



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

## NEWS RELEASE

### **WITH BABY BOOMERS AND ELDERLY FASTEST GROWING POPULATIONS IN CANADA, THE DEMAND ON HEALTHCARE SYSTEM CONTINUES TO INCREASE – VON CALLS ON ALL LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT TO FOCUS ON SUPPORT FOR HOME AND COMMUNITY CARE, CAREGIVERS AND HEALTH HUMAN RESOURCES**

#### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

July 18, 2007 (Ottawa, ON) —According to Statistics Canada's *2006 Census - National Census Snapshot*, Canadians aged 55 to 64 are the fastest growing demographic, accounting for 3.7 million people - a 28 per cent rise from five years ago. The over-80 crowd was the second-fastest growing group in the latest census period, increasing by more than 25 per cent to 1.2 million over five years.

"Canada's growing aging population will continue to have an increasingly significant demand on our healthcare system and labour market. As technology advances, Canadians are living longer therefore placing increasing pressure on the system," says Dr. Judith Shamian, President and CEO of VON Canada. "Canadians want to receive convalescent care, rehabilitation and chronic care at home rather than in an institutional setting. Clearly, the role of home and community care is growing and all levels of government have 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."

Statistics also 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 demand for home and community care. According to Roy Romanow's 2002 discussion paper, *Homecare in Canada*, predictions are that homecare expenditures will jump almost 80 percent between 1999 and 2026. Despite its growth, homecare still accounts for only one out of every twenty dollars the government spends on health.

The shift continues from institutional-based to home and community-based health care and as a result, an estimated 2.85<sup>ii</sup> million Canadians find themselves in a caregiver role, saving the health care system more than \$5 billion<sup>iii</sup> annually by providing vital, supportive care to family and friends who may otherwise be institutionalized. Governments need to recognize the role of family and friend caregivers with policy changes and financial support if we are going to continue to rely on them to deliver care in homes and communities.

Statistics from this report also highlight the continuing health human resources shortage. According to the report, Canada's labour force is at the point where one person leaves for every one person entering it, but will slide into a negative worker replacement ratio, where more people retire from the workplace than enter it, in about 10 years.

In the World Health Organization's (WHO) report, *The World Health Report 2006*, they estimate a worldwide shortage of almost 4.3 million doctors, midwives, nurses and support workers. Highly trained and skilled health care providers are the backbone of Canada's health care system. The healthcare workforce is extremely challenged to train, recruit and retain workers across the sectors. Home and community care is no exception. According to Canadian Nurses Association's report *Toward 2020 - Visions for Nursing*, even if RNs keep working to the age of 65, Canada will lose 13 per cent of its RN workforce by the end of 2006. Canada needs to graduate 18,000 RNs annually. In 2006, Canada fell 10,000 short of that target at 8,000 graduates per year. It is imperative that we find ways to address this shortage of trained health care providers.

VON calls on all levels of Government to:

- Reorganize Canada's health care system to integrate one of the fastest growing sectors - home and community care.
- Recognize the role and value of caregivers across Canada
- Integrate a pan Canadian health human resource strategy to address increasing shortages

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 inquiries:**

Thea McCarthy  
 Communications Coordinator  
 VON Canada  
 Work: 613-288-3462  
 Cell: 613-203-3117

---

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

<sup>ii</sup> Cranswick 2003

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