

Résidence
de soins palliatifs
de l'Ouest-de-l'Île



West Island
Palliative Care
Residence

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Palliative care community mourns death of pioneer Dr. Ina Cummings

*First Medical Director of the West Island Palliative Care Residence dies peacefully
at facility she helped create and shape*

KIRKLAND, Quebec, March 21, 2018 – The West Island Palliative Care Residence and entire palliative care community in Quebec and Canada is mourning the death on March 20, 2018, of Dr. Ina Cummings, a true pioneer in the field and the first Medical Director of the Residence.

“We have truly lost a pioneer of palliative care in Canada and someone who played a pivotal role in the development of the West Island Palliative Care Residence,” said Teresa Dellar, Executive Director and Co-Founder of the Residence. “All of us at the Residence in its early years benefited greatly from her experience, compassion and understanding of the needs of those at the end of life. It was an honor to care for her in the place that she helped create. Her legacy will live on through the growth of palliative care services across Canada.”

Dr. Cummings became interested and involved in palliative care in its earliest days in Canada, working with Dr. Balfour Mount at the Royal Victoria Hospital in Montreal in the 1970s when he first brought to Canada the hospice care ideas being pioneered by Cicely Saunders at St. Christopher’s Hospice in London, England.

From that start, she worked tirelessly to help build the foundations of palliative care in Canada, including developing a clinical model for palliative care in a university teaching hospital setting and co-editing the first Canadian manual of palliative care. She went on to author numerous articles and to speak frequently on palliative care, pain and symptom management.

She was a founding member of the Canadian Society of Palliative Care Physicians (CSPCP), one of its early presidents and in 2016 given its Lifetime Achievement Award. In its citation for that award, the CSPCP said, “In addition to personally caring for many patients and families, she paved the way for the growth of palliative care and palliative medicine in this country. We are grateful to her for her pioneering spirit, tireless dedication, warmth and wisdom.”

She also helped found the Canadian Hospice Palliative Care Association, served on its Board of Directors and in 1997 received its Award of Excellence.

She received the Award of Merit from Bishop’s University in Lennoxville, Quebec, in 1992 and in 1997 was granted an honorary Doctor of Civil Laws degree.

Dr. Cummings became the Residence's first Medical Director shortly before its opening 16 years ago, on October 16, 2002, and remained in the position for several years. In 2016, the Residence recognized Dr. Cummings by naming one of its four President's Awards in her honour. The Ina Cummings Award is given annually by the Residence to recognize medical excellence in palliative care. The first Ina Cummings Award winner named in May 2017 was the Residence's current Medical Director, Dr. Geneviève Richer.

Dr. Cummings is survived by her 2 sons, Stanley Ajemian (Bolder, Colorado) and Krikor Ajemian (Toronto) and grandson Paxton. Ina also leaves behind her sister Rita (Angus) and a large community of friends and colleagues.

About the West Island Palliative Care Residence

The West Island Palliative Care Residence is an independent, community-operated facility that is now the largest free-standing palliative care residence in Canada. All services are provided free of charge to terminally ill patients and their families. The Quebec government pays about one-third of the operating budget with the balance, more than \$3.5 million per year, raised in the community from events such as the Valentine's Ball and individual and corporate donations. Recognized across Quebec and Canada for its excellence in palliative care, the facility has welcomed almost 4,000 patients in the final stages of ALS, multiple sclerosis, cardiovascular disease and cancer, as well as their family members. To learn more, visit PalliativeCareResidence.com.

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