

April 14, 2021

Immediate federal injection needed for grief services

Grieving Canadian being left behind in recovery plans

(Winnipeg, Manitoba) – As a third and potentially more deadly, wave of Covid-19 sweeps Canada, the Canadian Grief Alliance (CGA) is calling on the federal government, as an emergency measure, to include \$30 million in its upcoming budget to support local grief services across Canada.

“Canadians have been through a parallel pandemic of grief over the last year,” said Paul Adams, spokesperson for the CGA. “But there is no vaccine for grief. It is time for Ottawa to step up to improve access to services for the three million Canadians (see Canada’s grief tracker) who are grieving deaths and other losses during this terrible year and countless others who, in the third wave, will say goodbye via iPad and grieve in isolation without a hug or a hand to hold.”

During the last year, the Canadian Grief Alliance has garnered the support of more than 150 organizations, including the Canadian Medical Association, the Canadian Nurses Association, and the Canadian Psychiatric Association. Despite warnings from grief experts, the government has not acted. As a result,

- Health Canada’s Covid-19 mental health portal does not address grief and offers advice that is detrimental to the grieving;
- Grief services, which were already underfunded have been stretched beyond their capacity;
- Indigenous people, who carry a pre-existing burden of grief from the ongoing impacts of colonialism, and whose communities have been especially hard hit by Covid-19, urgently need resources to develop and deliver culturally appropriate grief services in their communities;
- Health care workers and support staff, who have witnessed suffering on a scale never seen before, are struggling to access support services.

The CGA is recommending Ottawa use a proven community based-delivery model such as the Covid Emergency Community Support Fund to administer applications from health and social services organizations, municipalities, Indigenous organizations and other related organizations. This process would leverage existing community knowledge and resources to target support quickly to those who need it.

“The government needs to pay urgent attention not only to the lingering economic and physical effects of the pandemic but to the deep emotional and psychological effect of grief which can include depression and suicide ideation, which will impact on our economy and our physical health for years to come,” said Maxxine Rattner, grief expert and CGA member.

Canadian Grief Alliance



“The federal government has committed to building Canada back to an even better place than before. It cannot do so without attending to the anguish of the grieving,” said Adams. “We urge the Canadian government to make grief a priority in the April 2021 budget and not to leave grieving Canadians behind.”

Paul Adams

Writer, journalist, academic

Maxxine Rattner, MSW, RSW

Hospice/Palliative Care Social Worker Psychosocial Consultant
Canadian Virtual Hospice

Shelly Cory, MA

Executive Director, Canadian Virtual Hospice

Katherine Kortess-Miller, PhD, MSW

Assistant Professor School of Social Work
Associate Director Centre for Education and Research on Aging and Health, Lakehead University

Please contact:

Tara Skibo
Manager, Communications and Engagement
Canadian Virtual Hospice (CGA founding member)
tara@virtualhospice.ca