

For Immediate Release

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Office of the Seniors Advocate releases 2021 *Monitoring Seniors Services* report

Victoria, B.C.— Today, British Columbia Seniors Advocate Isobel Mackenzie released the 2021 update of the *Monitoring Seniors Services* report.

This annual report provides a comprehensive assessment of services available to B.C. seniors in the key areas of health care, community supports, housing, transportation, income supports and safety and protection. It highlights the performance of services and measures trends over time to identify where needs are being met, and where there are gaps.

“This report covers the first full year of the pandemic and many of the numbers reflect the disruption to services that occurred in the early part of the pandemic. We see the isolation and loneliness of seniors reflected in the virtual elimination of adult day programs, the significantly lower use of HandyDART and the reduction in trips to the emergency department,” said Mackenzie.

“However, we also see the care and concern that British Columbians have for seniors demonstrated in the extraordinary efforts of the Safe Seniors, Strong Communities program that built on the generosity of over 13,000 volunteers to deliver 860,000 services to close to 26,000 seniors,” said Mackenzie.

Among key findings in this year’s report:

- The population of seniors in B.C. increased by 4% in the last year.
- The overall health of B.C. seniors has remained relatively stable over the last five years. 42% of seniors are either healthy or have a low-complexity condition such as asthma, while 19% live with high-complexity conditions, and 6% have been diagnosed with dementia.
- Emergency department visits and hospitalizations for those over 65 dropped by 9% and 7% respectively, and there was a decrease of 28% in days spent in alternate level of care.
- 44% of seniors received the publicly funded flu vaccine at a pharmacy (an 8% increase from the previous year) and 10% received it at a physician’s office, while close to 88% received a COVID-19 vaccine.
- There was an 87% decline in Adult Day Program clients and 96% reduction in Adult Day Program days due to the program’s suspension during the pandemic.
- Over the past five years the number of subsidized, registered assisted living units have decreased by 3%, and private assisted living units have decreased by 26%.
- There was an 11% decrease in the number of B.C. long-term care facilities inspected due to the impact of the pandemic and this resulted in decreases in infractions.
- Average wait times for clients waiting for admission to long-term care increased by 33%.
- There was a 37% decrease in long-term care residents waiting to transfer to their preferred facility, demonstrating more seniors are living in their preferred facility.



- The proportion of long-term care residents taking antipsychotics increased by 7%.
- 72,067 seniors accessed the Property Tax Deferral Program and deferred an average of \$4,297 in taxes. The number of first-time program users decreased by 15%.
- Over the last 5 years, the number of seniors subsidized housing units per 1,000 population 55+ has decreased 14%.
- The average monthly income of Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters (SAFER) recipients is \$1,675, their average rent is \$1,052 and the average rent subsidy provided is \$199 per month. The average subsidy dropped by 4% in the last year.
- 80% of seniors maintained an active driver's license, a 6% increase from last year and there was an increase of 12% in seniors aged 80 and older with an active driver's license.
- Active HandyDART clients fell by 23%, and HandyDART ride requests by 57%.
- There was a 6% increase in seniors accessing GIS and a 4% increase in seniors accessing the B.C. Senior's Supplement.
- GIS and OAS increased by 3% and the B.C. Seniors Supplement increased by 101%.

"Overall, we see that most B.C. seniors continue to live independently with relatively good health. However, challenges remain for low-income seniors, especially those who rent. The significant increase to the B.C. Senior's Supplement was very welcome news for over 65,000 low-income seniors who benefit from the program. Unfortunately, the SAFER subsidy and seniors subsidized housing are not keeping pace with inflation and a growing senior's population. Positive advancement has been made on ensuring seniors have been placed in their preferred facility," concluded Mackenzie.

The 2021 Monitoring Seniors Services report and Supplementary Data Tables are available at:
<https://www.seniorsadvocatebc.ca/monitoring-seniors-services/>

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