

FACTS & INSIGHTS

ELDER CARE

■ Home care and long-term care are large and growing sectors of our economy. More public investment in these sectors would create jobs and stimulate the economy. Ensuring we have a strong public sector in these areas is important because the public sector plays a stabilizing role in the economy when the private sector is in trouble. Also, more public investment in home and long-term care is critically important for women who are the vast majority of the workers in this sector.

■ Canada is facing a major demographic tipping point. The number of elderly Canadians is growing and this trend will accelerate dramatically over the next few decades as baby boomers begin turning 65. The number of seniors in Canada is projected to increase from 4.2 million to 9.8 million between 2005 and 2036, and the seniors' share of the population is expected to almost double, increasing from 13% to 25%.

■ Canadians cherish our universal public health care system because all of us have access to high quality care regardless of ability to pay. But we are abandoning this vaunted commitment when it comes to

home care and long-term care for the elderly. These services are not in-

cluded in the Canada Health Act and are not a fully insured service in any province or territory. Ironically, if an elderly person receives medically necessary services in a hospital, those are provided from the public purse. Yet the same elderly person receiving essentially the same service at home or in a long-term care facility often has to pay for it out of his or her own pocket. Our system is failing to provide tens of thousands of older Canadians with the accessible and high quality care they need and deserve.

■ An estimated 700,000 working Canadians today are part of what is often called the “sandwich generation”. In addition to working in the paid labour force, they also spend countless hours as informal caregivers raising their children and caring for their elderly parents at the same time. An accessible and high quality system of home care and long-term care would reduce the burden on these informal caregivers – who are mostly women.



■ Home care and long-term care workers know there is a gap between the level of care they want to provide and the care they can provide. Low levels of funding, staff shortages, poor working conditions, privatization and profit-taking have created a human resources crisis in the sector.

OBVIOUS SOLUTIONS

- The federal and provincial governments must:
- ◆ Include home care and long-term care under the Canada Health Act;
 - ◆ Increase public funding for home care and long-term care services;
 - ◆ Develop and implement a pan-Canadian human resources strategy for these sectors.

TAKE ACTION

- Visit www.peoplesresponse.ca so you can:
- ◆ Find out about town hall meetings in your community;
 - ◆ Connect with like-minded people and get involved with a virtual campaign;
 - ◆ Make your voice heard by sending an email to your Member of Parliament, completing a short survey, and posting your own note or video;
 - ◆ Download information and other resources such as fact sheets, videos and podcasts.
- Invite your friends, family and colleagues to get involved and speak out.