

Investment in Senior Care—Securing B.C.’s Workforce by Fixing Access, Affordability & Navigation

Issue

B.C. employers are facing growing productivity losses as more employees struggle to balance work with caregiving for aging parents. The province’s seniors’ care system has not kept pace with demographic change and the aging population. Long-term care (LTC) waitlists have grown into the thousands, average waits now reach up to 10 months, and available LTC beds per 1,000 seniors aged 75+ have declined. Home and community support services remain both costly and limited, while navigating between public and private care options is confusing and fragmented. These systemic gaps have intensified since this issue was brought to the attention of the BC Chamber network in 2023 and is contributing to employee absenteeism, reduced work hours, and increased burnout, with negative impacts on both workforce stability and business productivity.

(Note: this is a policy renewal for a policy initially adopted in 2023. The Policy has been simplified for clarity from the previous iteration, and retitled to reflect concerns that the previous title needed updating to avoid misrepresenting the growing Seniors population in BC)

Background

British Columbia’s seniors’ care system is facing growing pressure as demand for long-term care, home support, and community services far outpaces capacity. Wait-lists for publicly funded long-term care have lengthened, while affordability challenges and limited expansion in home and community care leave many seniors and their families struggling to find safe, sustainable options.

The resulting caregiver strain, workforce shortages, and fragmented service navigation highlight systemic gaps that threaten both care quality and accessibility for B.C.’s aging population. B.C. employers are experiencing rising productivity impacts as an increasing number of employees face the competing demands of their professional responsibilities and caregiving duties for aging parents.

Long term care (LTC) access and housing capacity for Seniors

Provincial reviews show that Long Term Care (LTC) wait-lists and wait times have risen sharply since 2016, while the number of funded LTC beds per 1,000 seniors 75+ has fallen, and only a minority of announced new beds have opened. This shortage pushes seniors into hospitals, private-pay beds, or unsafe living situations, increasing costs for families and the health system. ¹

¹ [seniorsadvocatebc](https://seniorsadvocatebc.ca)

Home and community care affordability

B.C. is among the most expensive provinces for publicly subsidized home support, with modest-income seniors paying substantial annual user fees while also facing rising rents and service charges in independent and assisted living. Adult day programs, respite care, and convalescent or transition beds have not expanded at the pace of need, leaving many caregivers without realistic relief.²

Caregiver strain and workforce impact

The Seniors Advocate links longer LTC waits and limited home support/respice to rising caregiver distress, with many caregivers providing several hours of daily care in addition to their jobs and family responsibilities. This results in reduced work hours, missed shifts, and attrition, particularly among mid-career workers who are simultaneously supporting children and parents.³

Navigation and transparency gaps

Families must navigate multiple health authorities, housing providers, and private agencies, with limited transparency on eligibility, costs, wait-list status, and typical timelines. Existing tools help locate services but are not integrated with health-authority placement systems or real-time capacity, forcing families and employers to make decisions with incomplete information.⁴

Workforce, immigration, and standards

Chronic shortages of health-care assistants, nurses, physicians, and allied health staff constrain LTC, home support, and geriatric assessment capacity, despite efforts to recruit domestically and abroad. Internationally educated professionals face slow credential recognition and limited bridging seats, while private home-care providers operate without a consistent provincial licensing framework to ensure training, oversight, and quality.⁵

² [seniorsadvocatebc](#)

³ [seniorsadvocatebc](#)

⁴ [seniorsadvocatebc](#)

⁵ [niageing+1](#)

THE CHAMBER RECOMMENDS

That the Provincial Government

1) Expand LTC and seniors' housing supply with clear targets

- a) The Province of BC publish and fund an updated LTC and seniors' housing expansion plan with regional, annual targets that reverse the decline in beds per 1,000 seniors 75+ and reduce average LTC waits to 180 days by 2028.

2) Make home support and community care affordable

- a) The Province of BC phase out or significantly reduce assessed client fees for publicly subsidized home support for low- and moderate-income seniors over two budgets, and expand respite, adult day, rehab, and post-discharge home-care services to relieve caregiver burnout.

3) Modernize standards and licensing for in-home care

- a) The Province of BC implement a licensing or registration framework for private home-care agencies that sets minimum standards for training, supervision, insurance, and complaints, and align public home-support standards to ensure timely access to clinically necessary services.

4) Fix navigation with a single seniors' portal and hotline

- a) The Province of BC create an integrated seniors' care portal and 24/7 hotline that show eligibility, public and private costs, near-real-time capacity, and standardized wait-list status across independent living, assisted living, LTC, home health, adult day, and respite.

5) Strengthen the seniors' care workforce and support caregivers

- a) The Province of BC accelerate credential recognition and fund bridging programs for internationally educated HCAs, nurses, and allied health professionals, while partnering with employers and the federal system to enhance caregiver supports and promote caregiver-friendly workplace practices.

Submitted by the **North Vancouver Chamber of Commerce**

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