

Ottawa's Action Plan on Palliative Care gets mixed reviews

Health Canada's five-year [action plan on palliative care](#) is a "lacklustre" effort that fails to commit enough resources, says the Member of Parliament whose private member's bill led to the plan.

"There was such a big opportunity to do more for palliative care and they've really missed the boat," said Conservative MP Marilyn Gladu, who tabled Bill C-277 in the House of Commons in 2016. "Seventy-per cent of Canadians have zero access to palliative care."

"We need to see more hospice facilities; more home care; expansion of existing programs for paramedics to deliver palliative care and work to address the gap in palliative care physicians, nurses and personal support workers across the county," she said following the announcement of the plan on Aug. 20.



MP Marilyn Gladu

Gladu's bill, *An Act to Establish a Palliative Care Framework*, passed with all-party support in 2017 and called for the federal government to develop a plan in consultation with provinces, territories, and stakeholders.

One of those stakeholders, Pallium Canada, welcomed the plan as a step in the right direction.

"The Action Plan outlines best practices that Pallium has championed for many years such as a focus on supporting both the health care system and the

communities in which we live in order to provide better palliative care to Canadians” said Jeffrey Moat, chief executive officer of Pallium.

The non-profit works to build “professional and community capacity to help improve the quality and accessibility of palliative care in Canada.”

Moat said the plan is a start, “but like any blueprint, the implementation – with measurable outcomes for Canadians – is the bottom line.”

He said the organization wants to see the government play “a strong leadership role promoting palliative care innovation across the country through its stakeholder groups,” and he applauded Health Canada for the public awareness components of the action plan.

“Public education will help deepen a national understanding of what a palliative care approach has to offer Canadians,” said Moat.

The plan calls for:

- Raising awareness of how palliative care can improve quality of life until end of life
- Supporting improvement of palliative care skills for health care providers, families and caregivers
- Increasing data collection and research
- Improving access to palliative care for underserved populations
- Improving access to “culturally sensitive” palliative care for Indigenous Canadians.

The Health Canada announcement said the federal government has committed \$6 billion over 10 years to provincial and territorial governments for palliative and home care services and another \$184.6 million over five years for palliative care for Indigenous communities.

“What we need is to put the resources in place to address the gaps in partnership with the provinces and territories,” Gladu said.

“Nobody needs to raise awareness on palliative care. Everyone has a family member or friend who’s been touched by the need for palliative care.”