Aging Populations

Active aging

Leading up to the Denver Summit, the eight summit countries have agreed that the challenges and opportunities created by aging populations should be discussed around the theme of "active aging." Governments want policies that support their senior citizens by extending their opportunities to participate in a range of community activities. They also recognize that action should be taken now, while there is still time, to ensure their pension and health care systems are sustained when increasing demands are placed upon them by aging populations.

Challenges and opportunities

Canada's population, like that of other industrialized nations, is aging. Canadians are having fewer children and are living longer. Accordingly, the proportion of persons over the age of 65 years will increase significantly in the years ahead. Canada will have 8.8 million seniors by 2030, more than double today's 3.7 million.

Canada's aging population has created public policy challenges but it will also provide opportunities. There will be relatively fewer, younger workers to support the growing demands placed on our public pension and health care systems. Over the next decade there will be five working-age Canadians for each person aged 65 and over. By 2030, the ratio will drop to three to one. The cost pressures will begin to be felt in 2010, when the first of the postwar baby boom generation reach age 65, and will peak around 2030. On the other hand, Canadians are living not only longer but healthier lives. Many seniors have both the desire and ability to remain active and productive well into their later years — through work, voluntarism, family care giving and other activities. Public policies should be designed to support this new reality while continuing to provide appropriate care to frail members of the older population.

Protecting Canada's pension system

Recognizing these challenges, Canada has made the financial sustainability of its retirement income system a major priority. As a result, Canada is at the forefront of most countries coming to grips with the cost pressures associated with an aging society.