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## NATIONAL HOSPICE PALLIATIVE CARE WEEK

Statement by:

The Honourable Claudette Tardif

Tuesday, May 13, 2014

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[Translation]

### NATIONAL HOSPICE PALLIATIVE CARE WEEK

**Hon. Claudette Tardif:** Honourable senators, I would like to recognize National Hospice Palliative Care Week, which took place from May 4 to 10. The theme this year was “Busting the Myths about Hospice Palliative Care.” I learned more about this recently when I accompanied my father in palliative care in his last weeks.

I would first like to thank my colleague, Senator Jane Cordy, for the excellent speech she gave on this subject last week.

Unfortunately, too few people in Canada are able to receive palliative care. In fact, depending on where they live, only 16 per cent to 30 per cent of Canadians who need palliative care are able to receive it. That means that Canada is unable to provide valuable palliative care services to over 70 per cent of people who die in Canada.

One of the most alarming problems is the lack of infrastructure in the long-term care sector. As a result of demographic changes, Canada will be short nearly 30,000 more long-term care beds in the next five years alone.

There are also great disparities in Canada when it comes to the coverage and delivery of these services. We have a complicated mosaic of palliative care services in Canada, and there are major disparities both within and between the provinces. Canadians who live in rural or remote regions have severely limited access to palliative care.

What is more, according to the Canadian Hospice Palliative Care Association, families frequently have to shoulder nearly 25 per cent of the total cost of palliative care because of costs associated with home-based services.

These deficiencies obviously have an adverse effect on the quality of care that patients may receive, but also on the overall effectiveness of the health care system. When a patient cannot get the right care at the right time and in the right place, this tends to reinforce the deficiencies in the system, notably by putting extra pressure on the hospitals.

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It's a vicious circle. What is more, the cost of one day in the hospital far exceeds the daily cost of long-term care and home care.

According to the Canadian Medical Association, the lack of access to long-term care and home care costs the health care system roughly an additional \$2.3 billion annually.

Honourable senators, palliative care is one of the most humanist dimensions of our health care system. Every Canadian deserves to have access to such care. However, that is currently not the case, and demographic trends indicate that the problems will only get worse in the next 40 years. It is therefore crucial for governments to invest today in infrastructure and the long-term care sector and better support caregivers who look after a loved one at home. Then we could respond better to changing health care needs and the common aspirations of all Canadians, so that people are able to die as peacefully as possible and with dignity.

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