

THE CANADIAN GRIEF ALLIANCE

MPP Rudy Cuzzetto
Constituency Office:
Units 1-2, Lakeshore Rd. W.
Mississauga, ON L5H 1E8
Queen's Park Office:
Rm. 5340, 99 Wellesley St. W.
Toronto, ON M7A 1W3

February 12, 2021

Dear MPP Cuzzetto,

Re: Ontario 2021 Pre-budget Consultations

Thank you for the opportunity to meet with you, and to participate in your community consultation on February 5th. We, at the Canadian Grief Alliance, are grateful for these opportunities to highlight the unique needs of an ever growing number of grieving Ontarians as part of the Ontario government's pre-budget consultations.

Sadly, over 6,400 people have died in our province from Covid-19. And over 100,000 Ontarians have died from other causes since the pandemic's start. Research tells us that each death directly impacts nine people, meaning that 1 million Ontarians and counting are currently grieving in isolation, with insufficient support. Communities disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, including racialized and Indigenous communities, are also being disproportionately impacted by grief.

While grief is the natural human response to significant loss, because of Covid-19, individuals, families and communities across our province have not been able to grieve deaths from all causes — both covid and non-covid — in the way we are accustomed. Community-based grief services that were largely under-resourced before the pandemic are now bursting at the seams, unable to meet skyrocketing demand. Bereavement support programs are commonly funded by donations, and we know that Ontarians have less financial resources to donate to vital programs like these. Due to pandemic-related financial hardship, Ontarians also have less resources to pay privately for grief supports.

Without sufficient grief services, the risks for mental health issues to develop will increase for the people of Ontario. That's because when grief is complicated — if circumstances prevent us from having the supports to grieve, it can transform: into depression or anxiety, dependence or addiction, self-harm or the thoughts of it. Federal government spending on mental health since the pandemic's start has not included grief services. And traditional mental health interventions such as those aimed at individuals with depression and anxiety don't actually work for the bereaved and can do more harm.

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Bereaved Ontarians need specialized care and support that addresses their unique needs and experiences, and there are dozens of organizations struggling to meet demands for these services in our province right now.

We, at the Canadian Grief Alliance, urge the Ontario government to commit to investing \$6 million in community-based grief services in the forthcoming budget, so that Ontarians can access the supports they need, and so that mental health, health, social and economic impacts can be mitigated.

We invite you to learn more about the Canadian Grief Alliance here: <https://www.virtualhospice.ca/canadian-grief-alliance>. Attached is the list of national and Ontario organizations who have pledged their support.

Investing in grief services now will help Ontario's economy now and in the long term.

Sincere thanks, again.



Shelly Cory
Canadian Grief Alliance



Maxxine Rattner
Canadian Grief Alliance

National and Ontario organizations in support of the Canadian Grief Alliance proposal

National

Canadian Medical Association
Canadian Nurses Association
Canadian Psychiatric Association
Canadian Society of Palliative Care Physicians
Canadian Association of Social Workers
Canadian Association for Spiritual Care
The Enchanté Network
Young Adult Cancer Canada
Canadian Association of Psychosocial Oncology
Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada
Canadian Aboriginal HIV/AIDS Network
All Nations Hope Network
Dying With Dignity Canada
Canadian Association for Marriage & Family Therapy
End of Life Doula Association of Canada
The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society of Canada
Canadian Alliance for Grieving Children and Youth
Canada Bereavement Registry
Canadian Integrative Network for Death Education and Alternatives
Schizophrenia Society of Canada
Melanoma Network of Canada
Canadian Health Advocates Inc.
Canadian Medical Hall of Fame

Ontario

Hospice Palliative Care Ontario
Ontario Association of Social Workers
RNAO Palliative Care Nurses Interest Group
Centre for Education and Research on Aging & Health at Lakehead University
de Souza Institute
Hope House Community Hospice
Dundas County Hospice
Hospice Outreach Programs of Elgin
Hospice Muskoka
McNally House Hospice
Madawaska Valley Hospice Palliative Care
Hazel Burns Hospice
Hospice Wellington
Dr Bob Kemp Hospice and Bereavement Services
Heart House Hospice
St. Joseph's Hospice Sarnia Lambton
St Joseph's Hospice London

**National and Ontario organizations in support of the
Canadian Grief Alliance proposal**

Ontario (continued)

Hospice Northwest
Roger Neilson House
Evergreen Hospice
Hospice Peterborough
Matthews House Hospice
Doane House Hospice
Kensington Health
Near North Palliative Care Network
Bereavement Ontario Network
Bereaved Families of Ontario – South Central Region
Bereaved Families of Ontario – Ottawa
Bereaved Families of Ontario – Kingston
Bereaved Families of Ontario – Midwestern Region
Healing Broken Hearts
Good Grief! Bereavement Healing Services
Gilda's Club of Greater Toronto
The Hummingbird Centre for Hope
Grief Recovery Ontario
Dr. Jay Children's Grief Centre
Children and Youth Grief Network
The Lighthouse Program for Grieving Children
Seasons Centre for Grieving Children
Jewish Family and Child Service of Greater Toronto
Victorian Order of Nurses - Oxford
Unity Health Toronto
Selah Resources
Hulse, Playfair & McGarry