



*Artist's rendering prepared by Cardel Homes  
backing onto the Cancer Survivors Park*

*"Patients diagnosed with cancer or affected by cancer have physical, emotional, social, psychological, spiritual, informational and practical needs they require to be urgently met"*

*"There is increasing scientific evidence that certain types of group supportive therapy not only enhance the ability of cancer patients to cope with their disease but also prolong their lives."*

*Dr. Jack Laidlaw,  
Canadian Strategy for Cancer Control*

The diagnosis of cancer often leads to a crisis of the body, mind and spirit. While excellent resources have long been available to treat the disease at the medical level, support resources available through the health care system are limited and are primarily focused on the acute phases of the illness. Individuals and their loved ones often have difficulty finding the emotional, psychological and practical support they so urgently require.

The Ottawa Regional Cancer Foundation is creating a **Cancer Survivorship Centre** in Ottawa that will assist cancer patients and the people that are close to them. This initiative has the full support of the Regional Cancer Centre leaders, as well as enthusiastic encouragement from members of the community, including the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer. We have entered into a partnership with **Wellspring** to develop and implement cancer support programs. Our target is to have it built by the Spring of 2011.

The Cancer Survivorship Centre will provide an innovative approach that is designed to complement medical treatments. The plan is to have a house built off hospital grounds, backing onto the Cancer Survivors Park.

- The centre will be non-institutional, non-residential, warm, and supportive
- Programs will be open to ALL people living with cancer as well as their family members and close friends
- All programs and services will be provided at *no cost and without referral*

The programs will provide those living with cancer with a variety of unique mechanisms for coping with the diagnosis, the disease and its effects on patients and family members. All programs will be evaluated regularly. We will offer programs that are not available elsewhere, we will partner with existing cancer support organizations, and work closely with the Regional Cancer Centre. Some examples include:

- Individual support services, offered both on a drop-in basis and as professional counseling—including psychological, emotional, financial and nutritional.
- Support groups that are facilitated and designed to offer practical suggestions in a safe, confidential environment.
- Coping skills: we will offer a variety of programs designed to help people deal more effectively with the diagnosis, treatment and effects of cancer.
- Discussion series that cover various topics such as “New Advances in the Treatment of Lymphomas” and “What is Hope?”

#### **Medical Cost Offset of Psychosocial Oncology Care**

Psychosocial and support programs have been demonstrated to reduce the cost and burden on the medical system by ensuring patients have a better quality of life during their treatments. Side effects can sometimes be better tolerated when coupled with nutrition and exercise programs and mental health counseling. Here are the results of recent Canadian studies clearly defining the need for psychosocial support care:

A group of early stage breast cancer patients participated in 6 weekly psychosocial meetings while another (control) group received usual care. Billing records were obtained covering a 2-year follow-up period to determine the amount billed per person over the course of the study. **Women who participated in the meetings billed an average 23.5% less than the women in the control group.**

Two other Canadian studies show patients receiving psychosocial support make fewer visits to:

- general practitioners
- community or public health nurses
- pharmacists
- hospital emergency departments
- walk-in clinics

There are also costs offset from other social services, in addition to medical costs. A patient with untreated distress may be unable to work and thus drawing workers' compensation or long-term disability insurance. In a one-payer system such as Canada where the capital for these costs comes from the same pool of taxpayer funds as medical service, these additional societal costs could also conceivably be attenuated by timely treatment of cancer-related symptoms and distress.

*The studies above are taken from a report compiled by Linda E Carlson, Department of Psychosocial Resources, Tom Baker Cancer Centre, Alberta Cancer Board and Barry D Bultz, Department of Oncology, Faculty of Medicine, University of Calgary*

To find out more about the new Cancer Survivorship Centre that is being built by the Ottawa Regional Cancer Foundation, please contact:

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