



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

NEWS RELEASE

VON JOINS HEALTH COUNCIL IN CALLING FOR INFORMATION & ACTION ON HOME CARE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 1, 2007 (Ottawa, ON) — The VON (Victorian Order of Nurses), Canada's largest, longest serving, not for profit, charitable home and community care organization is joining the Health Council of Canada to call for information and action on a growing sector of the health care system – home care.

“One of the fastest growing sectors of the health care system, in terms of need, is home care and community services. Yet, despite calls for all levels of government to elevate funding and policy development for this sector, much remains to be done,” said Dr. Judith Shamian, VON President and CEO.

In a supporting document titled, *Canadian Perceptions of the Health Care System*, it is noted that 45% of Canadians strongly support developing more home and community care programs. Home care is one of the fastest growing components of the health care system. Statistics show that from 1995 – 2000, demand for home and community care grew by 140%.

“We know that more and more Canadians want to receive convalescent care, rehabilitation and chronic care at home rather than in an institutional setting. VON recognizes that a good first step was taken when three areas were identified in the 2003 First Ministers' Accord under home care: short-term acute home care, short-term acute community mental health home care and end-of-life care. Yet, even under these three areas, the Health Council is unable to report progress because of a lack of data. How are we going to improve the system if we do not have information upon which to make decisions?” said Dr. Shamian.

On Monday, February 5th, 2007, the Public Policy Forum will host a national roundtable that will shape a vision for the future of home and community-based health care in Canada. The goal of the one-day session is to identify practical recommendations to achieve that vision.

The roundtable will enable the solicitation of views from the top policy makers and practitioners in Canada and begin to flesh out what an optimal Canadian vision for home and community care policies would be.

Other areas of concern for VON unveiled by the Health Council's report include:

- Primary Health Care (PHC) - Although PHC is moving forward in many provinces, there is a need to look at different models of care delivery that make best use of our valuable health human resources while continuing to meet the needs of Canadians. For example, we must utilize Nurse Practitioners and other interdisciplinary team resources to allow more individuals to receive the care they need;
- Electronic Health Records (E.H.R.) - Canada lags behind other countries in the area of electronic health records which ultimately will be a cost savings in the health care system and improve patient safety. VON agrees with the Health Council - an aggressive implementation strategy is absolutely necessary;
- Aboriginal Health - Canadians should be outraged by the major disparities in health status between Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people. Life expectancy is 10 years less; infant mortality is three times higher; suicide is six times higher and diabetes is three times higher. These gaps in health status must be addressed.

VON Canada will continue to advocate for these and other areas, including caregiving, to ensure that the Canadian health care system is able to offer high quality care when and where Canadians need it.

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 quality improvement and is accredited by the Canadian Council of Health Services Accreditation.

-30-

Media inquiries:

Jennifer Stevens
Communications Manager
VON Canada
613-296-7803