
NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
2018HLTH0063-001227
June 18, 2018

Ministry of Health

Family-and-friend caregivers to receive much-needed relief with expanded supports

VANCOUVER – The Ministry of Health is investing \$75 million to expand respite care and adult day programs, helping both seniors and their loved ones, announced Adrian Dix, Minister of Health.

“Many B.C. seniors count on their spouses, children and close friends to help them stay at home, and cope and manage chronic conditions,” said Dix. “Caregiving without adequate supports can impact the whole family, particularly a person’s ability to live at home, which is what most seniors and their loved ones want. Giving seniors better options and supporting unpaid caregivers to take time for themselves is a necessity.”

Over the next three years, the Province will improve and strengthen respite services and adult day programs to support seniors and their family-and-friend caregivers. The number of respite beds will be increased, and overnight care at home will be made more accessible. In addition, the number of adult day program spaces will be increased, and the hours of operation will be expanded to provide services on evenings and weekends. As part of the work, health authorities are developing plans to meet localized needs of family-and-friend caregivers and seniors in their regions.

“The August 2017 report from the Office of the Seniors Advocate estimates that 31% of seniors had a primary caregiver in distress,” Dix said. “According to the report, the number of clients accessing adult day programs and the number of hours per client decreased in recent years. Over the past five years, there were also a significant cut in the number of respite beds. Under the direction of Premier Horgan, we are changing direction by expanding respite care and adult day programs. This plan will provide more direct care for seniors and afford family-and-friend caregivers time for themselves to reduce stress and exhaustion.”

“This expansion of respite care is a strategic investment in seniors’ care. It recognizes that caring for seniors involves caring for their caregivers,” said Anne Kang, Parliamentary Secretary for Seniors.

“These clients represent the most highly vulnerable seniors who, without caregivers, would likely need to move to residential care,” said Isobel Mackenzie, seniors advocate. “By increasing access to adult day programs and respite beds and capacity, caregivers will be better supported resulting in a healthier caregiver population, and a better quality of life for seniors.”

“This is exceptionally good news for family-and-friend caregivers in British Columbia, who provide over 80% of the care at home, often without support, and at great financial, physical and emotional cost,” Barb MacLean, executive director, Family Caregivers of British Columbia. “Having access to the right support, at the right time, is absolutely essential for caregivers to be

able to continue to care without burning out or becoming a patient themselves.”

Respite services are provided at home through home-support services in the community, through adult day programs, or on a short-term basis in a long-term care facility, hospice or other community care setting. Adult day programs assist seniors and adults with disabilities to continue to live in their own homes by providing supportive group programs and activities in the community. Services may include health-care services, including nursing and rehabilitation activities, nutrition, bathing, foot care, telephone check-ins and caregiver support, including respite, caregiver support groups, information and education programs.

Quick Facts:

- It is estimated there are approximately one million family-and-friend caregivers in the province who help seniors with daily activities, ranging from a ride to the grocery store or a medical appointment to assistance with activities, such as housekeeping and yard work, managing finances, helping with medical treatments and providing personal care, such as bathing. Often the caregivers are also managing families of their own and working.
- People interested in receiving caregiver respite or adult day services, or know of someone who might be in need of these services, can contact the home and community care office in their health authority, or have a health-care professional make a referral on their behalf.
- The strategy to strengthen supports for caregivers is part of work underway to improve the quality of life for seniors in B.C.
- A total of \$768 million over three years is being allocated by the Ministry of Health for investments in primary care, home and community care, residential care and assisted living.
- A further \$249 million over the next three years will be provided by the federal government under the Canada/British Columbia Home and Community Care funding agreement.

Learn More:

To learn more about supports, information and education offered to caregivers in B.C., visit the Family Caregivers of BC: www.familycaregiversbc.ca/

To learn more about the Office of the Seniors Advocate report on caregiver distress, visit: www.seniorsadvocatebc.ca/osa-reports/caregivers-in-distress-a-growing-problem-2/

To learn more about B.C.'s new primary care strategy, visit: <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2018PREM0034-001010>

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