

invites community participation and citizen empowerment, Canada, like other industrialized nations, has not found a means in order to ensure that this happens. Indeed, with technological advance and the increase in specialized knowledge, it is difficult to know how volunteers can have appropriate knowledge for much of the civic work that they may be interested in or asked to do. Findings to date about citizen participation, for example, in health care, are pessimistic. Research in Norway, the United States, and Sweden all reveal that regionalization of health care has resulted in domination by local professionals and bureaucrats without evidence of major impact by citizens (Church & Barker, 1998). Similarly, O'Neill (1992), studied the role of citizen participation in Quebec and concluded that the community was not empowered to significantly influence the system. This author suggests that both the highly technical and complex issues they were confronted with, as well as the techno-professional culture to which they did not belong, inhibited this from happening. To ensure community empowerment, boards must have autonomous sources of power, such as having a majority so they can carry the vote.

Canadians, though, wish to maintain their social democratic model of operating. Peters (1995) analysed 18 opinion polls between 1980-1995 and several focus group discussions held across the country in 1995. She concluded that Canadians do not believe the government's role in social policy should be minimized. Rather, social policy, including health care, is at the forefront of defining the Canadian identity. Sennett (2001) argues that a major challenge for governments is ensuring authentic public participation. Although having a voice and having a choice are unchallenged expectations in a democratic society, there is little consensus about what the terms actually mean (Abelson & Lomas, 1996) and even less on how to achieve it. Many would agree that involvement and consultation are not synonymous with public participation and that Canada's electoral system does not ensure that all voices are heard. Mechanisms for those voices to be heard are lacking.

Future generations of elderly may demand a greater voice than those who are elderly today. There is evidence that Canadian citizens are becoming increasingly politically savvy (Nevitte, 2000), with greater knowledge and attentiveness to politically relevant information, with more education and more knowledge about where to gain independent political information. Canadians, therefore, are more autonomous in their political thinking and have become much harsher in their evaluations of politicians and governments. Simultaneously, the majority of Canadians are not deeply dissatisfied with the way democracy works in Canada, nor are they disaffected from democratic principles generally. A major challenge for governments today is to find ways to capitalize on and utilize the resource that these energies symbolize; define new ways of working with citizens who are substantially different from in the past. This includes opportunities for those seniors who wish to be involved in meaningful ways.

### **Current Issues - Ageing in Place**

The concept of home is closely linked to that of families and entails a commonsensical understanding but defies precise scientific definition. Often home is associated with security, with comfort and familiarity, with caring, commitment, privacy, closeness between members, and with helpfulness (Dupuis & Thorns, 1996; Namazi et al., 1989). For older people in particular, home means a place where they have control and where they can express their individuality (Rutman & Freedman, 1988). Canadian seniors, like seniors in most industrialized countries, express a preference for staying in their home, for 'ageing in place'.

This does not mean that they wish to live in only one house for their entire lives, but rather that as they settle into a place in their later middle years and early old age, they do not wish to be uprooted to a place where they cannot take their personal belongings that have history and meaning attached to them, from a space that has become familiar and easy to