

National survey shows majority of Canadians want to 'age in place'

-- Ability of public healthcare to provide among major concerns --

TORONTO, Dec. 7 /CNW/ - A national survey of Canadians commissioned by Living Assistance Services <http://www.laservices.ca> (homecare) and conducted by Acrobat Research(1) indicates that almost 80 per cent believe aging at home offers a better quality of life. Gone are the days when aging Canadians thought all their twilight years held was a stay in a nursing home. Of those polled, 70 per cent want both themselves and their parents to age gracefully in their own homes. The older people get, the more they express a desire to stay at home as they age: 65.4 per cent of 18 - 29 year olds compared to 68 per cent of 30 - 49 year olds and 71.8 of those over 50.

Canadians skeptical that healthcare system can cope

Survey results indicate that seven out of ten Canadians are not confident in the ability of their provincial healthcare system to provide for them in their senior years. The most concerned are those in British Columbia (82 per cent) with Ontarians the least concerned (61 per cent); between the two are Atlantic Canada (74 per cent) and Quebec (73 per cent). More highly educated Canadians believe public healthcare will not be adequate, as compared to those without post-secondary education (71.8 per cent contrasted with 63 per cent). Although income level did not affect attitudes about public healthcare, women aged 30 - 49 years were most strident in their concerns (76.1 per cent females versus 68.9 per cent males).

"With the senior population doubling since the early 1980s and expected to almost double again in the next 25 years, our healthcare system is stressed to the limit(2)," says David Porter, director and owner of Living Assistance Services, a Canadian company focused on high-quality homecare. "The future holds increased demands for services like ours due to the limitations of public healthcare.

If nothing changes the worst is yet to come, which is emphasized by the survey findings that show most Canadians remain naïve about the cost and effort required to take care of their loved ones."

Dislike of nursing homes

Those surveyed believe staying at home as they grow older is advantageous because of the enhanced comfort and greater independence it affords as well more familiarity with surroundings. Respondents additionally cited a general dislike of nursing homes and the desire to be close to family.

When queried about their concerns regarding the role of caregiver, respondents pointed to personal time constraints and pressures, a lack of qualifications to provide proper care and the financial impact of becoming a primary caregiver for a loved one.

Choosing a caregiver

A majority of Canadians expect to be involved in the choice of a caregiver for their aging parents. Interestingly, Quebecers are significantly less likely to be engaged in the process as compared to other regions (59.5 per cent versus a national average of 72.5 per cent).

The desire to be part of the decision making process is positively correlated to income. In households making over \$60,000 per year, more than 80 per cent of respondents expressed a wish for involvement in selecting a caregiver, as opposed to about 65 per cent in households with less income.

Respondents want to ensure adequate quality of care and choose the most appropriate match for their loved one. They also want to establish a personal relationship with the caregiver and ensure that the caregiver is a responsible individual.

Need for sexual intimacy

Respondents who worried about placing family members in an institution expressed concerns about quality of care. On average, the greatest anxiety people had about institutional environments revolved around loss of control or independence, abuse and lack of personalized care.

The lack of privacy and diminished opportunities for sexual intimacy were also issues. Females were more apprehensive about abuse and lack of personal care than males.

In contrast, men are more concerned than women about the potential loss of privacy resulting in fewer opportunities for sexual relations; native French speakers demonstrated a higher level of concern than those whose primary language is English.

"The trend of Canadians demanding to age in place has grown dramatically in the ten years," says Porter. "Agencies such as ours provide a much-needed service in a country that doesn't appear equipped to deal with the needs of an aging population. With 53 per cent of Canadians not concerned about their potential role as a caregiver for aging parents or relatives, this survey will hopefully serve as a wake-up call and people will begin to recognize the financial, emotional and personal hardships involved in caring for a loved one in need of assistance."

About Living Assistance Services

Living Assistance Services is a non-medical provider of first-rate senior care. Based in Toronto, the ten-year-old company takes pride in hiring only the highest caliber of experienced, qualified caregivers and professional associates to match a senior's needs.

Employing a staff of 100, Living Assistance Services will take a limited number of clients to ensure that those in need receive the dedication and attention they require. The company has recently begun to franchise its operation across Canada. To learn more about Living Assistance Services, visit www.laservices.ca

(1) A total of 1,000 Canadians, 18 years and older were surveyed in Fall 2009. Results are accurate to within +/- 3.2 per cent, 19 times out of 20. The research was conducted by Acrobat Research, via their national telephone omnibus Omnitel, on behalf of Living Assistance Services.

(2) Source: Statistics Canada - Catalogue no. 91-520 pg. 46

Living Assistance Services survey findings overview

-- Canadians show overwhelming desire to stay at home as they age --

70 per cent of Canadians want to 'age in place'

- 77.9 per cent in Atlantic Canada
- 78.9 per cent in British Columbia
- 63 per cent in Quebec
- 69.6 per cent in Ontario

79 per cent believe aging in place affords a better quality of life

- 86.2 per cent in British Columbia
- 73.9 per cent in Manitoba/Saskatchewan
- 74.6 per cent in Ontario

Seven out of ten Canadians do not feel that public healthcare is adequate to meet their needs as they age

- 61 per cent in Ontario
- 82 per cent in British Columbia
- 73 per cent in Quebec
- 74 per cent in Atlantic Canada

- Women are more concerned than their male counterparts about healthcare (76.1 per cent vs. 60.9 per cent)

The senior population has doubled since the early 1980s and is expected to almost double again in the next 25 years

Reasons cited to want to stay in home as one ages

- More comfort, greater independence, greater familiarity with surroundings, dislike of nursing homes and proximity to family
- Canadians are split over their ability to care for aging family members

53 per cent of Canadians are not concerned about their potential roles as caregivers

Reasons Canadians are concerned about their role as a caregiver

- Sense of responsibility to family members, time pressures, lack of qualifications to care, financial impact
- Over half of respondents who are employed part time said they believe it's their responsibility to become a caregiver

A majority of Canadians expect to be involved in the choice of caregiver

- Almost 75 per cent are interested
- Quebecers the least likely to be involved (59.5 per cent vs national average of 72.5 per cent)
- Households earning \$60K+ annually more likely to be involved than those earning less
- Minority who don't want to be involved want role for themselves, defer decision to patients themselves, or don't feel qualified to make the decision

Reasons cited as concerns in institutional care settings

- Canadians most concerned about quality of life and personal care issues: loss of independence, abuse, lack of personalized care
- Men more focused than women on diminished opportunities for sexual intimacy
- Females more concerned about abuse and lack of personalized care

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