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NEWS RELEASE

Caregivers need public support and recognition

Canada's seniors' care system relies heavily on unpaid caregivers

Montreal – Informal caregivers need better financial support and more services from Canadian governments, according to a new study published by the Institute for Research on Public Policy, which notes that the number of senior Canadians needing help at home will double in the next 30 years.

“Providing better support would not only demonstrate greater recognition of the caregivers’ contribution, it would also reduce seniors’ need for formal care, delay their institutionalization and relieve the cost pressures on the long-term care and health care systems” argues Janice Keefe, author of *Supporting Caregivers and Caregiving in an Aging Canada*.

In the pioneering study, Keefe provides an overview of caregiving in Canada. She presents projections of future care needs and examines potential improvements in policy for income security programs, labour market regulation and human resource management in health and home care.

Informal caregivers, who are often family members or friends, play a crucial role in seniors’ care. “Without their invisible work, the current system for seniors’ health and home care would collapse,” Keefe argues. “But they also bear economic, social, physical and psychological costs associated with their role and should receive financial compensation, together with other forms of in-kind support, such as home help or referral services.”

In the long term, increasing the number of home care workers will be critical. Competition for health care resources is expected to be fierce in coming years, such that if governments want to ensure that adequate seniors’ care is available, they will need a strategy to enhance working conditions in the voluntary, for-profit and public organizations involved in home care.

This is the second in a series of three IRPP studies that focus on seniors’ care. Later this week, the IRPP will release a study by **Harvey Lazar** that examines the federal government’s role in seniors’ care. **Neena Chappell’s** study (released on October 19) provides a timely overview of the main health and social policy challenges presented by population aging in the areas of informal care, formal care and prevention.

Supporting Caregivers and Caregiving in an Aging Canada can be downloaded free of charge from the Institute's Web site (www.irpp.org).

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