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Planner

Mending the murican way:

COUNTERING COSTLY CARE

Wally Bob Warfarin resents being Americanized.

"Dagrabbit," he cursed, "We wipe them at men's hockey, at women's hockey, in curling, at all the things that truly count. Longer life expectancy, lower infant mortality.

Gardenia's alphabet income (OAS + CPP + GIS)* totals \$1100 monthly. Given this income level and her health, a benevolent provincial government has accepted Gardenia for Yaculta Lodge at the subsidized rate of \$27 daily . . . and put her on a

Always be nice to your children. They're the ones who will choose your rest home. — Phyllis Diller

"Why can't we beat them on the delivery of health care?"

This Americanization of Canadian health care, Wally Bob contends, is a mean-spirited downloading of social costs from government to the shoulders of the labouring classes. "There's an alien conspiracy at work," he figures, "A type needing Mulder and Sculley to investigate."

Wally Bob sees this Americanization occurring most broadly on three fronts: growth of multi-tier systems for those with wads of cash, prolonged waiting lists for those without, and the creation of a new class of aged and disabled poor.

Take Gardenia, his mother. For years she's been living in Wally Bob's basement ("A suite," he insists.), but can no longer handle stairs, is likely to break a hip if she tries. A commercial fisherman, Wally Bob can't supply the attention she needs; nor can his children, away at UVic.

waiting list edging three years.

"See," fumes Wally Bob, "It's the Murican way, their famous Catch 22: yes, you qualify, but, sorry, there's no room. She can die poor with a broken hip, or she can come up with \$2,500 a month for three years of private residential care elsewhere — \$90,000 hard-earned Canadian smackers to buy into an alien system."

Gardenia's certainly not alone. Forty percent of folks now 65 or older are going to need nursing home care, while others will require in-home attention. At a time when provincial governments are burning beds and slashing home care.

Wally Bob dreaded sharing this new financial challenge with his sister, Angelissima. The single mother of two teenage girls, she's called Superman by her daughters — not because of her inordinate strength of character, but because of her similarity to Christopher Reeve. Like the actor, she was bucked from her horse; and like the actor, her spinal cord was

*Old Age Security (\$461.55) + Guaranteed Income Supplement (\$548.53) + Canada Pension Plan (\$89.92)

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Statistics Canada: "A significant portion of the gains in life expectancy which have been made in recent years represent gains of life in poor health."

Statistics Canada, 1995-1997	Life expectancy at birth	Disability-free life expectancy	Years of lessened activity
Males	78.3	68.6	9.7
Females	81.2	70.2	11.0

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severed. Unlike the actor, she maintained the use of her upper body.

A Langley teacher, her group plan disability payments were sufficient to maintain the mortgage and the children — but insufficient to remodel her home to her needs. That she handled through her Critical Illness policy. This policy pays a lump-sum benefit on diagnosis of an illness such as cancer, heart attack, stroke — or paralysis. The \$50,000 was

enough to widen doorways for her wheelchair, replace entry stairs with ramps, to upgrade the bathroom with grab bars and a transfer bench, and to convert the main floor family room into her bedroom.

"You jerk," Angelissima responded with her usual endearment to her brother's concerns. "All this time you've been playing host to Mom, I've been paying into a Long Term Care policy for her. It's the least I could do. I got it done just before she turned 75, and all she

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had to do was answer some questions over the phone."

What Angelissima purchased is a reimbursement plan, providing \$50 each day her mother pays that amount or more. Coupled with Gardenia's pensions, the policy will provide just enough to cover the unsubsidized residential home costs.

Wally Bob now wonders about himself, what protective strategies he should be organizing. The odds are strong (see table above) that he too will someday need financial assistance.

WALLY BOB'S OPTIONS:

1. HOME AS EMERGENCY FUND

Pay off mortgage now! (How? From last year's sockeye season?)

Let kids know won't inherit.

Sell at market peak. (When's that?) Downsize.

2. BANKROLL RRSP

\$50,000 more than needed for retirement. (How? Last year's sockeye season?)

3. KIDS!

Rely on their basements, their wealth, their husbands? (Their husbands???)

4. PROTEST!!!

Spend holidays tenting on Parliament lawns. (Maybe not.)

5. INSURANCE

Critical Illness now, Long Term Care later.

Affordable? Considerably more so than alternatives.

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