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ΙΝΣΤΙΤΟΥΤΟ ΣΥΝΕΤΑΙΡΙΣΤΙΚΩΝ ΕΠΕΥΝΩΝ

& ΜΕΛΕΤΩΝ (ΙΣΕΜ)

**Title of abstract: Re-thinking Canada's Approach to Personal Support Work –
A case study of Home Care Workers' Co-operative.**

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Abstract : (max. 300 words)

Canada's aging population relies on a healthcare system focused on a for-profit, institutional approach. This institutional approach requires investment in costly long-term care facilities. The Ontario government alone will spend \$1.75 billion for new long-term care facilities to supplement the 626 currently operating. This additional funding will not address the average 152 days for client placement. With 35,308 Ontario residences on a wait list for placement the eldercare system is overwhelmed.

While infrastructure is a major issue, staff shortages are a more immediate concern. Long-term care facilities maintain worker shortages of 5 to 10 Personal Support Workers (PSWs) in a single 24-hour period. The situation is worse in Northern and rural areas with staff shortages between 20 and 50 PSWs per care centre. The impacts of these staff shortages mean that the elderly go without basic care functions such as toileting or bathing. PSWs are leaving the care sector due to poor pay, precarious work, burn-out and lack of empowerment as for-profit institutions focus on profit for their shareholders. Ontario's Long-term Care Staffing Study found that about 40 percent of PSWs are leaving the healthcare sector within one year of training due to stress and burnout related to staffing shortages as long-term care facilities reduce costs to improve profit margins.

In response to Canada's current for-profit, institutional approach to eldercare, a group of PSWs established a worker co-operative focused on home-based eldercare. This case study of the Home Care Workers' Co-operative (HCWC) examined this non-profit co-operative comparing it to the for-profit institutional approach. Is a worker co-operative's focus on profit re-allocation for improved working conditions an effective strategy to build a resilient eldercare system in Canada? Can home care address the immediate needs for eldercare by utilizing existing infrastructure that long-term care facilities cannot?

Keywords: Eldercare, Personal support workers, Worker Co-operative