

# **The time for a National Home Support and Home Care Act is now**

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## **Summary**

**BC Coalition of People with Disabilities**

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## Summary

***Between 1997 and 2002, the number of British Columbians receiving Home Support services dropped by almost 50 percent. As Home Support and Home Care services are reduced, the health of these individuals suffers and the pressure on expensive acute and long term care is increased.***

As BC's cross-disability advocacy organization, the BC Coalition of People with Disabilities (BCCPD) sees every day the hardships caused by reductions in Home Support and Home Care services. People with disabilities or chronic illness and seniors depend on these services to enable them to continue to live in their own homes and participate in their families and communities. Between 1997 and 2002, the number of British Columbians receiving Home Support services dropped by almost 50 percent. As Home Support and Home Care services are reduced, the health of these individuals suffers and the pressure on expensive acute and long term care is increased. A research project conducted by Dr. Marcus Hollander that studied Home Support clients between 1996 and 2001 found that "British Columbians who were cut off from previously available housekeeping support suffered from a 50 percent increase in the death rate and other plummeting health outcomes."

Coinciding with the reduction in Home Support and Home Care services since the mid-1990s has been the elimination of hospital beds and the closing of institutions, making thousands of people dependent on the underfunded health resources of their communities to provide at-home care. The earlier discharge of hospital patients and the advances in outpatient services have resulted in a complexity and intensity of care that would never have been seen in the home setting a few years ago.

Since the mid-1990s the federal government has moved away from the original vision of a Canadian health system that "is a comprehensive health insurance program which will cover all health services — not just hospital and medical care — but eventually dental care, optometric care, drugs and all the other health services which people require." A truly compre-

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***The federal government has reduced both transfer payments to the provinces for extended health services and the requirement for the provinces to report to the federal Ministry of Health about their delivery of extended health services.***

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hensive health system must include Home Support and Home Care services. However, instead of moving towards a national Home Support and Home Care plan, the federal government has reduced both transfer payments to the provinces for extended health services and the requirement for the provinces to report to the federal Ministry of Health about their delivery of extended health services. In turn, the provinces have cut Home Support and Home Care services to the bone.

Organization after organization, conference after conference, as well as the Royal Commission on the Future of Health Care in Canada, have called for a national Home Care plan. The BCCPD says the time is now. Canadians need a national Home Support and Home Care Act that is governed by the same principles as the Canada Health Act: Universality, Comprehensiveness, Accessibility, Public Administration, and Portability. A publicly funded, publicly delivered and publicly accountable National Home Support and Home Care Act would:

- *Establish strong national standards for Home Support and Home Care services based on the criteria of the Canada Health Act.*
- *Provide accountability for the delivery of these services. Cost-share with the provinces to ensure stable, adequate funding.*
- *Cover a wide range of community-based services, including home nursing and Home Support services ranging from housekeeping to intense personal care.*
- *Be available to people with disabilities, seniors, family caregivers who require respite, and people with terminal illnesses who wish to die in their homes.*
- *Include provisions for an arms-length appeal*

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*mechanism that adheres to the principles of third-party, neutral resolution of disputes.*

*• Be firmly rooted in the goals of self-determination, citizenship rights and community participation that are cherished by all Canadians.*

A National Home Support and Home Care Act is a logical and essential next stage in achieving a truly universal national health care program that values and cares for the well-being of every Canadian.

**The full text of this paper can be found on the BCCPD website at: [www.bccpd.bc.ca](http://www.bccpd.bc.ca).**