



**For Immediate Release**  
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**Caregiver Distress in B.C. rising while available supports fail to keep pace**

**Victoria** – Seniors Advocate Isobel Mackenzie released an update report today confirming that caregiver distress is rising in B.C. while supports and services are not keeping pace with growing need.

“We looked at data two years ago showing that B.C. has one of the highest rates of caregiver distress in Canada,” said Isobel Mackenzie, B.C.’s Seniors Advocate. “We were hoping when we looked at the data in this area this year that we would see improvements, but unfortunately, this is not the case.”

The report, *Caregivers in Distress: A Growing Problem*, is an update to a 2015 report that indicated 29% of unpaid caregivers are experiencing symptoms of distress such as anger, depression or feelings of not being able to continue with their caregiving duties. Data highlighted in the current report indicate rates of distress have **increased by 7% to 31%**.

“This is a disturbing trend on its own when we think of the daily reality for all the sons, daughters, spouses, neighbours and friends who are dedicating hundreds of hours caring for loved ones,” said Mackenzie. “However there is even more cause for concern when we look at additional data in this report that indicate the frailty and complexity of those we are caring for at home is actually increasing, and the supports and services that can make an immense difference to the lives of caregivers are not keeping pace.”

The report focuses on the caregivers of individuals receiving publicly subsidized home support in the province, as this is the only sub-set of the caregiving community where measurable data using detailed health care assessments are available. This report also relies on data that tracks key support services such as Adult Day Programs, which provide regular programming and relief to caregivers, respite in residential care facilities, and additional home support services, that also help provide a reprieve from caregiving duties.

“Having a break for even a few hours can make a huge difference in the lives of caregivers who are feeling exhausted and overwhelmed,” said Mackenzie. “For some caregivers, time alone to refocus and recharge is something very precious and we need to recognize that it can make the difference between feeling strong enough to carry on with caring commitments, or giving up entirely.”

Key findings of the report include:

- In 2015/16, 31% of clients had a primary caregiver in distress. This is a **7%** increase from the 2015 report
- Over this period, the actual number of primary caregivers identifying as distressed increased by over 1,000, which represents a **14%** increase in the actual number of caregivers in distress
- The number of home support clients accessing Adult Day Programs decreased by **5%** and the number of days delivered to these clients decreased by 2%
- The average hours of home support per day per client over 65 decreased by **5%**, signaling less intensive service

“Unpaid caregivers are a vital, often unrecognized yet critical piece in ensuring the stability of our health care system,” said Mackenzie, adding there are approximately one million unpaid caregivers in the province whose paid value is estimated to be \$3.5 billion. “The importance of maximizing supports can’t be underestimated when we consider costly alternatives such as residential care or hospital stays.”

The full report can be viewed at [www.seniorsadvocatebc.ca](http://www.seniorsadvocatebc.ca)

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