

Office of the Seniors Advocate Monthly Update - July 2021

Note: There will be no August update. The next update will be released in September 2021.

What's Happening in July

[Canada Day](#) (July 1)

[National Injury Prevention Day](#) (July 5)

[International Self-Care Day](#) (July 24)

[British Columbia Day](#) (August 2)

COVID-19

COVID-19 Vaccinations

Everyone in B.C. must register for the COVID-19 vaccine using the [Get Vaccinated provincial registration system](#), or by calling the provincial phone line at 1-833-838-2323. All people born in 2009 or earlier (12+) are now eligible to get their first dose. If you booked your first vaccine by phone or through a pharmacy, you must still register online to receive your second dose.

B.C. is accelerating second dose appointments for all eligible people due to increased vaccine supplies. Invitations for the second dose will be sent according to the date of your first vaccine.

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COVID-19 Update

In B.C., the third wave of COVID-19 pandemic peaked in early April 2021 with new cases averaging over 1,000 per day. Case counts and hospitalizations have been steadily declining since then with the seven day average falling below 300 cases by the end of May and to 49 cases at the end of June.

On May 25, the province launched a four-step plan to carefully bring people back together. On June 15, the province entered Step 2 of this plan with some easing of social interaction and travel restrictions. On July 1, we moved to Step 3 with many restrictions now reduced or eliminated. Continued progression through this plan will depend on the number of adults vaccinated, COVID-19 cases counts, hospitalizations and deaths, and the number of clusters and outbreaks.

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Provincial News

Statements from the Provincial Health Officer and Minister of Health

The Provincial Health Officer and the Minister of Health release regular statements that can be accessed on the [BC Government News](#) website.

Seniors Outreach is launching a pilot program this summer to help older adults avoid homelessness

(Kelowna Now)

Seniors Outreach and Resource Centre is launching a new pilot housing program this summer. The non-profit society, which works to enhance and brighten the lives of senior citizens in Kelowna, says the program will give seniors an extra option when struggling to find affordable housing.

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Tsawaayuus-Rainbow Gardens expanding with five-storey apartment

(Alberni Valley News)

Tsawaayuus-Rainbow Gardens is expanding again, this time with five-storeys of seniors' independent living suites. This is the fourth expansion project for Tsawaayuus-Rainbow Gardens since it opened in 1992. The five-storey apartment block unveiled on June 15 is expected to take 15 months to build.

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Merger creates new United Way British Columbia - working with communities in BC's Interior, Lower Mainland and Central & Northern Vancouver Island

(Cision)

Six United Ways have merged as a single organization to increase impact in local communities around the province, including in Central and Northern Vancouver Island, the Lower Mainland, Thompson Nicola Cariboo, Southern Interior, Trail and District, and East Kootenay.

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COVID-19: B.C. inching toward 80 per cent of eligible residents receiving a first dose

(Vancouver Sun)

B.C. is edging close to 80 per cent of those eligible for a COVID-19 vaccine getting their first jab. And experts say the province should push to reach 90 per cent to achieve "practical" herd immunity. Herd immunity, or population immunity, is normally considered the point at which enough people are vaccinated or have immune protection from previous infection so that the disease will not spread through the population. It varies for viruses.

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COVID-19: Mandatory vaccinations urged for B.C. care home staff

(Global News)

During the first two waves of the COVID-19 pandemic, care homes and other facilities for seniors were hit the hardest. Now, calls are growing to make vaccination and rapid testing mandatory in those facilities. The BC Care Providers Association says it should be mandatory for all staff to be vaccinated as a condition of their employment. The group is also calling for rapid testing to be in place for all visitors.

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COVID-19: Pandemic in B.C. heightens importance of family councils in long-term care

(Vancouver Sun)

The COVID-19 pandemic has convinced more family members than ever of the importance of having a recognized voice in long-term care, according to the head of the province's only regional family care association.

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B.C. Seniors' Week highlights seniors, elders, and their families during the COVID-19 pandemic

(The Georgia Straight)

B.C. parliamentary secretary for seniors' services and long-term care Mable Elmore has issued the following statement in recognition of Seniors' Week (June 6 to 12): "B.C. Seniors' Week in 2021 is especially significant given the many challenges seniors, elders, and their families face during the COVID-19 pandemic."

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Recent Announcements from the B.C. Government Impacting Seniors

- June 30, 2021 [Chief coroner's updated statement on public safety during heat wave](#)
- June 30, 2021 [Protecting renters by preventing illegal renovictions](#)
- June 29, 2021 [Chief coroner's statement on public safety during heat wave](#)
- June 29, 2021 [B.C. shifts to Step 3 of restart plan](#)
- June 27, 2021 [Premier's statement on Canadian Multiculturalism Day](#)
- June 25, 2021 [Tips to stay safe, cool during extreme heat wave](#)
- June 22, 2021 [State of emergency extended to continue B.C.'s COVID-19 response](#)
- June 21, 2021 [Joint statement on National Indigenous Peoples Day](#)
- June 15, 2021 [Affordable housing for seniors, Indigenous Elders underway in Port Alberni](#)

- June 15, 2021 [Statement on World Elder Abuse and Awareness Day](#)
- June 15, 2021 [Joint statement on resumption of travel within B.C.](#)
- June 14, 2021 [B.C. prepares to safely move to Step 2 of its restart plan](#)
- June 11, 2021 [Expanded medical device coverage for people with diabetes](#)
- June 8, 2021 [Abbotsford Regional Hospital expanded emergency dept. opens](#)
- June 8, 2021 [Connectivity investments help seniors benefit from technology](#)
- June 6, 2021 [Parliamentary secretary's statement on B.C. Seniors' Week](#)
- June 4, 2021 [2,600 new affordable rental homes on the way in B.C.](#)
- June 3, 2021 [Connectivity investments support northern economic recovery](#)
- June 3, 2021 [More affordable homes open in Salmon Arm](#)

National News

Statements from the Chief Public Health Officer of Canada

The Chief Public Health Officer of Canada releases regular statements that can be accessed on the [Government of Canada News](#) website.

Kick-starting Reform in Long-Term Care

(Institute for Research on Public Policy - IRPP)

The IRPP has released a feature series that aims to better understand the reasons for the decades-long inaction by governments to address reported issues in long-term care. The goal is to start a conversation on how to ensure officials tackle the root causes of system failure through fundamental reforms.

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Promoting the labour force participation of older Canadians

(Government of Canada)

Canada's population is aging due to lower fertility rates and longer life expectancy. With proportionally fewer young people moving into the workforce to replace the increasing number of older individuals retiring, population aging has had and will have direct implications on Canada's economy and labour market. Consequently, there is a need to increase the labour force participation of older individuals, and of other groups of Canadians, to support businesses, economic growth and continued improvement in Canada's standard of living. To address the specific workforce challenges facing many older Canadians and to promote their labour force participation, this report highlights the most promising initiatives; these include a multifaceted awareness campaign to address ageism while promoting the benefits of hiring older individuals, funding for targeted training for older individuals, and supporting initiatives that would lead to more flexible work. The initiatives, either in combination with one another or on their own, can have diverse impacts on the labour force participation of older people.

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Easy Online Tool Provides Expert Advice on COVID-19 Risk When Gathering with Others

(National Institute on Aging)

As Canada takes steps to safely reopen, a new online tool can help individuals and families to quickly assess their risk of exposure to COVID-19 when meeting or gathering with others. The National Institute on Aging has released a new tool called **My COVID-19 Visit Risk Calculator**. It takes about three minutes to complete and can help Canadians make safer choices when gathering with others for the duration of the pandemic.

[Learn More](#)

NIA Releases Guidance to Support the Safe Re-opening of Canada's Long-term Care Homes

(National Institute on Aging)

During the COVID-19 pandemic's first and second waves, restrictions were implemented in long-term care (LTC) homes to protect residents and staff. However, comprehensive vaccination coverage has been achieved in the LTC sector and it is time to reassess restrictions. To support the safe re-opening of LTC homes across Canada, the National Institute on Ageing has released a new guidance document called **After the Shot: Guidance Supporting the Re-opening of Canada's LTC Homes Following COVID-19**.

[Learn More](#)

Tips to avoid scams targeting seniors

(Campbell River Mirror)

Scams targeted at seniors is one form of elder abuse being highlighted on World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD) which the International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse (INPEA) has designated June 15. Various organizations, including the Canadian Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse and the Better Business Bureau (BBB), have come together to help provide resources, raise awareness and prevent elder abuse. This year, BBB is highlighting the most common scams targeting seniors along with tips that they, family members, business owners and their employees can all utilize to help keep them safe.

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U.S. FDA faces mounting criticism over Alzheimer's drug approval

(National Post)

In approving the first new Alzheimer's drug in nearly 20 years, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration is taking its biggest risk yet with a strategy that allows new therapies onto the market without strong evidence that they work, regulatory and scientific experts say.

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Seniors with dementia in LTC homes are using virtual reality to relive their pasts

(HealthyDebate)

Seniors across Canada are using virtual reality to escape the social isolation caused not only by their neurodegenerative disorders, but also by the lockdowns that have caused further isolation during the pandemic. Some long-term care homes have rolled out virtual reality programming to allow residents to access fun or relaxing experiences including site-seeing tours, playing with puppies or guided meditation on a beach. This can also be used for reminiscence therapy using photographs and music to remind these seniors of their past. There is little research to support the effectiveness, but the prospect of using virtual reality for therapeutic purposes is promising.

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Recent Announcements from the Federal Government Impacting Seniors

- Jun 27, 2021 [Statement by Minister Chagger on Canadian Multiculturalism Day](#)
- Jun 21, 2021 [Statement from Ministers Carolyn Bennett, Marc Miller, Daniel Vandal and Steven Guilbeault on National Indigenous Peoples Day](#)
- Jun 21, 2021 [Government of Canada's first phase to easing border measures for travellers entering Canada](#)

- Jun 15, 2021 [Government of Canada launches consultation on federal policy definition of senior abuse](#)
- Jun 15, 2021 [Statement by Judith Robertson, Commissioner of the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada, World Elder Abuse Awareness Day](#)
- Jun 9, 2021 [Federal, Provincial, Territorial Ministers Responsible for Seniors prioritize work on seniors abuse, housing and technology to age in place](#)
- Jun 4, 2021 [Canadians invited to help shape Canada's first Disability Inclusion Action Plan](#)
- Jun 1, 2021 [Statement from Ministers Carolyn Bennett, Marc Miller, Daniel Vandal, and Steven Guilbeault on National Indigenous History Month and Indigenous Reads](#)
- Jun 1, 2021 [Accessibility Standards Canada hosts first public meeting](#)

Seeking Your Opinion

British Columbians asked for views on next budget

British Columbians are encouraged to share what is important to people, businesses and communities in B.C.'s Budget 2022, as the province moves further into economic recovery and looks toward a pandemic-free future. People can share their views by completing the survey, sending in written comments or presenting to the committee. The Budget 2022 consultation, including the online survey, is now open. The deadline to receive all submissions is Sept. 30, 2021, at 5 p.m. (Pacific time). Public input will be included in the committee's report to the legislative assembly, expected to be released by Nov. 15, 2021.

[Learn More](#)

Developing a New National Long-Term Care Services Standard

The Standards Council of Canada (SCC), Health Standards Organization (HSO), and Canadian Standards Association (CSA Group) are collaborating to develop two new complementary National Standards for Long-Term Care that will be shaped by the needs of residents, families, and Canada's LTC workforce. The public is being asked to provide input on what matters most to you to help shape the future of long-term care in Canada.

[Learn More](#)

Recent Research

COVID-19 outbreaks in nursing and seniors' homes associated with certain facility characteristics

(Statistics Canada - The Daily)

Nursing and residential care residents and staff have been particularly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, nursing homes (also called long-term care homes) and seniors' homes (also called retirement homes or assisted living facilities) have accounted for a significant number of cases and the majority of COVID-19-related deaths across Canada. A new study released in June, entitled "Impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic in nursing and residential care facilities in Canada," provides preliminary results tracking the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on nursing homes, seniors' homes, mental health facilities and other residential care facilities.

[Learn More](#)

Advancing Family Presence Policies and Practices in the Canadian Health and Care Context: COVID-19 and Beyond

(Healthcare Quarterly)

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, restrictive visitor policies have curtailed the ability of family caregivers to be present to partner in the care of loved ones. Building on the success of the "Better Together" campaign, Healthcare Excellence Canada – the newly amalgamated organization of the Canadian Foundation for Healthcare Improvement and the Canadian Patient Safety Institute – has co-developed policy guidance and "Essential Together" programming that recognizes the significant role of essential care partners. This work aims to support the safe reintegration of essential care partners into health and care organizations across Canada during the pandemic and beyond.

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A scoping review of COVID-19 experiences of people living with dementia

(Canadian Journal of Public Health)

People living with dementia have been greatly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, there is a lack of knowledge on the COVID-19 impact on people with dementia and their care partners. This article draws on existing literature to understand the COVID-19 experiences in this group. With little access to supports and services, people with dementia and their care partners are currently at a point of crisis; the authors conclude that urgent action is needed to support this group.

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Feds sign off on mixing and matching COVID-19 vaccines, but evidence gaps remain

(Canadian Medical Association Journal News)

This article discusses NACI's advice on the choice of second COVID-19 vaccination dose offered to people.

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Refocusing on hypertension control in Canada

(Canadian Medical Association Journal)

Treatment of hypertension is highly effective for reducing cardiovascular morbidity, preventable disability, and death across age groups. However, Canadian National rates of hypertension treatment and control have worsened in the last decade. This article argues that hypertension control should again be made a national priority, with optimization of clinical care using global best practices and re-engagement with government.

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How do older adults understand and manage distress? A qualitative study

(BMC Family Practice)

Distress is an expected emotional response to negative life events. Experiences later in life, such as loss of mobility or bereavement, may trigger distress. Older adults often manage their own distress, yet little research has explored the self-management strategies used by older people. The authors discuss types of self-management strategies and conclude that primary care physicians should ask how patients currently self-manage distress and offer supportive information and community resources.

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The Complexity of Living with Diabetes and Urinary Incontinence for Older Adults with Multiple Chronic Conditions Receiving Home Care Services: An Interpretive Description Study

(Global Qualitative Nursing Research)

Over 40% of older adults with diabetes receiving home-care services experience urinary incontinence. However, experiential knowledge is lacking on how these older adults live with diabetes and incontinence. The evidence presented here supports the need for more comprehensive home care to support self-care for this population.

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Design characteristics and inclusion of evidence-based exercise recommendation in fall prevention community exercise programs for older adults in Canada: a national descriptive self-report study

(BMC Geriatrics)

Training balance through exercise is an effective strategy to reduce falls in community-dwelling older adults. Community exercise programs have the potential to deliver effective fall prevention exercise. This study described design characteristics of fall prevention community exercise programs for older adults (50 years and older) across Canada and explored whether these programs included the evidence-based exercise recommendations.

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Characteristics of older adults living with HIV accessing home and community care services in British Columbia, Canada

(AIDS Care)

Over half of people living with HIV engaged in care in British Columbia (BC) are age ≥50. Services most commonly used include community nursing and rehabilitation. Approximately 15% of older people living with HIV have accessed home and community care, but the extent of potential unmet need for these services needs to be further explored.

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Cannabis use and patterns among middle and older aged Canadians prior to legalization: a sex-specific analysis of the Canadian Tobacco, Alcohol and Drugs Survey

(BMC Public Health)

The existing literature neglects to include middle-aged and older adults. This nationally representative study identifies the prevalence, characteristics and patterns of cannabis use among middle and older aged males and females in Canada. Results from this study are expected to be used to reliably track changes in usage, behaviours, and related disorders in the years to come.

[Learn More](#)

Outreach by the OSA

The Seniors Advocate continues to meet with seniors across the province by attending events and delivering presentations virtually. If you would like to invite the Seniors Advocate to present at your event, please contact our office at info@seniorsadvocatebc.ca.

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