

## **The Quiet Revolution**

One of the greatest social upheavals of our times is taking place in Europe without a single march, protest, or even a speech. Our country is growing old and our new needs will soon reinvent the world around us

The average age of Europeans increased ten years in the last fifty. By 2030, the median age of Europeans will be over 40 — and, by 2050, over 60% of Europeans will be over 65. We are no longer a country of youths

Europeans have spent the thousands of years trying to live long and grow old. But now that we have triumphed in that endeavor, we need to turn our attention to making sure our social policies adapt to our success. We must begin to plan for healthy ageing. The time for the government to begin to plan for programs and policies that will assure our vitality, health and vigor is now. The public must hold us accountable for the quality of their healthcare, as our physical health will become increasingly essential to our country's health and productivity.

Timing is critical. Healthy ageing begins long before the age of retirement. Health conditions that are now being untreated, undertreated or undiagnosed, will, as the years go by, become far more costly to the government, the public and to those of us who are caretakers. Improving the quality of our healthcare is imperative, or all of us will be effected. Which is why the public has every right to hold us accountable for budgets and decisions that do not take into

account their need for the most effective medications and treatments and not simply the cheapest.

Innovative thinking will be needed. To do that, we need the best minds in medical research to remain in this country. The public must insist the government encourage our best doctors, university researchers as well as pharmaceutical companies and their experts to remain in Europe by allowing them to earn better returns on their research investment. To lose their expertise would be to deny ourselves the opportunity to participate in the development of drugs that will have a positive effect on the quality of health care in our own country as well as its future economics.

We must also review the implications of our current health policy. We cannot continue to allow government agencies to continue to constrict doctors in their ability to deliver quality healthcare (without regard at the long-term implications) by limiting the medicines they can prescribe. We know now that many patients with cardiovascular conditions, upper respiratory problems and a host of other chronic problems are receiving inadequate or outdated treatment that results in hospitalization as well as decreased productivity and an unacceptable quality of life. Even Alzheimer patients are denied drugs that will allow them to function almost two years longer before costly institutionalization. It's time for voters to look at the real implications of denying European patients the access to the newest and best medicines for their condition. The government has a responsibility to take the lead in healthy

ageing for the good of our future. But it is voters who must hold them accountable for their decisions.