

To face these challenges, our Government has developed the "Voluntary Sector Initiative" to strengthen the voluntary sector's capacity to meet the challenges of the future, and to enhance the relationship between the voluntary sector and the government, strengthening voluntary organizations' ability to serve Canadians. The Government of Canada is investing \$94.6 million over five years to developing its relationship with the voluntary sector.

One of the complexities of social policy in Canada is the structure of our government and the differing procedures and priorities of the Federal and Provincial governments. For example, health and education issues pose a unique challenge for Canada since jurisdictional issues between the Federal, Provincial and Territorial governments can complicate social policy discussions, developments and implications. The challenge is to find a balance between the perspectives of the various levels of government.

I am pleased to see that you will be discussing the issue of Health at today's presentations. This continues to be an extremely important social policy issue for both Japan and Canada.

Another important aspect that cannot be over emphasized is Education, which is key to a knowledge-based economy and society. Education is critical to equity, development and citizenship and is the key to social justice and economic dynamism. The Government of Canada stresses the importance of education by providing support in the form of grants, student aid programs, and in its efforts to help graduates manage debt. By expanding higher education, we are also creating a vibrant research base for new technologies.

Canada has the largest proportion of people with post-secondary education in the world, roughly 40%, but the demands of the knowledge economy are placing an increasing premium on quality, not just the number of degrees but also the quality of those degrees. The future will demand access to education of the highest quality, access to excellence.

Poverty and Marginalization continues to pose significant challenges.

Poverty is one of the central challenges in today's global economy and society. As unlikely as you might think, the eradication of poverty and marginalization also poses a great challenge to Canadians, especially in the area of child poverty. One in eight school-aged children lives in a family with very low average income - below \$20,000 per year. I believe that governments have a key role to play in providing support to families and children.

A critical task for our government is to address the issues of poverty and underdevelopment in Canada and abroad. That is why we need efficient international co-operation that links together solutions to these problems.

Health/Ageing/Work and Family

I would now like to turn to the three topics that you will be discussing in today's symposium. These topics include health, ageing, and work and family, all of which are of great mutual concern in this era of globalization.

Canadians attach great value to and take great pride in our public health care system. Canada's system of universal health care (Medicare) guarantees access to essential health services regardless of income or place of residence. The Government of Canada has no