NGOs Speak Out on Ageing – A CPRN Public Dialogue

Friday, May 3, 2002 – As Canada prepares to accommodate an ageing society, what should its priorities be?

That is one of the key questions put to participants in five public dialogues organized recently by CPRN's Public Involvement Program on behalf of the federal government.

At the UN's Second World Assembly on Ageing in Madrid this month, delegates gathered to respond to a draft UN strategy for Action on Aging. The goal: to ensure that people everywhere can age with security and dignity, while continuing to exercise their full rights as citizens.

The Assembly adopted the *International Plan of Action on Ageing 2002* **which identifies three key policy themes:**

- **older persons and development,**
- **advancing health and well-being into old age, and**
- **ensuring enabling and supportive environments.**

The Assembly also adopted a Political Declaration underlining the challenges and opportunities in population ageing and the key elements of the Plan of Action.

As a member of the UN General Assembly, Canada took part in negotiating the draft Plan of Action. In preparation, it sought input from Canadian non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Health Canada and Human Resources Development Canada commissioned the CPRN dialogues as part of that effort.

The dialogues took place in late 2001 and early 2002. Participants were selected to provide a good cross-section of NGOs. Four dialogues were conducted in English and one in French. Three were held in Ottawa, one in Montreal and one in Toronto. A total of forty-seven individuals took part.

The discussions focussed on three themes, in particular: maximizing participation, enhancing well-being, and respecting diversity.

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After identifying widely held core values, as well as a number of common barriers seniors face in trying to lead full lives, participants selected their three top priorities for government action. Amongst other things, participants called for government to improve access to health care, ensure greater financial security, provide more home care alternatives, recognize the special needs of Aboriginal peoples and women, offer more respite care, promote more accurate information on seniors and encourage healthier, more active aging and participation by seniors.

What Matters to Canadian NGOs on Aging: An Analysis of Five Public Dialogue Discussions, by Joseph Michalski, provides a full analysis of the process and results of the dialogues and is available on our Web site.

You can access or download the Michalski report by clicking here.

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