



AGING AT HOME #2

Key Message: Seniors are the fastest growing segment of the Canadian population.

Many seniors prefer to remain in their own homes, but they need the supports that would allow them to do so. Their home is their familiar comfortable environment. Seniors, like everyone else, are much happier when they can maintain their independence and control their daily lives.

The situation with seniors is already serious and will continue to worsen unless action is taken. Aging at home, although not feasible for all seniors, will result in a win-win situation for both the government and for seniors.

SPECIFIC ASPECTS TO CONSIDER:

Benefits to the system:

- Free up space in hospitals. Currently, 15% of hospital beds are occupied by seniors who are awaiting placement in long-term care homes (LTCH).
- Reduce overall costs to the health care system by reducing the required number of beds in LTCH which in turn will reduce the number of hospital staff required to care for those in hospitals.
- Reduce the pressure on assisted living and long-term care residences, leaving space in these facilities for those for whom aging at home is not appropriate.

Benefits to the individual:

- Remaining in one's own home allows the individual to remain independent.
- Remaining in the familiar surroundings of one's own home contributes to better mental health.
- Seniors will avoid exposure to infections and contaminants often encountered in a LTCH.
- Visits from family and friends can follow a more normal pattern.
- Seniors and their caregivers can select the level and timing of care.
- Costs of home renovations will likely be less than those associated with living in assisted-living or long-term care facilities.

Potential role of the Government in necessary changes:

- Target healthcare funding to ensure a change in the system from a hospital/LTCH driven system to one of community/home service.
- Ensure that all seniors have adequate funds to age at home.
- Be proactive in promoting aging at home by providing the appropriate support.
- Recognize the need for in-home care-workers by (1) providing targeted funding and (2) respecting the work that they do with appropriate salary and benefits.