



MLA ENGAGEMENT GUIDE



PREPARED BY



About the guide

Building a strong relationship with your local MLA helps to generate awareness of the sector, bring attention to key issues, and build strong champions in the Legislature for the important work seniors living and care operators do. It also helps MLAs better understand the needs of their constituents, particularly those receiving seniors living and care services, and their families.

This guide offers some tips and tools for engaging your MLA, including what to do before, during and after a meeting, how to address MLAs in different positions, and information you can use to prepare for your meeting, such as key messages and facts about the sector.





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Engaging your MLA, Why Does it Matter?

Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) are elected by their constituents to represent them in British Columbia's Legislature. Except for independent members, MLAs represent political parties – i.e, the British Columbia New Democratic Party (BC NDP), BC United (formerly the BC Liberal Party), the Green Party of British Columbia, or the Conservative Party of British Columbia.

The [Legislative Assembly of B.C.](#) describes the role of an MLA as follows:

When the Legislative Assembly is in session, an MLA's job is to represent the communities that elected them and collaborate with other MLAs to govern the province. They do so by researching, debating, and voting on all proposed laws (called bills) and government budgets. In doing so, MLAs consider the many different views and concerns of both those that elected them and of British Columbians more generally. When the Legislative Assembly is not in session, MLAs will often return to their communities to learn about the issues and concerns that their residents may have and work on their behalf.

Finding out who your MLA is

In some cases, your organization will have had a strong relationship with your MLA for years. In others, you may not yet know who your representative is.

Find your local MLA here:
<https://www.leg.bc.ca/learn-about-us/members>



If an MLA belongs to the governing party, they may also be a Minister, Parliamentary Secretary, or the Speaker of the House. Knowing this information is helpful, as it will inform how you address them (please see the below section on honourifics), and what kind of information they may be interested in knowing.

Building a strong relationship with your local MLA helps to generate awareness of the sector, bring attention to key issues, and build strong champions in the Legislature for the important work seniors living and care operators do. It also helps MLAs better understand the needs of their constituents, particularly those receiving seniors living and care services, and their families.

The easiest time to engage with your MLA is while the Legislative Assembly is not in session (i.e., while the house is not sitting), as this will mean that they are home in their constituency and not in Victoria. This typically happens over the summer and winter months; however, the session is set at the discretion of the Premier, which means that every year is different. You can view the current [Parliamentary Calendar here](#).

Sometimes, an MLA will reach out to you directly and ask you to give them a tour or share some information about your organization. In other cases, a seniors living or care operator will invite an MLA to make remarks at an event (e.g., an annual barbecue, family appreciation event, groundbreaking or expansion) or visit the site. An MLA, or their constituency office, may also reach out to you on behalf of a constituent – e.g., the MLA has received a complaint, they have a constituent who needs assistance, or they need information on the constituent's behalf.

Finally, you may also see your MLA at external community events, such as fundraisers or announcements – this can offer a good opportunity to introduce yourself and your organization, and perhaps offer the opportunity for a tour.



What to do and Expect Leading up to, During and Following an MLA Visit

Below are some things to consider, before, during and after a visit with your local MLA.

Before the visit

- If you would like to request a meeting, BCCPA may be able to reach out to facilitate an introduction on your behalf.
- If you are requesting the meeting, share information about the nature of your request, your organization/site and what the MLA can expect. Make sure to indicate that your organization/site is in their constituency. If applicable, check with your head office before sending the request, as they may have a process in place, pre-existing relationships, or information to share.
- If the MLA is requesting the visit, let your organization's head office know about the invitation, they may wish to send a representative (if applicable).
- Let BCCPA know about the visit, as the Association may have information or advice to share with you.
- Gather as much information as possible about what the MLA would like to get out of the visit.
- Do some research:
 - Learn if they are a Minister, Parliamentary Secretary, or sit on a relevant committee.
 - Know how to address the MLA (see below)
 - Read the MLA's biography.
 - Know what party they represent.



- Think about the key things you would like to communicate about your site or organization. You may develop key messages, or have some facts about the demographics of your community at the ready.
- Prepare a take-away package – this may include a one pager, an annual report, or other information of relevance to our organization, or the sector.
- Consider who you would like to introduce the MLA to while they are on site. For example, you may ensure that key staff are available, invite the Chair of your Family Council, or identify several residents or family members to be part of the tour or conversation.
- Identify someone to take photos – MLAs like to use photos on their social media to demonstrate that they are meeting with their constituents and engaged on local issues.
- If the MLA will be attending an event which your organization is holding, ensure that their office has all the information they need well in advance, this includes:
 - The time and location of the event (including parking instructions).
 - Information about the event.
 - Information about who will be attending.
 - A list of any other dignitaries or VIPs.
 - Whether there will be an opportunity to speak, and who else will be speaking.
 - A detailed agenda, if available.
- Make sure you have contact information for the MLA's staff.
- Determine if the visit or meeting is [considered Lobbying](#). If your interaction is considered lobbying, you will need to report the meeting to the Lobbyist Registry (or have your organization do this under the primary Lobbyist's account). If you are responding to an MLA's written request, your actions will not likely be considered lobbying – e.g., if an MLA's office reached out to you, to request a tour. For more information visit the [Office of the Registrar of Lobbyists, British Columbia](#).



During the visit

- Be respectful of the MLA's time. They often have full schedules and will be going from one appointment to the next.
- Because of their schedules, MLA meetings often begin late. Be prepared to shorten the visit/meeting agenda on the fly.
- Start with the basics – depending on their portfolio and professional background, the MLA may not know much about seniors living and continuing care sector. You can use the backgrounder on page 11.
- Leave ample time for discussion and Q&A. Answer questions, but don't go beyond your depth. The offer to follow-up with more information is often sufficient.
- Tailor your message to the MLA's background, portfolio and political party.
- Develop a personal connection – for example, “Have you ever had a family member live in a long-term care home?” Or, “I see that you were an emergency nurse, what were your experiences working with older adults like?”
- Have someone take notes – what you hear from the MLA/staff and the questions they ask are helpful to remember.

After the visit

- Send a thank you note or email. Include any photos which were taken (respecting resident/client privacy).
- Follow-up with any information you had promised, as soon as possible.
- Let BCCPA staff know how the meeting went.
- Share photos on social media.

After the visit – longer term

- Keep them engaged! Foster a relationship with the local MLA by keeping them updated on your organization’s activity. Whenever you have noteworthy events, milestones, press releases, etc., consider sharing them with the MLA by email. MLAs like to hear what is going on in their constituencies.





A Guide to Honourifics

Knowing how to address an MLA can require some navigation. Below is a summary of how to address MLAs in different positions.

You will be able to tell if someone is a Minister or a Parliamentary Secretary by looking at their biography. If their name includes “Hon.” before it, that is an indication that they are a Minister.

All Ministers will be part of the governing party, but not all members of the governing party will be a Minister.

Who	Addressing in writing	Salutation	Introducing at an event	In conversation
The Premier	The Honourable (first and last name, e.g. Peter Smith), M.L.A. Premier of British Columbia.	Dear Premier,	The Honourable Premier (last name)	Premier/Premier (last name)
Provincial cabinet minister	The Honourable (first and last name, e.g. Peter Smith), M.L.A. Minister of (name of ministry).	Dear Minister/Dear Minister (last name),	The Honourable Minister (first and last name)	Minister/Minister (last name)
Parliamentary secretary	(First and last name, e.g. Peter Smith), M.L.A. Parliamentary Secretary of (name of ministry/area).	Dear Parliamentary Secretary (last name),	Parliamentary Secretary (first and last name)	MLA (last name)
MLA	(First and last name, e.g. Peter Smith), M.L.A.	Dear MLA (last name),	MLA (first and last name)	MLA (last name)

More information [is available here](#).

Sample Letter of Invitation

July 24, 2023

MLA Edward Garfinkle

By email: Edward.Garfinkle.mla@leg.bc.ca

Subject: Invitation to Tour Aspen Gardens

Dear MLA Garfinkle,

It was a pleasure to meet you at the May Day fair last week. As promised, I am writing to invite you to tour our care home, Aspen Gardens, this summer.

Aspen Gardens has been operating in the Village of Keremeos for 25 years and provides long-term care and assisted living services to residents, requiring support. It would be our pleasure to have you see our space, and meet with the Chair of our Family Council, residents and staff.

If there are some dates which would work well for you, we would be pleased to accommodate your schedule.

Thank you again for your commitment to serving British Columbians.

Sincerely,
Betty Chan

Key Messages

In addition to highlighting your organization’s vision, mission, and commitment to providing support and/or care, the key messages below outline some of the things you may like to highlight for your local MLA. BCCPA staff are happy to help you craft a more specific message.

- By the end of the decade, close to one in four Canadians will be seniors. That represents a 17 percent increase between now and then.¹
- British Columbians are experiencing lengthy waits for the long-term care and assisted living services they need. Without immediate action this situation will reach a crisis point this decade.
- The long-term care waitlist has more than doubled in the past five years. In 2022 alone, the number of seniors waiting increased by 40 percent. Likewise, as of March 31, 2022, 785 individuals were waiting for subsidized registered assisted living, an 11 percent increase from the previous year.² More care is needed in this community and across British Columbia.
- In 2022, 81 percent of alternate level of care (ALC) days in acute care hospitals were for seniors.³ This represents seniors who are ready to be discharged but have no appropriate place to go. Without immediate investment in long-term care and assisted living, this issue will get worse.
- Research indicates that a minimum of 4.1 hours of direct care per day is required for quality care. The sector is calling for the government to increase the hours of direct care received by each long-term care resident to an average of four hours per day, ensuring that seniors receive the quality of care that they need and deserve.
- Providing more care is contingent on ensuring that there are enough people working in the sector to deliver it. The Government of B.C. has taken several positive actions to address the health human resources crisis. However, more must be done to secure a robust workforce.
- Many people want to age at home, or in an independent living home. Seniors should be supported to access family paid home support and independent living services. One model to look to is Quebec’s “Tax Credit for Home-Support Services for Seniors”. The tax credit is equal to 35 percent of the expenses paid for eligible home-support services.

[1] RBC. 2020. “Navigating the 2020’s: How Canada can thrive in a decade of change.” Accessed at: <https://thoughtleadership.rbc.com/wp-content/uploads/navigating-2020s.pdf>.

[2] Office of the Seniors Advocate. 2022. “Monitoring Seniors Services. 2022 Report.” Accessed at: https://www.seniorsadvocatebc.ca/app/uploads/sites/4/2022/12/MSS_Report_2022.pdf

[3] Office of the Seniors Advocate. 2022. “Monitoring Seniors Services. 2022 Report.” Accessed at: https://www.seniorsadvocatebc.ca/app/uploads/sites/4/2022/12/MSS_Report_2022.pdf



About B.C.'s Seniors Living & Continuing Care Sector:

There are four key components of the seniors living, wellness and care continuum which work together to support seniors.

1

Independent living: For seniors who are confident in their ability to live alone safely but do not want to worry about things like home maintenance, housekeeping or cooking. Seniors feel more confident knowing that help is there if they need it, and they enjoy the amenities and activities available in their purpose-built retirement community. Some seniors living in independent living also receive home health supports and care.

2

Home health care: Home care and home support options enable seniors to get the help they need at home. Services range from publicly subsidized care, which is delivered through the health authorities, to customized private-pay options, which can include medical care, transportation, companionship, and home making.

3

Assisted living: Assisted living homes are for seniors who can still live independently and make decisions for themselves but require additional support due to physical or health challenges. Assisted living services provide housing, hospitality services, and personal care services.

4

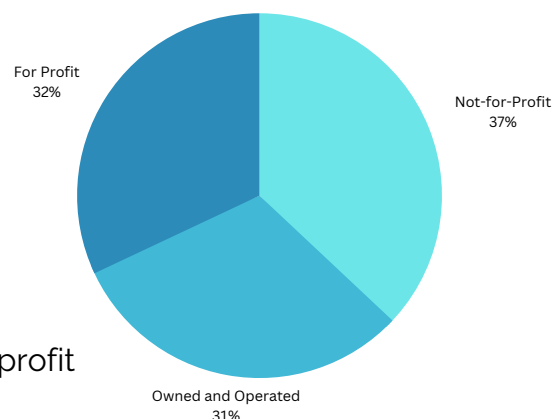
Long-term care: Long-term care homes are an option for seniors who need 24-hour professional support and care because of their physical needs or because they have significant cognitizant decline.

Different considerations including cognition, overall health, and ability to live alone safely all affect the level of care and/or support a senior requires. Factors such as the ability to pay for private care, and individual needs and preferences will also affect what kind of care or support a senior chooses.

Long-term care delivery type

There are 29,194 long-term care beds in B.C., which exist in 327 care homes. Of these beds:

- 31 percent (8,925 beds) are owned and operated by health authorities.
- 32 percent (9,377 beds) are operated by for-profit organizations.
- 37 percent (10,392 beds) are operated by not-for-profit societies.



Of these beds, 1,492 are private pay (meaning that the client pays for the service in full) and 18,777 are publicly subsidized (B.C. residents pay a co-payment of 80% of their after-tax income, subject to a minimum and maximum rate).⁴

About Us

Established in 1977, BC Care Providers Association (BCCPA) is the leading voice for B.C.'s continuing care sector. Our growing membership base includes over 450 long-term care, assisted living, and commercial members from across British Columbia. Through its operating arm EngAge BC, the organization represents independent living and private-pay home health operators.

BCCPA and EngAge BC members support more than 19,000 seniors annually in long-term care and assisted living settings and 6,500 independent living residents. Additionally, our members deliver almost 2.5 million hours of home care and home support services each year.

[4] Analysis performed on dataset provided by the Office of the Seniors Advocate: British Columbia Long-Term Care and Assisted Living Directory 2022.