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## NEWS RELEASE

### **IN PREPARATION FOR FEDERAL BUDGET, VON REITERATES KEY RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE HOME AND COMMUNITY CARE FOR ALL CANADIANS**

#### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**March 16, 2007 (Ottawa, ON)** —As the demand for home and community care continues to rise, VON (Victorian Order of Nurses) Canada is reinforcing its message to the Government of Canada to support the home and community care sector in the upcoming budget.

Statistics show that between 1995 – 2002<sup>i</sup>, the demand for home care services grew by 60 per cent. The aging population, consumer expectation for home and community care delivery, technology which allows more care to be delivered in the home and a shortage of beds and buildings, all contribute to the increasing trend for home and community care.

“The healthcare system is stretched to capacity but the need continues to grow,” said Dr. Judith Shamian, President and CEO of VON Canada. “VON offers home and community care as a key part of the solution. Supporting the infrastructure and organizations that keep people in the comfort of their homes is a wise financial investment for the Government of Canada, and a wise investment in the long-term health of Canadians.”

There are a number of pressures on the Government of Canada, none more daunting than how to reduce wait times and sustain our health care system. One in three patients<sup>ii</sup> is transferred home upon leaving acute care hospitals. Clearly, the role of home and community care is growing. The Government of Canada has an opportunity to provide leadership in this field and to prevent the same situation in home care as we face today with hospitals – long wait times, shortage of staff etc.

As noted in the Romanow Report, "The costs are generally lower than keeping people in hospital. Based on a major Canadian project known as the National Evaluation of the Cost-Effectiveness of Home Care (Hollander and Chappell 2002), there is growing evidence that investing in home care can save money while improving care and the quality of life for people who would otherwise be hospitalized or institutionalized in long-term care facilities."

In addition to supporting home and community care, in its submission to the Minister of Finance, VON recommended increased funding in the following key areas:

### **Caregivers**

An estimated 2.85<sup>iii</sup> million Canadians find themselves in a caregiver role, saving the health care system more than \$5 billion<sup>iv</sup> annually by providing vital, supportive care to loved ones who may otherwise be institutionalized. Increased funding to support caregivers along with a national strategy need to be investigated and implemented to address the needs of Canada's caregivers. On Monday, February 5, 2007, 150 leaders in the homecare field from across Canada gathered for a national roundtable discussion on the future of homecare in Canada. Convened by the Public Policy Forum, among the many recommendations made, the report calls for Governments to "...recognize the value of shifting funding to the primary care sector to better support informal / nonmedical health and social services and caregivers."

### **Aboriginal health**

VON recommends that the Government of Canada provide higher levels of continuing care in First Nations and Inuit communities. Hospital closures, introduction of early discharge programs and other changes, have placed serious pressures on First Nations communities. These pressures must be addressed with substantial and sustainable funding for home and community care.

### **Nurse Practitioners (NPs)**

With Canada's shortage of physicians in rural and some urban centres, there is a growing opportunity for Nurse Practitioners to fill the gap. Nurse Practitioners can provide much needed service in various communities throughout our country at a price tag that is less than the one attached to a physician. As well, by providing service in under-served areas, the use of Nurse Practitioners will support a focus on health promotion, which is proven to be less expensive than the treatment of illness and disease. The Government of Canada needs to increase funding to provinces so that they can increase the number of Nurse Practitioners servicing rural and remote communities across Canada.

### **Recognizing and supporting the role of volunteers and the voluntary/ non-profit sector**

It is impossible to look at the health care system and talk about how to make program delivery more efficient and effective without acknowledging and supporting the role of volunteers and the contribution made by the non-profit sector. It is estimated that Canada's volunteer sector contributes almost 2 billion hours of service per year, the equivalent of 1 million full time jobs<sup>v</sup>. Volunteers are vital to the survival of the non-profit charitable organizations, which often provide services the Government does not.

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.

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<sup>i</sup> Canadian Home Care Association, 2004

<sup>ii</sup> *Alternatives to Acute Care*, Health Care Quarterly Volume Nine, Number Two, 2006

<sup>iii</sup> Cranswick 2003

<sup>iv</sup> Eales et. al., 2001

<sup>v</sup> Caring Canadians, Involved Canadians. Highlights from the 2004 Canada Survey on Giving, Volunteering and Participating

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