

## News Editorial

If your family isn't rich, you had better adjust your expectations for the future...and make sure you have an extra bedroom.

Average lifespans in developed countries more than doubled in the 20th century. As a result, Baby Boomers are the first generation in history who must deal with aging parents and their long-term care.

But we have the Canada Health Act, right?

We already know that if we are sick, we are insured with the Canada Health Act:

But did you know that if we are frail and suffering the effects of aging, our health system is not required to respond like when we are classified as sick.

In other words...if you're young and sick, you're covered. If you're old and sick, you're not.

I have a friend who is in her early 80s. She can't manage on her own and the family is not equipped to care for an ailing senior.

They've searched for assisted living arrangements, but it's too expensive (\$2000-\$3000 a month). So, she meets the requirements for a government subsidy, right?

Yes, she does, but only after she has home support for at least three months..Then--and only then---after they determined that her need is great enough---she would be placed on a wait list for close to 2 years to get into a subsidized facility. In the meantime, the family is suffering. The situation has caused strain on personal relationships and created serious financial problems.

And that's assuming that you're alive to care for your parent. What do we do with our seniors who are alone?

I recently met an elderly lady who has lived in the hospital for 2 months. She has no living family. She can't care for herself, but she is no longer ill. She can't afford senior housing..she doesn't qualify for subsidies....they don't know where to send her. So she lives in the hospital.

In 2002, recommendations were made by the Romanow Commission to expand the Canada Health Act to include medically necessary home care. It was not implemented.

Canada MUST make caring for our seniors a priority. Defining illness as something only young people encounter is irresponsible and morally reprehensible in a civilized society.

If we don't lengthen our sights, we're going to wake up one day and find that we are living in what we thought was a science fiction scenario where people are sent to the proverbial pasture when they reach a certain age.

Write to your MP to tell them that it is imperative that the Canada Health Act be expanded to assist in the care of the elderly.

How long must we tout the benefits of our socialized medical system while leaving the oldest of us and those who care for them behind?

That's what I think.