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NEWS RELEASE

VON BRANCHES JOIN TOGETHER TO BECOME A STRONGER VOICE FOR HOME AND COMMUNITY CARE

For Immediate Release

October 9th, 2006 (Ottawa) – After more than 5 years of dialogue, VON Canada and its network of branches are in the final stages of a transformation that will see VON emerge as a single, national organization focused on improving and enhancing the care and services provided to Canadians at home and in their communities.

For 108 years, VON branches across the country have provided high quality care to more than 1 million Canadians annually. Brought into existence in 1897 to respond to Lady Aberdeen's (the wife of the then Governor General) concern that people in rural and remote Canada were not able to access high quality care, VON is Canada's only national, not for profit, charitable home care and community service provider.

"Five years ago we realized that the increased demand for home and community care combined with the changing market meant that we had to restructure our organization. Last year alone, we grew by 11 percent. This successful transformation will ensure that VON can continue to be Canada's leading home and community care organization for another 100 years," said Dr. Judith Shamian, President & CEO, VON Canada.

The strategy was put in place to:

- Achieve economies of scale through standardization and effectively access and utilize specialized services;
- Improve risk management;
- Improve quality and consistency so that VON policies and procedures are applied consistently across the country;
- Reduce administrative costs to free up funds for local charitable programs; and,
- Enhance the role of the local board so they can focus on building partnerships, raising funds for charitable programs and raising awareness about the work VON does in the community.

“Now more than ever, a united VON with more than a century of experience, will be able to provide Canadians with high quality home and community care”, said Lynn Bessey, Chair, VON Canada National Board. “Strong, focussed local boards combined with an articulate national organization will provide Canadians with a new voice on issues related to home and community care”.

As a result of this strategy, local branches who were previously independent, have chosen to join VON Canada. As has been the case for more than 100 years, charitable dollars raised will continue to benefit the community to make a difference locally. The local board will continue to lead the charitable aspects and will be the voice in the community.

While a number of branches chose to join VON Canada, unfortunately, a few branches decided to continue as independent organizations and therefore will no longer be members of VON. In Ontario the following branches will no longer be part of VON: VON Ottawa-Renfrew, VON Brant Norfolk Haldimand, VON Halton, VON Lanark, Leeds, Grenville and VON Eastern Counties. As of October 15, 2006 these branches will no longer deliver service under the VON name. They will not be accredited as part of VON, or have the ability to use the logo, manuals, education materials, etc.

Despite the departure of these branches we are taking all steps necessary to keep the commitments we have made and continue the services we have provided. To this end, VON has begun discussions with the remaining branches and other high-quality healthcare organizations to fill the immediate service needs in areas where branches may no longer operate as VON branches. On the longer term, VON will re-establish service capability in these areas to meet our client’s needs.

Through its almost 16,000 staff and volunteers, VON serves 1300 communities. VON clients have access to over 50 different programs including but not limited to:

- Home Visiting Nursing
- Foot Care Services
- Wellness and Health Promotion Clinics
- Immunization
- Homemaking and Personal Care
- Caregiver Support and Education
- Private Duty Nursing and Shift Nursing
- Adult Day Program
- Meals on Wheels
- Cancer Services

Background

Homecare continues to be one of the fastest growing sectors of the health care system due in part to:

- Shorter hospital stays, earlier discharge, and the use of outpatient procedures have increased the demand for home care;
- Individuals who, in the past, would not have survived a serious illness or injury are now living with chronic conditions, which often require constant care and / or technology in the home or alternative settings in the community.
- There has been a significant increase in the number of children requiring extensive health supports in their home and communities.
- An increase in the number frail elderly individuals with concomitant chronic diseases who require home care services to live independently in their own homes.
- The majority of Canadians (53%) would prefer to recover from an illness or surgery in their own home.

With increasing reliance on home care and community support services, a stronger VON will be in an even better position to ensure that Canadians will continue to have access to high quality home care.

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