice care. Whether it's the quiet environment, having family around or even inviting friends over to share pizza at midnight — as a resident did in one of Wood's past hospices — dying people appreciate this type of care, she said.

"Every hospice where I've been, the Catholic Church — the Catholic conscience — is always there," said Wood. "We believe in the sanctity of life. If you choose to die with dignity, you never die alone."

Rather than curative care, which is the focus in hospitals, hospices focus on comfort and quality of life while it lasts. "Hospice is a philosophy of care," said Wood. "You treat the whole person, you don't treat the disease."

For more information, see www.ttch.org.