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## Proactive attitude needed on health

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If Canadians were already concerned about how the country will afford health care in the future, it's looking like a greater dilemma given Monday's report from the Heart and Stroke Foundation.

The news is particularly upsetting, since the foundation says that people younger than ever before, because of lifestyle choices, face the prospect of heart attack or stroke early on in life.

Also, with the huge numbers of baby boomers getting into their senior years, more of these kinds of health problems associated with age can be expected.

It's what the foundation, in this its annual report on the heart health of Canadians, describes as a "perfect storm" of conditions.

The advice is also directed to the government: it needs to act now to avoid being deluged with the associated health needs.

But another key observation from Stephen Samis, the foundation's director of health policy, is that the bulk of our health budgets is used to help people after they become sick - rather than trying to keep them healthy.

It will come as no surprise to most that the picture painted of typical Canadians to accompany this report is of inactive people, even at relatively young ages of 20 to 24. Combined with that is a growing number of those overweight or obese, who have high blood pressure or diabetes.

It's not hard to see the contributors to this: more sedentary lifestyles with young people glued to electronic gear as opposed to outdoor recreation and occupations that rely less on physical labour.

At any rate, as we've seen life expectancy grow, it's upsetting for people to realize now that coming generations for the first time are likely to have shorter lives than their parents - if these trends continue.

The foundation has been pushing for federal support of an action plan on cardiovascular health. Given this prognosis one would hope this will get more attention, along with the recognition that prevention is far more cost-effective than treatment.