



AGING AT HOME #1

Key Message: Seniors are the fastest growing segment in Canada's population. Consequently, the cost of health care allocated to the care of seniors will also increase exponentially. Canada already has a shortage of beds in long-term care homes (LTCH). In Ontario alone, there are 40,000 individuals on waiting lists for placement.

There must be a better way to serve our seniors. According to survey, as many as 87% of seniors want to age in their own homes. With the appropriate government supports, this becomes not only a desirable option but could also expediate potential savings to health care costs.

ASPECTS TO CONSIDER:

Stress on the system: Without policy change, by 2040 around 25% of Canada's population will consume nearly 75% of the government's health-care budget (inflation-adjusted).

Inadequacy of long-term care openings: Currently, 15% of hospital beds are occupied by individuals awaiting a placement in a Long Term Care Home. The wait time can be months or even as long as years.

Variety of needs to be considered: Individual seniors will have different needs – personal and environmental. Personal needs may include income, health, special needs (e.g., intellectual disabilities) or special circumstances (e.g., adults who are caring for children with developmental disorders). Environmental needs include transportation, modifications to homes, rural versus urban settings, and the age friendliness of their community.

The system needs to be flexible to accommodate the needs that could change over time.

Paid caregivers: Caregivers are critical to the process of aging at home. The needs of seniors will vary with each individual. Personal assistance, home assistance, medical aid, and therapy are examples, but these too change with time.

Caregivers must be trained, well-paid and respected.

Unpaid caregivers: Millions of family members and friends across Canada are unpaid caregivers. Support and recognition are needed for the complex and time-consuming work that they do. Their role in allowing family members to age at home, is invaluable in supporting their family members and in reducing the stress on the system.