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Honourable Josie Osborne
Minister of Health
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Dear Minister Osborne,

Subject: Urgent Need for Improvements in Home Support and Long-Term Care Services in British Columbia

We are writing to express our deep concerns regarding the current state of home support and long-term care services in British Columbia. As social workers dedicated to supporting our senior population, we have witnessed firsthand with patients and our own families the critical challenges that are a reality. These challenges include:

Staffing Shortages: There is a significant shortage of healthcare workers, leading to inadequate service provision and increased burnout among existing staff. As the BC Seniors Advocate noted in 2023, the lack of full-time work and regular schedules in home support continues to make recruitment and retention challenging.

Inconsistent Service Quality: The quality of home support and long-term care services vary widely, leaving many seniors without the reliable care they need. ¹

Financial Strain: Rising costs are placing an immense burden on seniors, many of whom are struggling to afford essential services. In his recent report on the growing demand for long term care beds in B.C.², the Seniors Advocate reports that the home support client fee is a significant barrier for many B.C. seniors to remain at home. He notes that a single senior (75+) with an annual income of approximately \$31,000 must pay just over \$10,000 for a one hour daily visit of home support.

Legislative Confusion: The complex and often confusing legislative framework is a barrier to efficient and effective service delivery. With at least 3 pieces of legislation involved in a senior's journey from home support to assisted living to long term care, the legal framework is complicated and difficult to navigate.

Wait Times: Increasing demand for long-term care placements is resulting in unacceptably long wait times for seniors. According to the Seniors Advocate's report on long-term care, the average and median wait times for a long-term care bed has increased substantially since 2018. Furthermore, in the last ten years, the waitlist for publicly subsidized assisted living has increased by 30% from 943 people to 1,224 people.

¹ MacCourt P, Amdam L, Clarke L, Prouten S (2020) Improving Quality of Life in Long-Term Care-A Way Forward. Prepared for Action for Reform of Residential Care. <http://arrcbc.ca/>

² From Shortfall to Crisis: Growing Demand for Long-Term Care Beds in B.C. – Office of the Seniors Advocate, B.C. (2025)

Based on our experience as social workers and on the data gathered by the Seniors' Advocate, we have the following **recommendations for action**:

1. **Enhance Workforce Recruitment and Retention:** Develop comprehensive strategies to attract, train, and retain healthcare workers.
2. **Improve Oversight and Regulation:** Strengthen the oversight of home support and long-term care services to ensure consistent quality and accountability to seniors and their families.
3. **Address Financial Issues:** Implement measures to reduce the financial burden on seniors through subsidies and the elimination of home support fees.
4. **Simplify Legislation:** Clarify and streamline the legislative framework to facilitate better service delivery.
5. **Expand Support Programs:** Increase funding and support for programs that assist seniors in accessing services across the continuum of care from home support to respite care to assisted living to long term care.

The well-being of our senior population is paramount, and it is imperative that we address these issues with urgency and commitment. We urge you to take immediate action to address growing unmet need for seniors' services in British Columbia and look forward to your response.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter.

Sincerely,



Chelsea Minhas MSW, RSW
Executive Director



Phil Mach CD, MSW, RCSW
Board President

B.C. Association of Social Workers

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