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Dec 15th 2014



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

*Hon. Rona Ambrose
Minister of Health
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON
K1A 0A6*

RE: Implementing Palliative Care and M-456 within Federal Jurisdiction

Minister Ambrose,

It has been nearly six months since you and your colleagues gave your support for Motion 456 regarding the need for a Pan-Canadian Strategy for Palliative Care. Since then, the government has been very quiet on any steps it is taking in terms of implementing this strategy. The recent Ontario Auditor General's report shows the patchwork of services within the region of Ontario that is leading to problems in delivery of palliative services. If you look across the country you will see similar shortfalls affecting patient care resulting in huge costs to the medical system. From your vote in the House on this issue, I know that you share my belief that the federal government can play an important role working with the provinces and territories on establishing best practices when it comes to the delivery of end of life services.

However, even before you begin working with provincial and territorial partners, the Federal government can establish its credibility on the issue by improving palliative options within its own jurisdiction.

The Federal government is responsible for offering health care services, including home care services, to a number of groups namely First Nations and Inuit, Veterans, active members of the Canadian Armed Forces, members of the RCMP, refugees, and federal offenders. These services are offered in programs such as the interim Federal Health Program for refugees, the First Nations and Inuit Home and Community Care Program, and the Veterans Independence Program.

Showing leadership on palliative care will reverse the direction set by your Conservative government when you abandoned the Health Accord earlier this year and when the Conservative government cut the National Secretariat on Palliative End of Life Care in 2007. It will also be following Parliament's leadership when it voted with near unanimous support for the New Democratic Party's motion for a Pan-Canadian Strategy on Palliative and End of Life Care.

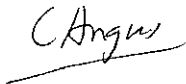
The motion calls on the federal government to work with the provinces and territories to establish a pan-Canadian palliative care strategy. Such a strategy will go a long way to ensuring that we have systems in place to improve outcomes for patients and families. New Democrats believe that the federal

government has a huge role to play in improving health outcomes. Our vision for a Pan-Canadian strategy establishes a strong Federal role in health care to provide better supports and uniform standards.

I think we would both agree that if Parliament does not follow through on this bi-partisan initiative, it would be a real failure for Canadians who look to us to put our partisan interests aside in pursuit of the greater good. Delivering and implementing a Pan-Canadian Strategy must be a collaborative process where the federal government works with experts, the provinces, and Canadian civil society.

It is imperative to start now. Integrating palliative care into federal health services would be an excellent first step to establishing a Pan-Canadian strategy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "C. Angus". The signature is written in dark ink and is underlined with a single horizontal stroke.

Charlie Angus
MP Timmins-James Bay