

## **A victory for N.B.**

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Saturday night's fundraising gala for Hospice Greater Saint John was a classy, red carpet affair. So was the speech delivered by Social Development Minister Mary Schryer.

Minister Schryer presented Hospice with a cheque for \$120,000 and a commitment that government will work "hand in hand" with Hospice when its residential home opens in 2010.

This was the news Hospice's supporters had been waiting for, and the room erupted in applause - a standing ovation for the government's endorsement and everything hospice's founders have achieved.

This decision will put New Brunswick at the forefront of palliative care in Atlantic Canada. It will establish a major partnership in health care between a community non-profit organization and the provincial government. And it will save the Department of Health money. But first and foremost, it will give New Brunswickers who are dying of terminal illness access to appropriate care.

Government's commitment to this project signals that New Brunswick is a gracious and enlightened place - a place in which compassion has a role in good public policy, alongside cost-effectiveness.

Hospice founder Dr. Nancy Grant, medical director Dr. Chris O'Brien and executive director Sandy Johnson deserve credit for persuading the provincial government to act. They have proven that solid research figures, an open, professional attitude and a positive outlook can prevail even in the political arena.

The province's commitment of operational funding means that Hospice organizers can now focus exclusively on bringing their program into being. This is good news, because the model adopted in Saint John will be the pilot project for hospices in New Brunswick. Physicians and community organizers will be watching to see if its success can be duplicated.

Many details remain to be worked out, but everyone agrees on this project's potential, and that is worth celebrating. As honorary capital campaign chairman Steve Murphy observed, "We have no residential hospice anywhere in Canada east of Montreal; and I think if we could come back in 25 or 50 years we'll see that this was the movement to residential hospice care. Saint John is leading the way for all of Atlantic Canada."