

FACT SHEET

CANADIAN FEDERATION OF NURSES UNIONS

HOME CARE

THE SITUATION IN CANADA

Home care encompasses a wide range of health services delivered to where a patient lives. Services are provided to recovering, disabled, chronically or terminally ill persons in need of medical, nursing, social or therapeutic treatment and/or assistance with the essential activities of daily living, and to their caregivers.^{1,2}

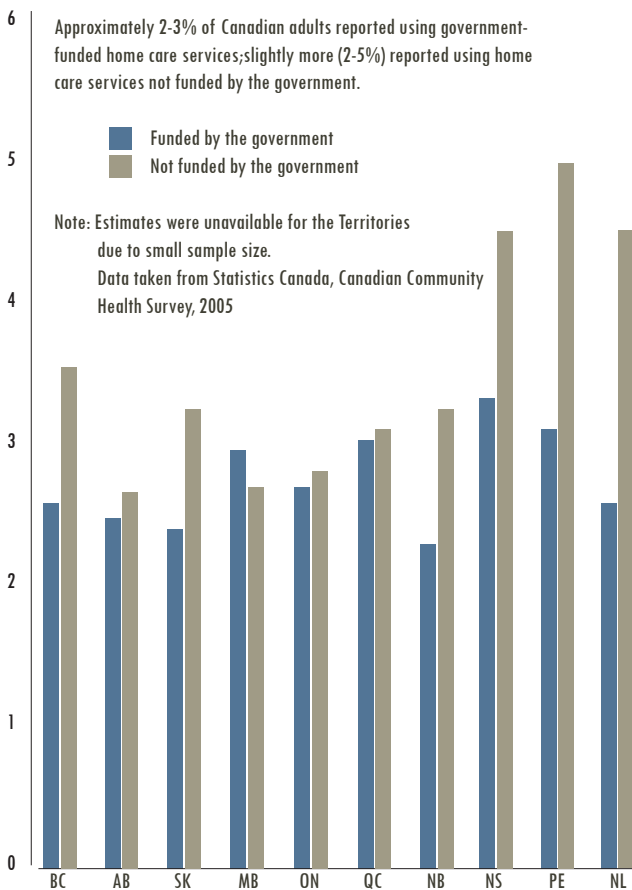
In the 2004 *10-year Plan to Strengthen Health Care*,³ the First Ministers committed to renew home care services in Canada. They agreed to first

dollar coverage for a few specific home care services including: short-term acute home care, short-term community mental health home care, and end-of-life care.

Despite these efforts at home care renewal, a 2008 report⁴ by the Health Council of Canada found that home care, one of the foundations of the Canadian healthcare system, is so stretched that it is not always as comprehensive or coordinated as it should be — leaving patients to fall through the cracks.

- Home care accounted for 3.7 % of total public healthcare spending in Canada in 2007⁵ while hospital spending consistently makes up the largest component of health care spending (28% of total health expenditures in 2008).⁶
- In Canada, there are over 900,000 recipients of home care — over 70% of which are aged 65 and older.⁷
- In 2005, 3-4 % of Canadians aged 65 and older said they needed home care services that they did not receive.⁸
- 4-5 million Canadians are estimated to be caring for a family member with long-term health problems. The estimated economic value of unpaid caregiving is over \$5 billion.⁹
- One in four Canadians cares for a close friend or family member with a serious health problem.¹⁰
 - Women are more likely than men to be caregivers for children, dependant adults, aging parents and intimate partners.¹¹
 - Over 40% of caregivers need to use personal savings to survive during this time.¹²
 - Over 20% take one or more months off work per year for caregiving.¹³
- 78% of Canadians support the development of more home and community care programs as a means to improve the healthcare system.¹⁴

Chart 1: Use of Home Care Services Funded by Government and Not Funded by Government



Source: The Health Council of Canada. Originally appeared as figure 9 in *Fixing the Foundation: An Update on Primary Health Care and Home Care Renewal in Canada*. (Toronto: Health Council, 2008).

CHALLENGES

Pan-Canadian Inconsistencies

The Senate Committee on Aging¹⁵ found that the population across the country is aging at different rates and this creates challenges for provinces to provide a comparable range of services. Home care is not an insured



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health service under the *Canada Health Act*, and as such, results in a wide variation in access to and availability of service across Canada. Provinces and territories vary widely in their provision of support services, medical supplies, equipment and drugs to individuals and families needing care.

Demand

The Canadian home care sector estimates that the number of seniors with chronic conditions requiring home care services will increase by 33% by 2017 to 840,000. Already, the sector has experienced over a 51% increase in the past 12 years.¹⁶

Investment and Supply

The home care sector is facing a crisis in health human resources — both professional and unpaid family caregivers. A pan-Canadian nursing shortage coupled with under-investment in health human resources has severely impacted community and home care services. Family caregivers are experiencing extreme financial, emotional, physical and mental burden due to caregiving responsibilities.¹⁷

Under-investment in home care jeopardizes the sustainability of our entire healthcare system.¹⁸ Inadequate access to home care needlessly pushes people into acute care or long-term care, blocking beds for those who are more in need. For example, when patients who are no longer in need of acute care are unable to be discharged because they have no supports in place to care for them in their home and community — the phenomenon called bed-blocking arises. Bed-blocking leads to over-expenditure in acute care and over-crowding in hospitals, exacerbating wait times. Adequate funding of home and community care can reduce hospital admissions and use of facility-based long-term care — care that can be more costly and often less appropriate for the individual.

SOLUTIONS

Home care is part of the solution to many of the core challenges facing our health system, such as improved patient outcomes, wait times, financial pressures, and hospital and long-term care bed shortages.¹⁹

Government intervention is needed to:

- Expand coverage and access to services through legislation — making home care a focal point of healthcare renewal strategies.^{20,21}
- Increase transparency and accountability through the identification of targets, monitoring progress and public reporting.

- Build a stable workforce — guided by pan-Canadian standards — comprised of caregivers that are skilled, dedicated and have experience suited to home care.²²
- Provide leadership and coordination through initiatives such as a National Integrated Care Initiative, and a National Caregiver Strategy that recognizes the value of family caregiving in policies and legislation which will provide financial support to caregivers and facilitate flexible work environments.^{23,24}
- Create and support an Expert Advisory Panel on family caregiving to develop a multi-sectoral strategy to better support caregivers across Canada.²⁵

- 1 Canadian Healthcare Association. 2009. *Home care in Canada: From the margins to the mainstream*. Ottawa, Ontario: Canadian Healthcare Association.
- 2 *Home and Continuing Care*. <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hcs-sss/home-domicile/index-eng.php>.
- 3 Health Canada. *New Federal Investments on Health Commitments on 10-year Action Plan on Health*. <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hcs-sss/delivery-prestation/tpcollab/2004-fmm-rpm/index-eng.php>.
- 4 Health Council of Canada. 2008. *Fixing the foundation: An update on primary health care and home care renewal in Canada*. Toronto, Ontario: Health Council.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Canadian Institute for Health Information. 2008. *National health expenditure trends: 1975-2008*. Ottawa: Canadian Institute for Health Information.
- 7 Health Council of Canada. 2008. *Fixing the foundation: An update on primary health care and home care renewal in Canada*. Toronto, Ontario: Health Council.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 Canadian Home Care Association. 2008. *Home Care: The next essential service meeting the needs of our aging population*. Ottawa, Ontario: Canadian Home Care Association.
- 10 Canadian Healthcare Association. 2009. *Home Care in Canada: From the margins to the mainstream*. Ottawa, Ontario: Canadian Healthcare Association.
- 11 Neumann, B., Crewe, C., Clow, B. and Amaratunga, C. 2007. *Healthy balance research program: Priorities for caregivers*. Halifax: Healthy Balance Research Program.
- 12 POLLARA Research. 2007. *Health Care in Canada survey: Summary of findings*. Toronto, Ontario: MediResource Inc.
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 Special Senate Committee on Aging. 2009. *Canada's aging population: Seizing the opportunity*. Ottawa, Ontario: Senate of Canada.
- 16 Canadian Home Care Association. 2008. *Home Care: The next essential service meeting the needs of our aging population*. Ottawa, Ontario: Canadian Home Care Association.
- 17 Ibid.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 Canadian Healthcare Association. 2009. *Home Care in Canada: From the margins to the mainstream*. Ottawa, Ontario: Canadian Healthcare Association.
- 20 Health Council of Canada. 2008. *Fixing the foundation: An update on primary health care and home care renewal in Canada*. Toronto, Ontario: Health Council.
- 21 Canadian Healthcare Association. 2009. *Home Care in Canada: From the margins to the mainstream*. Ottawa, Ontario: Canadian Healthcare Association.
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 Canadian Home Care Association. 2008. *Home care: The next essential service meeting the needs of our aging population*. Ottawa, Ontario: Canadian Home Care Association.
- 24 Special Senate Committee on Aging. 2009. *Canada's aging population: Seizing the opportunity*. Ottawa, Ontario: Senate of Canada.
- 25 Silas, L. 2008. *Submission to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Health, Nurses' Perspective: Review of the 10-year Plan to Strengthen Health Care*. Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions.