



**For Immediate Release
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B.C. Seniors Advocate releases results of landmark residential care survey

Vancouver – B.C. Seniors Advocate Isobel Mackenzie released provincial results of her office’s survey of publicly subsidized residential care homes today. This is the most extensive survey of residents’ quality of life ever conducted in Canada.

“For the first time in this province, we have heard the collective voices of some of our most frail and vulnerable seniors across all of our care homes,” said Mackenzie. “What they are telling us is that while some are satisfied in some areas, overall, we need to be doing better, and in some cases, much better in ensuring the needs of residents are met,” Mackenzie added.

The survey asked a range of questions on residents’ experiences of day to day activities and care from questions about food quality and staff responsiveness to observations of physician care and social connectedness. The survey was conducted between June 2016 and May 2017. Residents’ most frequent visitors, usually a family member, were also mailed surveys.

“We are very good at using clinical measurements to gauge how we’re doing in this area such as numbers of falls etc.,” said Mackenzie. “What we haven’t been good at is actually asking the residents themselves what they think of the care they receive and this survey gave us the opportunity to hear feedback that is so critical in making care improvements,” Mackenzie added.

Key positive responses from the survey include:

- 50% of residents rated the overall quality of the care home as very good or excellent with 83% of residents believing the staff know what they are doing
- 88% of family members report being involved in decisions about the care of their loved one
- 80% of residents indicate they get the services they need
- 65% of family members rated the facility 8 or higher when 10 was the highest possible score
- 88% feel safe in the care home
- 86% of residents feel staff treat them with respect
- 88% of family members or most frequent visitors report that facility staff addresses their concerns always or most of the time

Key areas where residents and families said improvements are needed include:

- 62% of residents say they do not get to bathe or shower as often as they want
- One in four residents say they sometimes, rarely or never get help to the toilet when needed and 25% of residents report staff tries to relieve physical discomfort sometimes, rarely or never
- More than one-third of residents report they are not consistently getting the help they need at mealtimes
- Almost 46% of residents report there is no one living in the facility that they consider a close friend and 45% report there is no one for them to do things with
- Less than half (46%) of residents say staff regularly make time for friendly conversation

- 49% of residents only sometimes, rarely or never have the same care aide on most weekdays
- 4 out of 10 residents living in residential care do not want to be there
- Only 57% of residents report that the care facility regularly feels like home

“We have heard from 20,000 British Columbians - 10,000 residents and 10,000 family members - and together their voices send three strong messages...more staff, more freedom and more conversation,” said Mackenzie. “Residents need more help in some areas reflecting the fact there are not enough staff; many are lonely and want to be talked to and engaged and they want what we all do, more freedom to control all aspects of their day to day lives from when they get up in the morning to what time of day they eat their meals.”

The Advocate makes eight recommendations in the report for system improvements including increasing care hours and ensuring staffing levels are enforced and monitored by health authorities, increasing flexibility of how and when care is delivered, increasing training focused on the emotional needs of residents, expanding the role of nurse practitioners in residential care facilities and increasing the range of activities provided in residential care facilities, particularly in the evenings and weekends. The Advocate also recommends ongoing use of this survey tool to ensure progress is monitored.

“We have to remember that for people who are living in residential care, this is their home, and very likely their last home,” said Mackenzie. “We need to do all that we can to ensure those who live there, have the very best experience possible.”

Background and full highlights of the Office of the Seniors Advocate’s Residential Care Survey are available at www.seniorsadvocatebc.ca

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