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## Make Haitian seniors a priority: Help the Aged

*By C.P. Hillman*  
A 69-year-old woman who spent a week buried under a collapsed cathedral in Haiti's capital Port-au-Prince was singing when she was rescued.

The miraculous rescue of Anna Zizi highlights the spirit and resilience of older people in the country, struck by a devastating earthquake on January 12.

However, the current crisis poses immense challenges for seniors, according to Help the Aged Canada. As a result the elderly population in Haiti requires special attention.

Help the Aged, a registered charity that has been in operation since 1975, helps to meet the needs of poor elderly people in Canada and the developing world. It works with several groups and individuals, mainly in the Northern and Southern parts of Haiti.

While the entire population of Haiti urgently requires medical care, food and water, shelter and clothing, the agency states that elderly Haitians face particular difficulties.

It believes that the elderly are

often the forgotten people in international aid programs, and the last to be given medical aid.

Physically weaker to begin with, the elderly have difficulty travelling to different locations to receive distributions of aid and are often the last to obtain food.

Elderly people are also particularly vulnerable to violence.

Help the Aged Canada is appealing for donations to assist with earthquake relief. For more information or to donate, call toll free 1-800-648-1111 or go to [www.helptheaged.ca](http://www.helptheaged.ca).

"At this initial stage what is most important is to provide help to the survivors," stated executive director Jacques Bertrand on the organization's website.

Help the Aged is collaborating with HelpAge International and its emergency team in Port-au-Prince so that the immediate and future needs of the elderly can be evaluated.

The agency's local partners in northern Haiti were suddenly faced with a growing number of displaced



Photo courtesy of the Rocky Mountain Seniors Ski Club  
*Members of the Edmonton-based Rocky Mountain Seniors Ski Club enjoy an excursion to the Sun Peaks Resort. The group for skiers 55-plus organizes a number of ski resort excursions each season, in addition to regular skiing at Snow Valley. Club members will be travelling to Kimberley, Silver Star, Marmot and Sunshine over the next several weeks. For further information go to <http://seniorsski.com>.*



Photo by Deb Mainwaring  
*Jessie Nicol, a member of the Central Lions Seniors Association, celebrates her 104th birthday at the centre. Sharing Nicol's joy is her daughter, Eileen Harle.*

## CARP looking for move on pensions before spring

*By Stephen Dajoe*  
With an estimated 11 million Canadians facing retirement with no pension income outside that issued by the federal government, and many more experiencing a drastic drop in savings through the market downturn, the Canadian Association of Retired Persons (CARP) is calling on the federal government to include something in next month's throne speech addressing pension reform.

It is an issue that has gained widespread attention over the past year, but one that CARP feels the federal government is dragging its feet on.

"It's always up to government to delay things until things get better,"

said CARP vice president of advocacy Susan Eng. "If you delay the whole debate long enough, maybe the market will recover and the whole issue goes away."

Eng said the government of Prime Minister Stephen Harper is out of touch with the public sentiment on pension reform in that they have an ideological belief that the state has no role in the retirement security of its citizens. She feels this is shown by the uncharacteristic coverage of pension reform in the broad media, and from the organization's own research.

CARP recently polled 85,000 of its 350,000 members nationwide, a group Eng said is demographically

comprised of mostly older, retired, financially-secure Canadians who have saved for their retirement.

The result of the polling suggested that, while CARP members has been able to weather the recent economic hit to their own retirement savings, they are greatly concerned about the retirement future of younger generations, including their own children and grandchildren.

The advocacy vice-president explained that the combination of the Canada Pension Plan's maximum benefit in 2009 of \$10,000 with the Old Age Security pension, currently a maximum of about \$6,200, is often insufficient for seniors to live on.

The income provided by these pensions is rising only very slowly, which is one of the reasons CARP has been advocating for a supplementary universal pension plan to ensure that all Canadians are able to retire with as close to their pre-retirement income as possible.

The CARP vision for a universal pension plan would see it being modelled on the CPP architecture, with mandatory payroll deductions, targeted end benefits, and fund sustainability. Its ability to weather economic storms would be strengthened by the size of the fund.

Eng said that there has been some