

COMPASSIONATE OTTAWA

PROGRESS REPORT, JUNE 2017.

PREPARED FOR PALLIUM CANADA

BEGINNINGS

On November 25, 2016, 45 representatives of a cross section of the community, including palliative care health provider and community social organizations, met to discuss Ottawa as a compassionate community.

There was a strong consensus at the meeting that there would be much to gain to work towards Ottawa becoming a compassionate community for palliative care. Cardus, hosted the meeting and prepared a summary of the discussions, which is part concluded:

“Roundtable participants were clear that the successful implementation of a Compassionate Community (CC) would result in a culture change with the city. The initiative would engage a community of diverse voices working across barriers resulting in a new found synergy. The initiative would foster partnerships among community groups and between community groups and health care providers. Citizens would feel informed and empowered in navigating life changes and end of life care. The movement would be a bottom up mobilization of grassroots networks with public institutions echoing the message

“A successful implementation of a CC approach would result in a citizenry educated in how to access a coordinated network of resources. Conversations about dying and death would not be relegated to quiet corners, but would instead be expressed openly in the public sphere. Advanced care planning would become common practice in Ottawa. There would be space for natural caregivers to give expression to their struggle and grief, and to share their wisdom acquired by experience”

The meeting ended with concrete offers: to assist in raising seed money to support the initiative; to provide assistance in developing the initiative to the next stage; and to provide names of other organizations that needed to be at the table going forward.

LOOKING BACK FROM JUNE 2017

Four learnings can be taken from the perspective of looking back to the beginnings:

- A small group of citizens felt that something needed to be done to improve palliative care in Ottawa. They came together to sponsor the November 25 meeting.
- If there had not been strong support from the participants at the November 25 meeting to take the next steps to create Ottawa as a compassionate community, the initiative would have not moved forward
- The group that would take the initiative forward were not associated with any existing organization. This is different from a number of other CC initiatives which are sponsored by the community residential hospice. There is no right or wrong way to start a CC and it will be helpful to compare different approaches over time
- The vision and mission of Compassionate Ottawa that has been subsequently developed closely follows the philosophy described in the two italicized paragraphs above

GETTING STARTED

To oversee the next stage, a Coordinating Committee was put in place with co-chairs working with a small group of volunteers who were committed to the initiative. It was decided to call the initiative **'Compassionate Ottawa' (CO)** with an accompanying tag line of **Reimagining Palliative Care.**

A number of important first steps were taken:

- Finding a 'backbone' organization that would become the home for CO as there was no desire to create a new not-for-profit organization. The OutCare Foundation stepped forward with an to be the home. An MOU was completed in early 2017.
- Community Foundation Grant. An application for seed money to help establish the initiative was made to the Community Foundation of Ottawa. In early May 2017, the application was approved.
- The volunteer group set out to establish a number of important partnerships with key players in Ottawa. This included the Champlain Hospice Palliative Care Program, Hospice Care Ottawa, Age Friendly Ottawa, and Elizabeth Bruyere Hospital. It was stressed that CO would not be in the business of providing palliative care services but rather to support these organization with its work. Looking back from June 2017 this is exactly how the role of CC has been developed.
- Reaching out to a broad cross section of community organizations who have an interest in palliative care. From December 1, 2016 to April 1, 2017, the volunteer group visited

approximately 35 organizations including school boards, faith groups, social agencies, employers, higher education institutions etc. The clear conclusion of these visits was that the initiative was much needed, it would not duplicate anything currently underway and offers of support and engagement were made.

- The framework that would be followed was the Compassionate City Charter developed by Professor Alan Kellehear in the UK.

DEVELOPING A SHARED UNDERSTANDING OF THE INITIATIVE

The volunteer group which was spearheading the initiative were largely community leaders who had little experience in community capacity building and the complexity of the world of palliative care. We received excellent help from a number of professionals in the field. Mary Lou Kelley of Lakehead University led the volunteer group in a seminar in early January 2017. Bonnie Tompkins, then of Carpenter Hospice in Burlington and now with Pallium Canada shared her experiences with the group. Pallium Canada and Cardus were at the table early on sharing their experiences. The Champlain Hospice Palliative Care Program shared with us their operating and strategic plans to help us better understanding how we could support them with their mandate.

The first time the volunteer group of some 15 individuals came together as a group was on April 10, 2017. This seminal meeting was facilitated by Synapcity, the new name for the Citizens Academy, a grass roots community building not for profit organization. The Synapcity facilitators did a first class job of getting the volunteers all on the same page with respect to what Compassionate Ottawa was all about and helped us develop a draft vision, mission and program priorities.

THE NEXT CRITICAL TEST

The purpose of the April 10, 2017 workshop was to prepare for our second broad community meeting which was held on May 9, 2017. The volunteers worked diligently to ensure that the May 9 meeting represented a more diverse group than the November 25, 2016 meeting.

We were very pleased with the fact that 85 participants accepted our invitation to attend the May 9 meeting, which far exceeded our expectations. This meeting was facilitated by Synapcity and the objective was to review to draft vision, mission and initial ideas of programming with the participants.

The meeting was very successful. A key reason for this is that the communities that came together to discuss Compassionate Ottawa was in many ways not communities that knew each other even though they

worked in various aspects of aging and palliative care. The workshops in the half day meetings brought forward many ideas of how various parts of the community need to come together to create a more compassionate community.

The report on the meeting will be released in early June. In summary, there was strong support for the draft vision and mission for Compassionate Ottawa. In addition the participants made many suggestions about program priorities for consideration. Finally, over 40 of the participants completed a form indicating what they would be prepared to do to help with the initiative.

The next step will be for the volunteer group to reconvene in late June to review the input from the May 9 meeting and determine programming priorities for the next six months.

LOOKING BACK TO EARLY APRIL 2017

The volunteers felt that it was crucial that the April 10 and May 9 meetings be facilitated by experts who knew the health care field, the field of community capacity development and the make-up of Ottawa's many communities. Extensive planning was undertaken between the Synapcity facilitators and a small volunteer planning group. The overall aim of the two meetings was to move beyond concepts and ideas of Compassionate Ottawa to an organization with a vision, mission and programming priorities.

The two meetings achieved this goal.

NEXT STEPS

The work of the volunteer group was greatly aided by the financial support of an anonymous donor at the Community Foundation who provided us with the financial resources to conduct the April and May meetings and with resources to hire a part time staff person to help coordinate the work going forward. It is important to note that everything that has been accomplished to date has been undertaken by volunteers with the assistance of a number of organizations like Pallium Canada, Cardus, Synapcity, and others who have provided in kind services to help us

CONCLUSION

Compassionate Ottawa will not delivery any direct services. Rather, it will work with a wide variety of community partners, matching resources with needs raising public awareness and facilitating volunteer training to meet the ever increasing need for palliative care services in

our community. In this way, CO will complement, support and extend the good work that is already taking place in the city.