

## Time to fund dying

We are very fortunate to have resources and facilities dedicated to offering palliative care to local residents.

Even with those supports, however, it's not terribly uncommon to encounter someone whose family has experienced a very trying period when seeking to help manage the end-of-life health and support of a loved one as they were dying.

That's because of a host of reasons. One of these is that there is no standard for public access to palliative in Canada. And, even in areas of the country where there are resources for such care, patients in need can fall through cracks in the system because the care networks in place can have knowledge or funding or other gaps that can lead to considerable suffering from dying residents.

Recently, the Canadian Cancer Society added its voice to those calling on Ottawa and the provinces to develop a common standard for accessing and providing palliative care in this country.

"We haven't, as a country, guaranteed this as part of what Canadians have a right to expect from their health care system," said society spokesperson Gabriel Miller in advocating for action on this health care file.

According to the society, the result is that a patchwork palliative care system exists across the nation, with incredible ranges in care standards and access and many dying patients going without beneficial specialized care they might receive elsewhere.

In a recent interview, federal Health Minister Jane Philpott, a physician, suggested that perhaps just 15 per cent of Canadians have access to high-quality palliative care when they need it. "That's unacceptable and we are committed to doing better," Philpott told *The Canadian Press*, in December.

It's encouraging to know the government is aware of this issue.

This is not an aspect of health care where public attention or investments generates the same buzz as, say, acute care. But it's one that governments can no longer overlook.

A health ministers gathering is set for this week in Vancouver.

We hope that rectifying palliative care is a top action item for those key health sector leaders.

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Kevin O'Leary considers running for Conservative leadership.



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## Letters to the editor

### The blue dot needs your support

As the world waits to see what measures our leaders will take from COP21 in Paris to address climate change, grassroots environmental movements are taking root here at home.

Around the globe, protecting our environment has become an urgent issue with more than 110 nations already recognizing their citizens' right to live in a healthy environment. But not Canada.

The Blue Dot Movement, an initiative of the David Suzuki Foundation, seeks to have all levels of government in Canada recognize our right to breathe clean air, drink clean water, and eat healthy food.

Starting locally and building nationally, ordinary people are taking extraordinary action to create lasting change in environmental policy.

In order to build national momentum and shift views on a massive scale, the Blue Dot Movement seeks to engage

the citizens of all communities on a local and grassroots basis.

People here in Halton Hills and across the country are working to get petitions signed and are meeting with mayors and local representatives urging municipalities to issue declarations providing their citizens with the right to a healthy environment.

When enough municipalities have done so, the next step is for each province to include similar wording in a provincial environmental bill of rights. Manitoba is the first of the provinces to do so.

Then, with at least seven of ten provinces representing at least 50 per cent of the population on-side, the movement's attention will turn to amend the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedom.

With municipal declarations already in place in Guelph, Erin, Oakville, Burlington, Hamilton and most recently Toronto becoming the 100th and Milton the 101st community in Canada, shouldn't Halton Hills be next? Let's target Earth Day (April 22) 2016.

Local initiatives have already be-

gun within our community; a float in the Georgetown Santa Claus Parade bringing awareness to the Blue Dot movement and a group of Grade 9 students at Acton District High School preparing for a delegation to town council at a "special" meeting held with the Mayor and councillors at Acton District High School on Jan. 14.

While world leaders are doing their part to protect our blue dot, the Earth, there are things you can do too.

Sign the petition at [bluedot.ca/join-us](http://bluedot.ca/join-us). Like us on [facebook.com/GeorgetownBlueDot](https://www.facebook.com/GeorgetownBlueDot) and support the students in Acton at [facebook.com/BlueDotADHS](https://www.facebook.com/BlueDotADHS).

Follow us on [instagram.com/GeorgetownBlueDot](https://www.instagram.com/GeorgetownBlueDot) and [twitter.com/GtownBDot](https://twitter.com/GtownBDot).

Or email us to help the local movement at [georgetownbluedot@gmail.com](mailto:georgetownbluedot@gmail.com).

Together let's protect the people and places you love.

This Blue Dot is the only home we've got and our children and grandchildren deserve to live in a healthy environment.

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A David Suzuki Foundation