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## Hospice Niagara – Palliative Care Can No Longer Be Optional

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(St. Catharines, ON) February 6, 2015 - The Supreme Court of Canada has unanimously decided that within certain parameters and definitions, outlined in the ruling, a mentally competent adult has the right to ask a physician to assist them to die. Legislation by provincial and federal governments and medical regulating bodies must be developed within the next 12 months before individuals can access this right. Within this ruling, hospice palliative care providers and healthcare professionals have retained the option not to participate in assisted suicide. This decision on assisted suicide is no excuse to stop or slow important progress required in improving access to palliative care across Canada.

Hospice Niagara will continue to ensure that those people who access our palliative programs and services are treated with dignity and respect. As with all changes to the law, Hospice Niagara will await further analysis of the decision before changing any of our current practices.

Hospice Niagara's Board of Directors affirms that palliative care addresses suffering by combining good medicine with good care. We all want the ability to relieve suffering at end-of-life. By focusing on palliative care first, pain and symptoms, quality of life and family support can be addressed. Universal access to palliative care is the most effective alternative to euthanasia and assisted suicide. It aims to provide the best care.

"We care about the issues that our patients are facing at end-of-life. People are continuing to experience more advanced illnesses and complex medical issues. Palliative care addresses their suffering by providing patient-centred pain and symptom management, says Carol Nagy, Hospice Niagara's Executive Director. "We are working to expand our services across the Niagara Region so that good care at end-of-life is available to everyone. Palliative care can no longer be optional."

Most Canadians are not being referred to hospice palliative care in a timely fashion – the support for living well until dying can be greatly increased.

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