

# Fact sheet

## The Ombudsperson's Recommendations on Seniors' Care



Seniors' care in B.C. is at a crossroads. The services and supports that seniors rely on have eroded in the past decade.

The BC Ombudsperson's report on seniors' care represents an historic opportunity to strengthen the services and supports that can help B.C.'s growing population of seniors to age in place, and to die with dignity. The report outlines a clear roadmap to addressing some of the serious problems in our home and community care system.

### The Report

The BC Ombudsperson's office conducted an investigation into the state of seniors' care between 2008 and 2012 and received unprecedented public response. The result was the largest report the Ombudsperson's office has ever produced: *The Best of Care: Getting it Right for Seniors in British Columbia*.

The Ombudsperson's findings reveal that the Ministry of Health is not fulfilling its leadership role in seniors' care. In response, the report recommends measures for improving quality, accessibility, and accountability in home and community care, in particular for home support services, assisted living, and residential care.



### Government response to-date

In an update released in December 2012, the Ombudsperson's office found that since the report's release the Ministry of Health had fully implemented only four of the 141 recommendations made directly to the ministry, and partially implemented only approximately 25 per cent of the recommendations.



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# The provincial government needs to:

## Increase access to home support

Access to home support for seniors over age 75 dropped by 30 percent between 2001/02 and 2009/10. The Ombudsperson's report points out that it makes sense to expand the home support program, both in the interests of seniors and of the health care system as a whole.

**Question for Candidates:** What investments would your government make in home support services?

## Improve access and meet guidelines for residential care

The Ombudsperson found that the Ministry of Health's decisions on residential care funding are primarily guided by past funding levels. This means the amount of money allocated by the health authorities may not be enough to ensure that the staffing levels, training and service levels are in place to meet the needs of seniors currently living in residential care.

**Questions for Candidates:** Would your government evaluate whether the residential care budget in each health authority is sufficient to meet the current needs of its population? And would you ensure that each health authority meets the Ministry of Health guidelines for residential care and provide 3.36 hours of direct care per resident per day by 2014/15?

## Report to the public on the adequacy of home and community care services

In order to fulfill its stewardship role and address issues such as long wait times, the Ministry of Health must gather reliable data on how and if programs are meeting the needs of seniors. It is equally important that the public have access to this information.

**Question for Candidates:** Would your government implement the Ombudsperson's recommendation to provide annual public reports on whether home and community care services are meeting the needs of seniors?

## Provide seniors with the information and support needed to access services

When seniors and their families need to access home and community care services, it is often

difficult to get information about the services available in their community, the wait lists for these services, and the options for financial assistance.

**Question for Candidates:** Would your government implement the Ombudsperson's recommendation to establish a program that would support seniors and their families to access information about the home and community care system?

## Provide services appropriate to the needs of diverse communities

When seniors are able to access culturally appropriate care they are less likely to experience confusion, discomfort and safety concerns. During their investigation, the Ombudsperson's office also heard concerns from the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered community about the need for inclusive policies and training to ensure that LGBTQ seniors can have equal access to services and care.

**Question for Candidates:** What would your government do to provide equal access to services and culturally appropriate care for seniors from diverse cultural backgrounds, including education and training to ensure inclusive and welcoming facilities?

## Implement and enforce province-wide standards of care

The Ombudsperson found that the Ministry of Health has not established specific quality of care standards for seniors receiving home and community care services. For example, the Ministry has not established clear and legally binding standards for assisted living residences in areas such as staffing, residents' rights, food quality, and assistance with the activities of daily living.

**Question for Candidates:** Would your government establish clear and enforceable province-wide standards of care for home support, assisted living and residential care and implement the Ombudsperson's recommendations on enforcing those standards?