

27 November 2013

The Honourable Michael de Jong, Q.C.
Minister of Finance
Room 153
Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4

Dear Minister:

Re: 2014 Budget Submission

British Columbia's rapidly ageing population presents significant opportunities to enhance the province's economic strength. Given this demographic shift, the time is ripe for the government to leverage care providers' entrepreneurial spirit and specialized expertise in delivering efficient and quality seniors' care.

The BC Care Providers Association (the Association) has represented private and non-profit community care providers for over 30 years. We have over 230 care home, home support, assisted living and commercial members across B.C.

Our members represent over one-third of all funded long term care beds in B.C. – caring for over 21,000 seniors in care each day and creating more than 15,000 direct and indirect jobs across the province.

We are pleased to provide our recommendations for Budget 2014.

Recommendation 1: Capitalize on care providers' specialized expertise and entrepreneurialism.

With the growing number of older British Columbians, and particularly, the increasing number of seniors living with dementia, there is significant need to renovate, rebuild and construct care homes, as well as enhance home support, for this specialized population. Meeting the needs of this demographic requires expert knowledge.

Our members bring this expertise to the table. Caring for seniors is what we do. This specialized service enables us to focus on delivering quality care.

Further, our entrepreneurialism enables us to find innovative ways to deliver quality care in an efficient manner. In fact, in 2011, the B.C. Ombudsperson reported that in the Vancouver Island

Health Authority, for example, “it would be typical for a publicly funded facility with 50 residential care beds to receive approximately \$44,000 more in funding each month than a privately owned facility with the same number of subsidized residential care beds” (*The Best of Care: Getting It Right for Seniors in British Columbia (Part 2)* at p. 216-17).

It is worth noting that if only 1000 more expensive care beds run by the health authorities were operated by BCCPA members, it would save the health budget over \$50M in the next 5 years – and not compromise the quality of care.

To make the best use of limited tax dollars dedicated to health care, we recommend the government continue its longstanding policy of utilizing our members for the development and operation of new facilities.

Recommendation 2: Ensure funding matches the costs of delivering complex care.

In B.C., the shift to complex care delivery has resulted in a significant increase in the acuity level of seniors in residential care. Funding lifts, however, have not matched this rising acuity. Instead, funding is often less than collective agreement increases, less than cost of living increases and health authorities rarely recognize inflationary pressures. As a result, funding shortfalls increase year after year.

While our members strive to deliver the best care possible and creatively find ways to “make do” with the resources available through government funding, shortfalls are ultimately to the detriment of seniors in care. This system of having care providers operate at a financial disadvantage is unsustainable.

A sustainable system requires collective agreements to be fully funded and benchmarked to similar agreements negotiated in the private sector. It also requires other care costs to be fairly compensated. Accordingly, we recommend that government ensure funding matches the cost of delivering complex care.

Recommendation 3: Implement efficiencies identified in the Core Review.

Over the last several years, our members have faced an ever increasing regulatory burden. Sadly, this translates into our frontline staff having to spend more time in front of computers and filling out forms rather than with their residents.

This comes at a time when there are calls from the public and families of those in care to provide an even higher level of service for their loved ones.

To help move care providers’ resources back to the frontline, and in support of the Hon. Bill Bennett’s Core Review, our Association is conducting a special red tape review of the continuing care sector. We will identify administrative and regulatory processes that create

duplication and inefficiency, with a view to streamlining the system in a manner that promotes financial efficiency and moves dollars back to frontline care.

We will produce our interim report in December 2013, with a final report delivered in February 2014. We encourage government to work in partnership with us to implement the efficiencies identified in our forthcoming reports.

Conclusion

B.C.'s demographic shift is placing increasing demands on our health care system. It is also creating an opportunity to encourage innovative solutions that support efficiency, sustainability and quality care. However, the current system of "make do" is unsustainable.

Our members' resources are being stretched too thin. Budget 2014 presents the opportunity to enhance the focus on efficient, sustainable and quality residential care and home support, and ultimately, make B.C. the best place for seniors.

Sincerely,



Daniel Fontaine
Chief Executive Officer

cc: Hon. Terry Lake, Minister of Health
Hon. Bill Bennett, Minister Responsible for Core Review
Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services