

problems facing older people are housing and health. Every time the question of housing for the aged arises, somebody comes along to say that this is a relatively new problem which did not exist before, when three or four generations used to live together under the same roof. That same person will probably go on to say that before the advent of urbanization and the nuclear family, senior citizens lived with their married children and grandchildren and kept busy on the farm almost until the end. Things were never that simple. As much in the time of Shakespeare's *King Lear* as in that of Zola's *La Terre*, according to De Beauvoir, history has shown time and again that old peasants forced by old age to make over their whole estate to their children ran the risk of being despised and often of being without the bare necessities.

Furthermore, as the Special Senate Committee on Aging also pointed out, even if many elderly couples are doing their best to have their home repaired before the husband retires, the fact is that their properties are generally very old and require much more maintenance than the average.

Since accidents are a major cause of incapacity among older people, they were advised by way of precaution to alter their homes so as to minimize the risks of getting hurt or falling, for example, by improving the lighting on staircases, installing a handrail in the bathroom, lowering their cupboards, and so on. Those recommendations are useful and well-meant no doubt, but unlike countries like Denmark where the government gives grants to that end, no Canadian government has yet offered to pay the cost of such improvements.

The Canada Works and Young Canada Works programs have clearly shown a great need for general helpers to provide those services but no specific program exists at this time to meet that need. One of the problems of homeowners which particularly affects widows and may explain the increasing popularity of condominiums among senior citizens is the difficulty in finding help for chores such as snow removal, lawn and garden maintenance and eavestrough cleaning.

Mr. Speaker, after serving my city for 15 years, I am very proud to have been able to obtain, with the help of the Verdun social clubs, the money required to accommodate 350 people in a home and 300 others in low-rent apartments. I am convinced that the residents of Verdun are very grateful for this. Canadian social welfare agencies already provide professional family helpers, but there are very few of them and they are used mostly to take over from hospitalized or over-worked mothers or to look after seriously ill senior citizens.

As all those who have looked into the plight of senior citizens in Canada over the last 20 years, including the Royal Commission on Health Services, the Senate Committee on Aging and many others, have concluded, every province and territory needs family helpers. These should be specially trained to lend a hand to delicate senior citizens a few days or a few hours a week, if need be, in house cleaning, shopping and cooking. This service, as well as meals-on-wheels for all those

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who cannot cook for themselves, would enable elderly people to remain independent and to keep on living in their own homes.

These studies also listed other important services, such as contact programs—to identify those who are confined at home—information and reference services—to inform senior citizens about community resources and government programs—telephone services for distress centres, amicable contacts, special teams to help out in house cleaning, men and women for general chores and special transportation services. However, the provincial home care services as provided by visiting nurses, doctors, speech therapists, rehabilitation specialists, dentists and chiropodists are still inadequate as far as answering the needs of the elderly people who are too weak. The Victorian Order of Nurses and many other hygienists work with elderly people in all parts of Canada but here again as in the case of family help, the services are inadequate and mainly reserved for the seriously ill people.

Another factor contributing to the inefficiency of services is that social and health services are almost always independent from one another and as a result their efforts show a total lack of co-ordination. Besides the weak elderly people who live alone, there is another group which suffers from the lack of co-ordination between social and home care services: the families—particularly wives, daughters and daughters-in-law—with whom these weak or sick elderly people stay. Many elderly people are sent to rest homes not because their family does not like them or does not want them, but because the family does not get the trust and the support it needs to be able to take care of them.

Many older women who care for their sick husbands admit that they are terrified at the prospect of a misfortune because in such a case they would have no one to rely upon. Quite often, these women are exhausted because they never have a holiday or time off. In its report, the federal-provincial task force on public health recommended that governments provide special services to spouses and families who look after senior citizens. One such form of support would be short periodic stays in a nursing home or occasional homemaking services.

The task force also recommended that allowances be granted to these families to enable them to set up ramps for wheelchairs in their house for instance or to build small semi-detached apartments. In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I would like to tell our dynamic leader, the Prime Minister, that we have confidence in him and in the measures proposed in the Speech from the Throne which reflects the ideology of our party and enables our government to satisfy the needs of the people in the most deserving areas. Therefore I take pleasure in seconding the motion of my colleague the hon. member for York-South (Mrs. Appolloni) and proposing its adoption.