

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 26, 2026

B.C. seniors' population is growing, living longer as pressure on services rises

VICTORIA – The Office of the Seniors Advocate's annual monitoring report released today shows there are more older adults in B.C. and they're waiting longer for many front-line services because government isn't keeping up with the needs of the rising seniors' population.

"Our report found wait times for surgeries, long-term care, safe hospital discharge and subsidized housing are all increasing as more people reach their older years," said Dan Levitt, BC Seniors Advocate. "These are all vital services that help seniors maintain their independence, health and quality of life. However, a growing number of people are unable to access these supports."

B.C.'s seniors' population (65+) was 1.1 million in 2024, growing 44% over ten years, and life expectancy at 65 years is now 22.8 years, up from 21.7 years in 2015. However, the capacity for many publicly-subsidized seniors' services is decreasing:

- The number of seniors on waitlists has increased over the last six years for four of the top five surgeries: knee replacements up 61%; hip replacements up 72%; abdominal hernia repairs up 16%; prostate up 29%.
- In 2024/25, there were 20,449 alternate level of care (ALC) patients (65+) occupying a hospital bed, a 14% increase from 2019/20; the average ALC stay was 24 days.
- There were 7,029 people waiting for a long-term care bed in 2025, a nearly 200% increase compared to 2019/20. Wait times have also grown, from an average of 144 to 287 days over six years.
- The number of home support clients increased 16%, and the rate of clients per 1,000 seniors (75+) decreased 7% over six years.
- In 2024/25, 83,124 seniors deferred their property taxes, however, 14% fewer people joined the program compared to six years ago. The average property tax amount deferred was \$5,369, a 23% increase from 2019/20.
- There were 13,216 approved applications for BC Housing Seniors' Subsidized Housing (SSH) as of March 31, 2025, 50% more than six years ago; only 7% of applicants (894) received a unit in 2025.
- The number of HandyDart rides decreased 13% for BC Transit and 6% for TransLink over the past six years.

“It’s important to recognize there are areas of improvement, such as increased health care staff recruitment, significant growth in Better at Home services last year, and higher subsidies for many Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters (SAFER) clients,” said Levitt. “Also, more seniors are maintaining an active driver’s licence and many are continuing to work into their 60s.”

The declining rate of many services compared to the seniors’ population also puts pressure on family caregivers. While adult day programs have rebounded from the pandemic with more clients returning and program days increasing, waitlists have risen 18% over six years. In addition, there were 7 fewer overnight respite beds last year compared to 2019/20. Adult day programs and overnight respite beds are vital in giving family caregivers a break from caring for their loved ones.

“I am also very concerned about the increase in seniors abuse in B.C. Calls to the Seniors Abuse and Information Line reporting abuse rose 71% over the past six years,” said Levitt. “There is also a rise in seniors experiencing financial abuse and fraud targeting seniors, which is particularly worrisome as so many of these cases go unreported.”

Anyone experiencing or concerned about abuse, neglect or self-neglect of a senior is encouraged to contact the Seniors Abuse and Information Line, their local Community Response Network, BC211, Crimestoppers, health authority, RCMP, police, or the Office of the Seniors Advocate.

“I am continuing to urge government to develop a cross-ministry seniors plan to identify required services and outline how to expand capacity as efficiently as possible,” said Levitt. “With the current fiscal climate, the Province has committed to improving health care and front-line services which are precisely the supports seniors and their families rely on.”

Quick Link: <https://www.seniorsadvocatebc.ca/monitoring-seniors-services/>

-30-

The Office of the Seniors Advocate is an independent office of the provincial government with a mandate of monitoring seniors’ services and reporting on systemic issues affecting seniors. The office also provides information and referral to seniors and their caregivers by calling toll-free 1 877 952-3181, via email at info@seniorsadvocatebc.ca, Canada Post and the OSA web site <https://www.seniorsadvocatebc.ca/>.

Media contact:

OSA Communications
250 213-2024
osa.comms@gov.bc.ca
www.seniorsadvocatebc.ca