

**RESOLUTION 3****Advocacy on a National Home Care Plan**

*BE IT RESOLVED*, That the Canadian Nurses Association, in partnership with others, develop an advocacy strategy to actively lobby federal/provincial/territorial governments to establish a national Home Care program congruent with the five principles of the *Canada Health Act* and key elements of primary health care.

**Background**

Canadians benefit from universal access to medically necessary services under the *Canada Health Act* (CHA). Unfortunately, the CHA only covers hospital and doctor services, and omits many other key services. As the 2001 CNA position statement *Financing Canada's Health System* states, the CNA “believes health services should be universally accessible to all Canadians no matter where they live. The accessibility of health services is dependent on the allocation of adequate funding. Funding cuts over the last decade have resulted in restrictions to the accessibility of health services.

“Funding is needed to support health services not now covered in provincial/territorial health insurance plans, such as community and public health services; wellness programs; home care services; and support for purchases of pharmaceuticals.”

Home care is one of the glaring omissions from the CHA, and one that creates many problems for the Canadian health system:

- Access to home care is unequal across the country, as some provinces have more comprehensive programs than others. The lack of coverage under the CHA makes provincial funding voluntary and consequently, service levels are uncertain over budgetary cycles.
- Many who are not able to obtain publicly funded home care will have to forego it, if they cannot afford to pay for it themselves.
- Inadequate access to home care creates system problems, as people end up using the more expensive hospital services because they are publicly paid for. Others forego the benefits of home care and some consequently suffer from worsened conditions requiring more costly health system interventions.
- Generally, people prefer, if possible, to receive care in their homes, rather than receiving care in institutions that end up costing the system more. So the system and client interests are aligned, but the current funding arrangement is an obstacle.

The CNA position in support of home care reflects CNA resolutions accepted in 1997 and 1998, both of which called for the creation of a national home care program. These resolutions preceded the Romanow Commission's own recommendations to expand the CHA to cover specified medically necessary home care services.

Canada's health care system is restructuring away from unnecessary institutionalization of health care, and in many cases, the best way to deal with care is to deliver it in the home. As Canada's population continues to grey, aging in place demands increasing support for home care. It is time to renew the call for a national home care program.

Submitted by the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario