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NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Health

Action plan, centre for excellence, hospice funding to support end-of-life care

VANCOUVER – Health Minister Margaret MacDiarmid today released an action plan to improve access to end-of-life care so people can remain at home and in their community longer and committed funding to establish a centre for excellence in end-of-life care.

“Providing end-of-life care helps people in this stage of life to die with dignity in their home community near family and friends,” said MacDiarmid, while visiting the new Vancouver Hospice Society hospice home. “While advances in end-of-life-care have been made in recent years, there are ways we can improve. Our goal is to provide high-quality compassionate, respectful and competent care for all people who are dying and for their families.”

The health minister released the action plan at the Vancouver Hospice Society’s hospice home where she also announced \$950,000 to help complete and equip the new facility. The funding will complete the fundraising needed to construct, equip and operate the home.

“Our hospice home will help provide additional hospice and palliative care beds in the Vancouver area,” said Geri McGrath, executive director with Vancouver Hospice Society. “It will ensure those facing end-of-life issues will have the medical, emotional and spiritual support they need during a challenging time in their life.”

The minister also announced funding to support a number of hospices. Marion Hospice in Vancouver will receive \$2 million, Peace Arch Hospice in White Rock will receive \$3 million and Canuck Place Children’s Hospice will receive \$2 million.

“As the only pediatric hospice in British Columbia, Canuck Place Children’s Hospice is extremely grateful for this funding. It will help us continue to provide urgent, critical care for children and teens facing life-threatening illnesses and their families across the province,” said Margaret McNeil, CEO of Canuck Place. “We are proud to partner with the Province of B.C. and the Ministry of Health and thank them for their continued commitment to pediatric palliative care and the Canuck Place program.”

The Provincial End-of-Life Care Action Plan for British Columbia is intended to guide health authorities, physicians, health-care providers and community organizations in planning integrated primary and community care services to meet the needs of people coping with end of life, including their families and caregivers.

“The action plan is an excellent guide for health-care providers who support persons with life limiting illness at end-of-life, including their families and caregivers,” said Carolyn Tayler, director of End of Life Care Fraser Health. “A key element is the early identification of people who would benefit from a care approach that focuses on their quality of life to identify and address their care goals. This takes into account their beliefs, values and wishes.”

Actions can be summarized in three areas and cover:

- Redesigning health services to deliver timely co-ordinated end-of-life care. Actions include expanding telehealth and telemonitoring and improving the capacity to provide end-of-life care in residential care facilities and other housing and care settings.
- Providing individuals, caregivers and health-care providers with palliative care information, education, tools and resources. Actions include increasing public awareness of palliative care as an approach to care at any stage of a serious illness, translating advance care planning materials into Punjabi and Chinese, as well as supporting end-of-life care education for family doctors, specialists and other health care professionals.
- Strengthening health-system accountability and efficiency. Actions include implementing provincial end-of-life care clinical guidelines, protocols and standards as well as providing equitable access to the B.C. palliative care benefits program.

The action plan supports quality hospice, palliative and end-of-life care services throughout British Columbia – with a focus on supporting individuals with life-limiting illnesses to remain at home in their community, reducing the need for hospital or emergency department visits, and improving co-ordination of care across all settings.

Over the next two years, government will report on the key priorities and actions outlined in the Provincial End-of-Life Action Plan for British Columbia through the Ministry of Health website. The plan is available at: www.health.gov.bc.ca/library/publications/index.html

Government is committing \$2 million through the Provincial Health Services Authority to establish a Provincial Centre for Excellence in End-of Life Care. Once established, the centre for excellence will be expected to accelerate innovation and best practice in the field of quality care for people with life-limiting illnesses. Government’s intent is for the centre to focus on research, education, information management, and policy and clinical care. It is expected that the knowledge and tools it creates will then be shared with health-care professionals and anyone who is interested throughout British Columbia, Canada and worldwide.

Creating a high-quality, sustainable system for palliative and end-of-life care is increasingly important as British Columbian’s population grows and ages, and as more individuals live with long-term illnesses. The percentage of B.C. seniors over the age of 80 years old will grow from 4.4 per cent in 2012 to 7.4 per cent of the population by 2036. At the same time, it is projected that the prevalence of chronic conditions may increase by 58 per cent over the next 25 years.

Two backgrounders follow.

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BACKGROUNDER 1

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Providing support for hospices

Canuck Place Children's Hospice - \$2 million

Government is providing \$2 million to Canuck Place Children's Hospice. Canuck Place offers respite and family care, bereavement counselling, pain and symptom management and end-of-life care to more than 400 children with life-threatening illnesses and their families throughout British Columbia. Canuck Place Children's Hospice is building a second facility in addition to their Vancouver location. The new hospice will be housed within the Dave Lede Campus of Care, located on a two-acre property located in Abbotsford, which will double Canuck Place's current capacity from nine beds to 18 provincially.

Marion Hospice - \$2 million

Government has committed \$2 million to the Tapestry Foundation for Health Care to support the creation of a new 12- to 15-bed hospice in central Vancouver. The new facility will create a permanent home for Marion Hospice, which is operated and staffed by Providence Health Care. The proposal is to create an approximately 929-square-metre (10,000-square-foot) stand-alone facility with up to 15 beds. The facility will be part of a new envisioned campus of care located on the site of the former St. Vincent's Hospital in Vancouver.

Peace Arch Hospice - \$3 million

Government is providing \$3 million toward the expansion of Peace Arch Hospice. The hospice offers private rooms for people in the last weeks or months of life when care cannot be managed at home. Palliative care nurses provide end-of-life care and support 24 hours daily.

Vancouver hospice home - \$950,000

Government is providing \$950,000 to help complete and equip Vancouver Hospice Society's new hospice home. The funding will complete the fundraising needed to construct, equip and operate the home. When opened, the hospice home will provide six beds and employ 15 full-time health-care professionals.

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BACKGROUNDER 2

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Improving end-of-life care for British Columbians

All health authorities have end-of-life programs. In addition, recent improvements to hospice, end-of-life and palliative care include:

- The British Columbia palliative care benefits program provides eligible palliative patients who want to receive care at home with coverage of drugs, supplies and equipment used in palliative care. More than 66,000 clients have received benefits since the program started in 2001.
- The after-hours palliative nursing services provides palliative patients and their caregivers with after-hours, toll-free access to telehealth triage and support for palliative symptoms. The nursing telephone service complements existing supports available through home and community care services during the day for palliative clients and their families.
- In 2009, the palliative care planning incentive fee code for general practitioners was implemented, with the inclusion of specialist physicians in 2012.
- An end-of-life care practice support module was developed in 2010-11 to assist general practice physicians and specialists in providing interdisciplinary, shared end-of-life care with other physicians and allied health professionals.
- In September 2011, British Columbia's laws for incapacity planning changed to give capable adults more options to make their wishes for future health care known, including at the end of life, by naming a representative and/or making an advance directive without needing to visit a lawyer or notary public. To support the changes, the Ministry, in collaboration with health authorities, physicians and patients, developed a provincial advance care planning guide and educational resources.
- As of September 2012, B.C. has a total of 266 publicly subsidized hospice palliative care beds.

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