

Health Starts at Home:

VON Canada's Vision for Home and Community Care in Canada

Overview

Governments around the world are reforming their health and social care systems to better meet the needs of their citizens. Increasingly, they are turning to the home and community care sector as a focal point of change. Despite some efforts by provinces and territories to ensure Canadians have access to adequate care and supports to live, heal, age and die in their homes, Canada has yet to come together as a country and develop a national approach to home and community care.

Many Canadians are at risk because they do not have access to adequate or appropriate care and supports to help them remain independent in their homes. This affects individuals, and family and friend caregivers, and threatens the sustainability of the health care system overall.

At VON Canada we see home and community care as a key element of Canada's health care system and we are in good company. According to the 2007 Health Care in Canada Survey, 78% of Canadians agree that a stronger health care system depends on a better developed home and community care system.

Home care is the fastest growing sector in health care. A robust and accessible home and community care system that is integral to our publicly-funded health care system will help Canadians age at home, and keep people well and out of emergency rooms, hospital beds, and long-term care institutions.

VON Canada believes that the federal, provincial and territorial governments must work together to build a comprehensive and accessible home and community care

system for all. To help move this vital issue forward, VON Canada has identified six key areas that require immediate attention by governments and other concerned parties:

- Strengthen the **health human resource** capacity of the home and community care sector and maximize the contributions of all providers, including volunteers.
- Investigate, fund and develop **integrated models of health and social care**.
- Invest in **technology for the home** for use by providers, clients and their caregivers.
- Accelerate the implementation of comprehensive **chronic disease prevention and management strategies**. In particular, enhance the role of the home and community care sector in preventing and managing chronic disease.
- Recognize family and friend **caregivers** as part of the health care team and provide access to services, training and information to support them in their role.
- Significantly **increase investment in home and community care and develop a national approach**.

The number of Canadians who require home and community care is growing every day, and it is our collective responsibility to ensure that the proper supports and systems are in place. The health and quality of life of Canadians depends on it.