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NEWS RELEASE

Ottawa must play strategic role in seniors' care

Montreal – There are many ways the federal government can help address the growing and underfunded care needs of seniors without undermining the leadership role of the provinces, according to a new study published by the Institute for Research on Public Policy (IRPP).

“Governments loom large in the lives of retired people,” says the author of the study, *Many Degrees of Policy Freedom: The Federal Government's Role in Care for Seniors*, Harvey Lazar. He adds, “While the constitutional responsibility for care rests with the provinces and territories, federal pension and income support programs for seniors and transfer payments to the provinces for health and social services have a significant influence on the availability and accessibility of care.”

In the context of an aging population, expected labour shortages and mounting pressures on the health system, Ottawa is likely to be called upon to do more.

Lazar looks at the federal government's present role in seniors' care and its policy options for the future. He presents a full range of policy measures directed both at the demand and the supply sides of caregiving, and spanning the whole continuum of care from light to more complex cases.

While most of the measures proposed focus on enhancing the financial capacity of seniors to purchase the care services they need and providing insurance against prohibitive care costs, Lazar also recommends initiatives to help increase caregiving capacity across the country.

“The next opportunity to make meaningful policy decisions on aging and care will be in the context of the renegotiation of the major social transfers in 2014,” notes Lazar. “One question the Harper government should now be facing is whether it wishes to use the renegotiation as an opportunity to act strategically on the aging file.”

This study is the third in a series of IRPP studies on seniors' care issues. A study released earlier this week by [Janice Keefe](#) looks at current and future caregiving needs in an aging Canada and presents the policy implications. [Neena Chappell's](#) study, released last month, provides a timely overview of the main health and social policy challenges presented by population aging in three areas: informal care, formal care and prevention.

Many Degrees of Policy Freedom: The Federal Government's Role in Care for Seniors can be downloaded free of charge from the Institute's Web site (www.irpp.org).

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