For immediate release
Press release

May 4th to 10th, 2025
National Palliative Care Week
50 Years of Palliative Care in Quebec:
Let's Realize Its Full Potential Together!

Montreal, May 4, 2025 - In January 1975, after years of planning, Dr. Balfour Mount opened the very first palliative care unit in Quebec at Montreal's Royal Victoria Hospital, paving the way for a compassionate, dignified, and person-centred movement. As Dr. Mount so aptly put it: *" When pain and other symptoms are controlled, there really is limitless potential for quality of life at the end of life."*

The Quebec Coalition for Palliative Care Access (the Coalition) is proud to highlight how far we've come since then, and to reiterate the importance of equitable access to compassionate, dignified and comfortable care.

Today, despite five decades of progress, palliative care remains largely misunderstood. Contrary to the perception held by many Quebecers, **palliative care is not limited to pain management in the last days of life**. Rather, palliative care aims to relieve the full range of symptoms - physical, psychological, social and existential - associated with a serious illness. It **should be offered from the moment of diagnosis** and can bring significant benefits throughout the care trajectory. This care **should be accessible across all settings**—at home, in CHSLDs, hospices, and hospitals.

> "Too often, people still believe that palliative care is only for the very last days. However, earlier access helps to better manage symptoms, reduce anxiety and better prepare the patient and loved ones for what comes next," points out **Dr. Justin Sanders**, physician and Director of Palliative Care at McGill University.
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> "Although it has been available for 50 years, palliative care remains a poorly understood subject that frightens people suffering from serious illnesses. Yet, offering palliative care means promoting a better quality of life. It's about alleviating suffering, but also enabling patients and their loved ones to live better every day," adds **Dr. Olivia Nguyen**, physician and president of the Société québécoise des médecins de soins palliatifs (SQMDSP).

A survey conducted by IPSOS in March 2023 reveals a persistent lack of awareness of palliative care in Quebec. **Nearly 80% of respondents mistakenly believe that palliative care is limited to pain management at the end of life**. Less than a third of those surveyed knew that bereavement support is an integral part of palliative care, and less than half were aware that such care is offered in the home. These results underline the importance of raising awareness of this fundamental right and of the many benefits of palliative care.

To celebrate National Hospice Palliative Care Week 2025, the Coalition is inviting the public to view and circulate a video that explains how "Palliative Care is About Living Well", giving voice to those touched by this essential care.

The video and other information on the benefits of palliative care are available on the Association québécoise de soins palliatifs website.

The Coalition also invites everyone to feel empowered to talk with their care team and discover how palliative care can enhance life, at any point in the disease trajectory.

This initiative is made possible by our partners: Alliance des maisons de soins palliatifs du Québec, Association québécoise de soins palliatifs, Institut de soins palliatifs de Montréal, Pallium Canada and the Canadian Cancer Society.

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About the Coalition

The Coalition is a group of some 30 organizations whose mission is to promote, in a spirit of solidarity, equitable access to quality palliative care by promoting the various aspects of this care in Quebec. It salutes the tireless work of palliative care specialists, but also of all professionals who, without being experts in the field, are committed to offering an approach imbued with compassion and respect.

About the AQSP-FISP 2025 Congress

On May 8 and 9, the Quebec City Convention Centre will host the **34th annual congress of the Association québécoise de soins palliatifs** (AQSP), organized this year in collaboration with the Fédération internationale francophone de soins palliatifs (FISP). Under the theme "*Palliative care and community: here and elsewhere*", the congress will bring together professionals, researchers, managers and volunteers from Quebec, Europe and Africa for two days of training, reflection and exchange. This annual event is a unique opportunity to advance clinical knowledge, forge links within the French-speaking palliative care community and recharge our batteries together.

To discover the program, click here.

For further information:
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