

Policy Motions adopted in 2023:

Investments in Long-Term Care

Whereas the Minister of Health has announced a long-term care (LTC) capital plan of \$2.039 billion over the next ten years;

Whereas the Minister has announced a number of new health authority owned and operated LTC projects;

Whereas the average cost of the announced projects is about \$1 million per care bed;

Whereas the capital plan will only cover the construction of two thousand beds in ten years;

Whereas most of the announced projects are to replace existing out-dated facilities with only a small number of incremental beds;

Whereas the Conference Board of Canada has projected that over 30,000 new long-term care beds will be required in B.C. by 2035; and

Whereas affiliate providers of long-term care have a successful history of delivering projects in response to requests for proposal (RFP); now, therefore, be it

Resolved, that the BC Care Providers Association (BCCPA), on behalf of its members:

Calls on the Ministry of Health to utilize its operating budget to issue requests for proposals (RFPs) for new incremental bed construction throughout the province as a means of closing the gap between demand and supply of long-term care spaces.

- Revitalization of Affiliate Long-Term Care Homes

Whereas the Canadian Standards Association (CSA) has published new national standards for long-term care homes that call for one resident per room;

Whereas many long-term care homes in B.C. are more than thirty years old and have exceeded their original lifespan;

Whereas many older long-term care homes have two and four person rooms;

Whereas some older long-term care homes are not equipped with modern HVAC systems; and

Whereas many older long-term care homes do not meet energy efficiency standards; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, that the BC Care Providers Association (BCCPA), on behalf of its members:

Calls on the provincial government to create an Affiliate Long-Term Care Rejuvenation Fund to allow older care homes to be upgraded to meet current operational and quality standards for an aging population.

- Assisted Living Redesign

Whereas Canada's population is aging, such that one in four Canadians will be over the age of 65 by 2036;

Whereas the supply of Assisted Living (AL) spaces in British Columbia has remained essentially unchanged over the last five years at 4,115 publicly subsidized spaces;

Whereas the rate of Assisted Living spaces per 1,000 population (75+) has decreased by 15% in the last five years;

Whereas seniors must wait many months for placement in publicly subsidized Assisted Living, from 62 days in Fraser Health Authority to 465 days in the Northern Health Authority;

Whereas up to 15% of Canadian hospital beds are filled with "alternate level of care" patients who are ready to be discharged into the community but have no appropriate place to go;

Whereas the "ideal" Assisted Living client is not well-defined, as rising acuity levels increasingly portray Assisted Living as a transitional space for individuals awaiting transfers to long-term care, and case managers preferring to refer clients to community care as the cheaper option;

Whereas the lack of clarity regarding assisted living's purpose has been exacerbated by a pivotal change in 2019, when the requirement to provide two prescribed healthcare services was removed, contributing to the current ambiguity in the role of assisted living residences;

Whereas a systemic redesign is needed to ensure that Assisted Living remains an integral part of the continuum of care for older adults, ensuring that seniors can age in the right place and are not prematurely transitioned to long-term care; and

Whereas Office of the Seniors Advocate's 2023 report, It's Time to Act: A Review of Assisted Living in B.C., calls for a significant increase in the capacity of the publicly subsidized assisted living program; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, that the BC Care Providers Association (BCCPA), on behalf of its members:

Calls upon the Ministry of Health to undertake a systems redesign of Assisted Living services and invest in increasing spaces in communities across B.C. to improve access for frail and older adults.

- Climate Change Preparedness

Whereas climate change threatens to worsen the frequency, severity and impacts of extreme weather events and natural disasters, including droughts, floods, wildfires and extreme heat events;

Whereas many communities in British Columbia are at elevated risk for earthquakes and other natural disasters due to seismic activity;

Whereas older adults are particularly vulnerable to the health impacts of climate change due to factors such as frailty, chronic health conditions, compromised immune systems, limited mobility, cognitive challenges, social isolation and other factors; and

Whereas the vast majority of the 619 people who died as a result of the 2021 heat dome were frail older adults without access to air conditioning;

Whereas several seniors care communities and independent living residences in B.C. have been evacuated in recent years due to climate events, including floods and wildfires;

Whereas despite these recent experiences and the increasing frequency of climate-related emergencies, there continues to be ambiguity around the roles and responsibilities of responding agencies and organizations;

Whereas care providers will need access to essential equipment to mitigate the impacts of climate change and other natural disasters, such as modernized HVAC systems; and

Whereas Equipcare BC is a well-run program that could distribute government funds to publicly subsidized long-term care and assisted living providers for the purchase of essential equipment; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, that the BC Care Providers Association (BCCPA), on behalf of its members:

Calls upon the Ministry of Health to renew and expand EquipCare BC with an additional \$6 million investment to provide care operators with equipment for climate change and natural disaster preparedness; and

Calls upon Health Emergency Management BC (HEMBC) to work with the Ministry of Health, regional health authorities and the affiliate care sector to update the emergency response plans relating to care communities.

- Stabilizing British Columbia's Continuing Care Workforce

Whereas the continuing care sector continues to experience a staffing crisis, with a job vacancy rate that has more than doubled since the start of the pandemic;

Whereas the seniors care sector will require 32,000 more nurses, care aides, allied health professionals and support workers by 2032 to meet the needs of our aging population, increased hours of care and new beds;

Whereas the provincial government has demonstrated its commitment to addressing these challenges through its provincial health human resource strategy, including significant investments to level up wages for continuing care workers, expanding training seats for nurses and care aides, streamlining credential recognition and expanding immigration pathways for internationally educated nurses (IENs), and committing to nurse-to-patient ratios;

Whereas continuing care workers are reporting unprecedented levels of overtime, stress and burnout, as well as poor work-life balance;

Whereas these workers are increasingly leaving regular positions for employment with temporary staffing agencies, who can offer greater flexibility and significant pay incentives; Whereas care communities must increasingly rely on these temporary staffing agencies to address critical shortages in nursing and care aide positions;

Whereas despite efforts to overhaul the process, IENs continue to face significant bureaucratic obstacles to validating their credentials and finding relevant employment; and

Whereas the care communities in the interior, island and northern health community regions continue to experience the most acute staffing shortages; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, that the BC Care Providers Association (BCCPA), on behalf of its members:

Calls upon the Ministry of Health to improve IEN pathways while working with the regional health authorities and affiliate care providers to develop region-specific recruitment and retention strategies, resulting in an increased number of B.C. nurses and care aides staying on regular lines.

- Aging in the Right Place Tax Credit

Whereas 91% of Canadians across all ages and nearly 100% of those aged 65 years of age and older report that they intend to support themselves to live safely and independently in their homes for as long as possible;

Whereas independent living, sometimes referred to as seniors' living or retirement living, has become a preferred choice for many seniors who are able to continue living independently, but can benefit from support services such as meals, housekeeping, and recreational activities, in the more than 20,000 independent living suites across the province;

Whereas home health and independent living are critical components of B.C.'s seniors care system, providing seniors with support to maintain their independence;

Whereas while many Canadians receive publicly subsidized home health services through their governments, approximately 35% pay for them out of pocket;

Whereas there are many reasons why seniors choose to use family-funded home health services, including greater availability, flexibility, continuity in workers, and personalized care that exceeds the level of service delivered by the public system;

Whereas B.C.'s senior population is set to double within the next two decades, driving a surge in demand for home health services, further disrupting the availability of publicly subsidized options and compelling more seniors to seek private alternatives;

Whereas by 2031, home health will represent the largest portion of care demand, further driving a rise in the costs of these services;

Whereas family-funded home health services are a critical component of B.C.'s seniors care system; however, there are currently no financial incentives or support provided to address the associated barriers and costs;

Whereas a refundable tax credit to subsidize the costs of family-funded home health and independent living services would increase accessibility of these services, supporting more B.C. seniors to safely age in the right place and remain independent within their communities; and

Whereas a refundable tax credit would contribute to the sustainability of the health system, mitigating pressure on acute care and alleviating strain on the publicly subsidized continuing care sector as the province prepares for its aging population; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, that the BC Care Providers Association (BCCPA), on behalf of its members:

Urges the B.C. government to establish a refundable tax credit to help cover expenses incurred by seniors accessing non-government home health and independent living services to support them in living safely and independently in the places they call home.