

## **E. Educating Informal Caregivers**

Caregivers are generally persons such as spouses, other relatives and friends who provide care to others on a personal basis outside the formal organizational structures of the health and social services. The stress of caring for an elderly, sometimes physically or mentally disabled, person was noted by witnesses. Education about the aging process and about the availability of support services that would offer a respite from the continuous care were deemed essential.

The Committee heard about several responses to the information needs of people who care for elderly relatives. The Royal Bank provided the example of their Eldercare Information Service. This is a toll-free phone service free of charge to employees and their spouses. It helps callers locate and assess resources for older people related to housing, home support needs, respite care, social and recreational programs, health services, and counselling.<sup>70</sup> At the present time, information about elder care services available in the community occurs on an *ad hoc* basis.

### **The Committee recommends:**

- 18. That the federal government, in consultation with other levels of government and with organizations representing employers and employees, establish ways to provide information to meet the needs of caregivers with elder care responsibilities.**

## **VI SERVICES**

Education to provide more understanding among all segments of society was seen as vital to any effort to prevent abuse of older people. It was recognized, however, that increasing the population's knowledge of the problem might lead to increasing demand for services to solve it. As Pearl McKenzie noted: "Heightening

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<sup>70</sup> Moorcroft, 7:11.