

## Fact Sheet: Disabilities and aging in Canada

### Disabilities:

- **The number of people with disabilities is on the rise worldwide.** Around the world an estimated 600 million people live with disabilities. There are many reasons for this trend, including: a growing aging population; medical advances that preserve and prolong life; a rise in chronic health conditions; increasing life expectancy; environmental changes; and the epidemics of diabetes and obesity.
- **Over 3.6 million Canadians (about one in eight or roughly 13% of the population) have a disability affecting their mobility, agility, hearing, vision or learning.** These disabilities are significant enough to diminish their quality of life and level of participation in society and to increase their dependence on assistive technology. The number of Canadians living with the consequences of disabling injury and illness is expected to grow to more than 4.1 million by 2011.
- **An estimated 170,000 Canadians use manual and powered wheelchairs and scooters to help them get around.** About 35% of Canadians over the age of 75 use assistive devices. But even with such assistive devices, people often face barriers such as winter conditions and other accessibility obstacles.
- **Disabilities cost the Canadian economy about \$60 billion annually.** For example, it costs \$1.25 million to \$25 million to care for a person with a spinal cord injury over a period of 50 years, depending on the injury. The cost of falls to the Canadian health care system is \$1 billion each year. About \$1.78 billion is spent every year caring for people involved in auto collisions.

### Aging:

- **The fastest growing segment of Canada's population is the elderly.** For the first time in Canada's history, there are more than four million Canadians over the age of 65. This population is expected to almost double by 2030 when 25% (or almost nine million people) will be over the age of 65. Currently, people over 80 are the second-fastest growing group reaching 1 million for the first time in the country's history, while Centenarians, Canadians 100-plus, has increased 22% since the 2001 census.

- **Older persons to exceed the number of young.** By 2050, the number of older persons in the world will exceed the number of young for the first time in history. By 2015, it is expected that there will be more Canadians over 65 than 15 and younger.

### **Some causes of disabilities experienced by Canadians:**

- **Spinal cord injury:** About 37,000 Canadians currently live with spinal cord injuries; each year about 1,000 Canadians sustain some level of permanent paralysis or neurological deficit because of an injury.
- **Brain injury:** Each year, about 50,000 Canadians sustain brain injuries and 34,000 are admitted to hospital because of their injuries.
- **Motor vehicle collisions:** More than 220,000 Canadians are seriously injured each year in motor vehicle collisions.
- **Stroke:** Stroke is the leading cause of death and disability in Canada. Each year, about 50,000 people suffer a stroke. Some 40% of those who survive have moderate to severe stroke-related impairments. About 10% are so severely disabled they require long-term care. Approximately 300,000 Canadians are living with stroke-related disabilities.
- **Cardiovascular disease:** An estimated eight million Canadians live with some type of cardiovascular disease, including heart disease, disease of the blood vessels or risk factors for stroke or heart attack. Some 60,000 Canadians are admitted to hospital each year for heart attacks.
- **Alzheimer's disease:** Alzheimer's is the leading cause of dementia. By 2015, 625,000 Canadians will have the disease or related dementia. Nearly 25% of Canadians have a family member with Alzheimer's. One-third of those who have the disease live alone.
- **Falls:** One in three people 65 years of age and older fall each year. About one in ten falls among the elderly results in a serious injury such as hip fracture or head injury. Falls are the single greatest reason for hospitalization of older people.