



*Touching Lives Since 1897  
Au cœur de la vie depuis 1897*

## **NEWS RELEASE**

### **Budget 2007 Recognizes Importance of Dealing with Mental Health but Falls Short on Home Care, Caregiving and Aboriginal Health**

**For immediate release**

**Ottawa, Ontario, March 19, 2007** – By investing in the Mental Health Commission, the Government of Canada has recognized the importance of individuals suffering from mental health issues.

“Each year, more than 20% of Canadians experience some form of mental illness,” states Judith Shamian, President & CEO, VON Canada. “Treatments, supports and services vary greatly from region to region so it is vital that a Mental Health Commission be put in place to address the current disparate system and develop a national approach to mental health issues.”

While it does transfer more funds to the provinces generally, Budget 2007 does not provide specific funds to deal with the pressures of homecare and the millions of Canadians providing caregiving to friends and family throughout Canada. VON made the following recommendations to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance:

#### **Home and Community Care Services**

- Earmark additional dollars for home and community care/community support services;
- Set aside significant dollars to retrain and recruit the best and brightest to a growing yet under-resourced sector; and,
- Examine our country’s home care needs including the use of technology in the home and incentives for not for profit organizations who fill this gap.

#### **Caregiving**

- Support provisions in the tax system to reimburse caregivers for out of pocket expenses similar to the Medical Expenses and Attendant Care Expenses;
- Support a ‘caregiving drop-out’ clause in the Canada Pension Plan (CPP) for caregivers similar to the Child-Rearing Drop-Out provision;

- Allow for contributions to the CPP while one is caregiving and not in the labour market;
- Enhance the compassionate care benefits made available to caregivers under the Employment Insurance Program effective January 1, 2004 by:
  - providing benefits to caregivers of individuals with chronic but not necessarily palliative conditions, and
  - increasing the length of the benefit beyond 6 weeks to include other crisis times during their caregiving career.
- Invest in research, education and promotion of supports for caregivers to strengthen community organizations to respond to caregiver needs;
- Fund the “caregiver portal initiative” - a one-stop source of information currently being examined by VON;
- Invest in a 24-hour, 7 days a week, 1-800 hotline for caregivers to have access to information and to a network of other caregivers; and
- Engage the private sector through Industry Canada or Service Canada to address the needs of employed caregivers through workplace initiatives.

### **Aboriginal Health**

- VON recommends that the Government of Canada provide higher levels of continuing care in First Nations and Inuit communities.
- Support and training for caregivers including CPR, first aid, medication management, and injury prevention;
- Information and case management services for families who provide care to other members of the community and may not be receiving home care services;
- Respite care as an essential component of home care services for caregivers who take on the role;
- Support and training for health care employees to support caregivers; and
- Compensation for caregivers in First Nations and Inuit communities to offset financial costs of care

For more information please go to [VON CANADA'S SUBMISSION TO THE HOUSE OF COMMONS STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE IN PREPARATION FOR BUDGET 2007.](#)

VON is dedicated to being a leader in the delivery of innovative comprehensive health and social services and to influencing the development of health and social policy in Canada. We are a national health organization and registered charity offering a wide range of community health care solutions that meet the needs of Canadians from coast to coast. VON is committed to continuous quality improvement and is accredited by the Canadian Council of Health Services Accreditation.

-30-

**Media Contact:**  
Thea McCarthy  
613-808-6697