

A Path Forward for Hospice Care in BC—A Bold Collaborative.

Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic and fast-growing number of older adults in BC challenged by frailty, serious illnesses, grief, and at end-of-life have created an unprecedented need for compassion, support, resources, and care in our communities. Access to resources to support these escalating needs varies among health jurisdictions. These experiences can be physically and emotionally painful for the affected individuals and families. Like elsewhere in Canada, older adults in BC increasingly want to stay safely at home, and to have a say in their care and death—a desire that will challenge current health and social systems.

At a time when the need is increasing for affordable, flexible psycho-social and practical support in the hospice palliative care (HPC) sector, leaders of HPC organizations in BC took action in response to this need. These leaders surveyed over 70 community hospices province-wide; brought together 36 provincial hospice palliative care stakeholders to form a think-tank roundtable; and based on its findings wrote the first of its kind provincial report outlining ground-breaking recommendations.

This provincial survey, with an unprecedented 76% response rate, revealed the strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for improvement for BC's hospice care. The results of this research were pivotal in the discussions and provided a meaningful framework to innovate and identify opportunities to bridge the gaps. The outcome, *Hospice Care in British Columbia: The Path Forward* report, proposed 10-steps, including: building an alliance, increasing engagement of qualified and trained volunteers, developing standards for care and standardized training approaches, developing effective partnerships in underserved communities, and advocating strategic policies.

Community hospice organizations are well-placed to support this 10-step plan, which leverages the existing volunteer-driven services and prepares them to focus on the needs of people, supporting them to live the best possible quality of life in the place of their choice with needed supports.