

Lack of support stifling hospice plan

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Suppose you were a provincial cabinet minister.

A non-profit organization comes to you with a plan to provide end-of-life care in a residential setting. It will save the health system more than \$2 million a year, free up hospital beds for the treatment of acute illness, and give dying New Brunswickers better care at no fee. Do you support it?

It's a no-brainer - so why hasn't the provincial government given this plan its blessing?

Hospice of Greater Saint John plans to build a 10-bed residential hospice. It is seeking provincial funding of \$200 per patient per day and has promised to raise \$100 per patient/day itself. The hospice would provide palliative care to 150 patients per year, at a total savings to the province of \$2.28 million - supported by some of the province's top doctors.

The government ignored Hospice's proposal in its 2008 budget, and has declined to consider the project for support in 2009. No public explanation has been offered.

A bank recently turned down Hospice's application for a line of credit on the basis that the province is not committed to the project. Donations are also starting to slow. Government inaction is derailing the project - and for what?

It is inexplicable that this worthwhile project should go wanting while golf courses qualify for government support.

If the Department of Health can distribute corporate headquarters around N.B. like political favours, surely it can fund a program that will give people better care and help government spend health care dollars more wisely.