

# Improving Care for B.C. Seniors: An Action Plan



**FINAL REPORT ON PROGRESS**

April 2014



Ministry of  
Health

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# Executive Summary

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## Background

On Feb. 14, 2012, the Province released [Improving Care for B.C. Seniors: An Action Plan](#) (seniors action plan) to address concerns expressed by seniors, their families, and care providers about seniors' care in British Columbia. The seniors action plan was informed by the findings and recommendations of the B.C. ombudsperson in the report [The Best of Care: Getting it Right for Seniors in British Columbia \(Part 2\)](#), which was released at the same time.

The seniors action plan committed to making improvements to seniors' care through 26 key actions organized into six themes corresponding to the ombudsperson's report:

1. **Concerns & Complaints:** To provide appropriate avenues to have complaints heard and dealt with in a fair manner.
2. **Information:** To improve the scope, quality and access to the information seniors and their families need to understand and access services in a timely and informed way.
3. **Standards & Quality Management:** To ensure more consistent delivery of care across services.
4. **Protection:** To improve the protection of seniors from abuse and neglect.
5. **Flexible Services:** To provide flexible services to meet care needs.
6. **Modernization:** To modernize the home and community care system to provide sustainable and lasting improvements that will better serve seniors across the province.

In April 2013, the Province reported on progress made in the first year of the seniors action plan, to the ombudsperson and the public.

## Key Accomplishments

Most of the actions in the seniors action plan were completed in the first year. Some actions were completed in the second year of the plan, while others focusing on the modernization of B.C.'s home and community care system were intended to take longer and will continue as part of government's refreshed health system strategy for British Columbia. This final report on the seniors action plan includes information on all 26 actions in the plan, as well as additional new or updated information up to April 2014.

Improvements to seniors' services have not been limited to commitments made in the seniors action plan. There have been a number of complementary strategies to support healthy aging and help seniors remain independent for as long as possible (see Related Strategies).

Table 1: Status of the commitments in *Improving Care for B.C. Seniors: An Action Plan (2012)*.

All commitments/actions have been completed, with the exception of those highlighted in blue, which are underway.

THEME	NAME	COMMITMENTS/ACTIONS
<b>Concerns &amp; Complaints</b>	Consultations	Consultation over the next four to six months will provide seniors, caregivers, service providers and other organizations with the opportunity to have direct input into the future role of a seniors' advocate.
	Phone Line	As of June 1, 2012, a single provincial phone line will allow you and your family to report concerns about your care. You will be provided with direct support and timely follow-up through to resolution.
	Advocate Office	The Province will establish an Office of the Seniors' Advocate.
<b>Information</b>	Advance Care Planning	Advance care planning information and tools to help you prepare for your future health care needs will be available online and through your local health authority by April 2012.
	Website	Enhancements to www.SeniorsBC.ca by September 2012 will provide you with easier access to information on home and community health care programs and other services.
	Inspection Reports	Online access to detailed residential care facility inspection reports and assisted living residence investigation reports will be in place by September 2012 to help you and your family choose a care facility.
	Care Information	More online information about your care and support options, how to access health care services, eligibility criteria for publicly subsidized services, wait times, urgency criteria, patient charges and hardship waivers by September 2012.
	Dementia Information	Information provided in October 2012 to assist you and your family to understand and live with dementia, including support provided by the Alzheimer Society's First Link program.
	Seniors' Guide	Updated BC Seniors' Guide will be published by December 2012.
<b>Standards &amp; Quality Management</b>	Residential Care Improvements	Over the next 12 months, improvements will be made to the care seniors receive in residential care through regular medication reviews, enhanced training for care providers and consistent medical oversight.
	Facility Inspections	Increase the focus of residential facility inspectors on high risk areas and ensure any necessary changes are made to maintain safety beginning in April 2012.
	Standardized Benefits	Plan to standardize benefits and protections to all residential care clients, regardless of where care is received by January 2013.

THEME	NAME	COMMITMENTS/ACTIONS
<b>Protection</b>	Elder Abuse	Ensure the protection and safety of seniors through consultation and the development of a provincial elder abuse prevention, identification and response strategy by December 2012.
	Community Response Networks	Invest in the operation and expansion of Community Response Networks across the province over the next three years, which support coordinated local actions and work jointly with other organizations to prevent and respond to elder abuse and neglect.
<b>Flexible Services</b>	Non-medical Home Support	Invest, in partnership with the United Way of the Lower Mainland, in the expansion of non-medical home support services in up to 65 communities across the province over the next three years, to help you age in place.
	End of Life Care	Strengthen family physicians and home health teams providing end of life care through training beginning in April 2012.
	Palliative Support Line	Provide provincewide after hours palliative tele-nursing support to caregivers and families in your home as of April 2012.
	Hospital Care	Establish clinical guidelines by June 2012 for frail seniors in emergency and hospitals to improve care outcomes and establish follow up care and supports for a successful return home.
	Accommodating Spouses	Establish policies to provide flexibility in accommodating spouses with different care needs within assisted living and residential care residences by September 2012.
	Dementia Guidelines	Produce guidelines for dementia care to support caregivers and promote evidence based practice in all care settings by October 2012.
	Home Health Care	Over the next two years, innovative approaches for home support services will be piloted in different communities across the province, providing greater choice and flexibility for you and your family.
<b>Modernization</b>	Best Practices	A review of existing best practices of seniors' care across Canada and in other jurisdictions to help us design a system of care that best serves your needs.
	Licensing Review	An independent review of the home and community care licensing and enforcement system for residential facilities to identify what changes are needed to ensure consistent standards of care are met across the province.
	Abuse Prevention	Implementing the provincial elder abuse prevention, identification and response strategy.
	Patient Care Quality	An independent review of the current patient care quality program to examine how your concerns and needs are being met and how you can best be served.
	Reporting Concerns	Examining ways to improve the existing protections for patients and providers who report care concerns or complaints.

## Moving Forward

The work of improving care for seniors initiated in the seniors action plan continues in the context of the [Ministry of Health 2014/15 - 2016/17 Service Plan](#) and the ministry's refreshed health system strategy, [Setting Priorities for the B.C. Health System](#). Both documents reflect a shared, cross-sector commitment to providing patient-centred care, contain a number of objectives for improving seniors' care, and reinforce the need to maintain a sustainable health care system while continuing to implement quality improvements.

While much has been accomplished through the seniors action plan, we know more remains to be done. The plan helped to focus ministry efforts on improvements, which addressed concerns raised by the public and the ombudsperson. With those immediate priorities addressed, the Ministry of Health is taking a second look at the ombudsperson's report to review what additional actions may be required to support safe, reliable, person-centred care throughout the province.

It will take a collective effort to address the complex needs of our aging population. The Ministry of Health will continue to work with health authorities, care providers, community stakeholders, patients and their families to ensure the health system is enhanced, protected and provides the best possible value for taxpayers.

## Action Theme 1: Concerns and Complaints

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The Province is ensuring concerns and complaints about home and community care are responded to and resolved in a timely manner through the establishment of a toll-free phone line and through the establishment of the Office of the Seniors Advocate.

### Completed Actions:

- **Phone Line:** The Seniors Health Care Support Line was established in June 2012 to allow seniors and their families, or other individuals in their lives, to report concerns about care. This toll-free phone line is intended to supplement existing care concern avenues, with dedicated support for seniors who have complex needs. The line is available Monday-Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. – with the exception of statutory holidays – by calling 1 877 952-3181 or 250 952-3181 in Victoria.
- **Seniors Advocate Consultations:** Seniors Advocate consultations were held from May to July 2012. The ministry met in-person with over 500 seniors, families and other stakeholders around the province to solicit feedback on the potential mandate and functions of a new Office of the Seniors Advocate. The ministry also received over 100 written submissions from the public, senior-serving organizations and others.
- **Office of the Seniors Advocate:** Input from the public consultations was used to inform legislation, which established the mandate, powers and duties of the seniors advocate. The *Seniors Advocate Act* (Bill 10) was introduced in the legislature on Feb. 20, 2013, and was brought into force on March 14, 2013. The seniors advocate was appointed through order-in-council on March 19, 2014.

### Office of the Seniors Advocate Established

On March 19, 2014, the Government of British Columbia appointed Isobel Mackenzie as Canada's first seniors advocate. Isobel Mackenzie brings 18 years of experience working on behalf of seniors at a local, provincial and national level. The Office of the Seniors Advocate will monitor seniors' services, promote awareness and work collaboratively with seniors, families, policymakers, service providers and others to identify solutions to systemic issues and make recommendations to government on ways to improve care for our aging population.

## Related Strategies:

- **Assisted Living Registry Complaint Process Improvements, April 2012:** Changes to the Assisted Living Registry complaint process have improved response times, communications with complainants and monitoring for follow-up actions. The ministry created a new Assisted Living Registry [brochure](#) on how to make a complaint, provided to operators and posted on the Assisted Living Registry website.
- **Home and Community Care Policy Manual Update, October 2012:** Health authorities were directed to provide information to clients of home and community care services on how to make complaints. The manual can be found online at: [www.gov.bc.ca/hccpolicymanual](http://www.gov.bc.ca/hccpolicymanual).

## Action Theme 2: Information

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Enhancements have been made to web and print materials to improve access to information for seniors and their families so they can make informed choices about care.

### Completed Actions:

- **Advance Care Planning, February 2012:** The ministry released *My Voice: Expressing My Wishes for Future Health Care Treatment*, a comprehensive guide and workbook containing advance care planning information and tools to help people prepare for their future health care. For advance care planning information, brochures, videos and the My Voice advance care planning guide, visit: [www.gov.bc.ca/advancecare](http://www.gov.bc.ca/advancecare).
- **Website, September 2012:** The ministry launched substantial changes to both the SeniorsBC [website](#) and the Home and Community Care [website](#). Finding and understanding information on government programs and services is now easier.
- **Inspection Reports, September 2012:** Online access to detailed residential care facility inspection reports and assisted living residence investigation reports are now available to help seniors and their family choose a care facility, and can be found at: [www.health.gov.bc.ca/ccf/facility-inspection-reports.html](http://www.health.gov.bc.ca/ccf/facility-inspection-reports.html).



- **Care Information, September 2012:** Information was added to the Home and Community Care [website](#) to support people in making informed decisions about their care, and covers topics such as: eligibility criteria for publicly subsidized services; how to arrange for care; costs for services, including specific information about the hardship waiver application process and how pension income splitting can affect the rates seniors pay; detailed descriptions of each service type; accountability for health, safety and quality of care; as well as how to have concerns and complaints addressed.
- **Dementia Information, October 2012:** Information has been added to the HealthLink BC [website](#) to help individuals with dementia and their families better understand and live with dementia, including information about the Alzheimer Society's First Link program. First Link participants (those with dementia, their families and caregivers) receive customized information and access to helpful programs and services. On March 25, 2013, government announced an additional \$2-million to expand the First Link program, with the goal of helping more B.C. individuals and families affected by dementia.
- **BC Seniors' Guide, December 2012:** The 10th edition of the BC Seniors' Guide was released in English, French, Chinese and Punjabi. It covers provincial and federal programs, and includes sections on health, lifestyle, housing, transportation, finances, safety and security, and other services of interest to seniors. This edition contains a new section on benefits, provides tips on healthy aging, and encourages seniors to plan ahead for future health care needs. For more information on the BC Seniors' Guide and instructions on how to order a free print copy, visit: [www.gov.bc.ca/seniorsguide](http://www.gov.bc.ca/seniorsguide).

### Related Strategies:

- Two mental health resource documents were developed in response to identified needs within service delivery areas for seniors:
  1. [Meeting Seniors' Mental Health Care Needs in British Columbia: A Resource Document](#) (2012) is a resource for those in the province involved in providing care to seniors, including: planners, program managers, policy makers, mental health and other health professionals.
  2. [Improving BC's Care for Persons with Dementia in Emergency Departments and Acute Care Hospitals](#) (2011) is the final report of a project, which examined the care received by persons with dementia in two particular areas of B.C.'s health system – emergency departments and acute care hospitals.

- [Strategies and Actions for Independent Living \(SAIL\)](#) is an evidence-based training fall prevention program designed for community health workers and home health professionals who work with clients receiving publicly funded home support services. The program promotes increased independence and quality of life for home support service clients by reducing their risk of falling and sustaining an injury, and establishing a comprehensive approach to fall prevention into their daily lives. SAIL was updated in 2012 in collaboration with home care administrators, staff and clients; and in partnership with fall prevention researchers, policy makers and health care professionals across the province. It consists of five integrated components: training, surveillance, risk assessment, interventions and evaluation.
- The [Alcohol and Aging: Know the Facts](#) brochure was developed and posted online.
- [Planning for Your Care Needs: Help in Selecting a Residential Care Facility](#) was updated in February 2013 and posted online.
- **Planning for Healthy Aging:** A new section on the SeniorsBC website provides information to help seniors, their caregivers and families make plans about their future needs in all areas of their lives, including: housing, transportation, health, healthy eating, fall prevention and more. The ministry will be adding new tools and resources to help people make choices and decisions in advance, so they can avoid making difficult decisions when it may be a time of crisis with fewer options. Planning for Healthy Aging can be found at: [www.gov.bc.ca/healthyaging](http://www.gov.bc.ca/healthyaging).
- **Elder Abuse Prevention Information Kits:** 16,000 information kits on how to prevent, identify and respond to elder abuse (in English, French, Chinese and Punjabi) were distributed across the province in 2013. Due to high demand, a further 15,000 information kits were printed in March 2014. The kits have been distributed to senior-serving, community service, victim service, First Nations and Aboriginal, and ethnocultural community organizations. The information kits may also be accessed online at: [www.gov.bc.ca/elderabuse](http://www.gov.bc.ca/elderabuse).

## Action Theme 3: Standards and Quality Management

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The Province recognizes the need for consistent provincewide standards for residential care services, protected by inspection and enforcement. Through the seniors action plan, the Ministry of Health has enhanced the ability of residential facility inspectors to focus on high risk areas, developed a plan to standardize benefits for residential care clients, and made quality improvements to the residential care system. However, more work is needed to improve the quality of services that seniors receive. Work continues to increase access to an appropriate continuum of residential care services.

### Completed Actions:

- **Facility Inspections, April 2012:** The ministry and health authorities began increasing the focus of residential facility inspectors on high risk areas and ensuring any necessary changes are made to maintain safety. They developed a new Risk Assessment Tool, and includes a facility risk rating, which assigns a value of low, medium or high risk. Using the Risk Assessment Tool, licensing officers work with the facility operator to identify the actions and preventative measures needed to protect residents.
- **Standardized Benefits:** Historically, facilities regulated under the *Hospital Act* have had different regulatory protections for residents than facilities regulated by the *Community Care and Assisted Living Act*. To address these differences and ensure residential care services are safe, transparent, responsive and accountable, the ministry developed the [Plan to Standardize Benefits and Protections for Residential Care Clients](#). The plan provides immediate steps to establish the same standards, benefits, active oversight and inspection requirements (e.g., public reporting of inspection reports), and complaints processes apply to all publicly subsidized residential care facilities. Many of the changes described in the plan also apply to private-pay residential care facilities.
- **Residential Care Improvements, June 2013:** The ministry published [Improvements in Residential Care](#), which outlines changes made to improve the quality of residential care services for seniors. Three areas were identified as key priorities for improvement: regular medication reviews; enhanced training for care providers; and consistent medical oversight. In addition to work completed in these areas, the plan provides an update on improvements made to residential care by health authorities, the BC Care Providers Association and the Denominational Health Association, all of whom are key partners in promoting quality care in British Columbia.

## Related Strategies:

- **Residential Care Reinvestment:** Following the restructuring of the client rate structure for residential care services in 2010, government committed to investing any additional revenues from client rates to improve residential care services. Over a two year period (2010/11 to 2011/12), health authorities invested a total of \$85.6 million from additional revenues to increased residential care staffing, education, specialized services, and equipment (see [Health Authority Investment of Revised Residential Care Client Rate Revenue](#)).
- **Guide to Community Care Facility Licensing:** The [guide](#) describes the licensing and enforcement system, which governs the provision of care and supervision in British Columbia's licensed community care facilities.
- **Community Care Licensing Officer Program:** On Aug. 6, 2013, the Ministry of Advanced Education and the Justice Institute of B.C. announced the Community Care Licensing Officer program. The curriculum for the program was developed in partnership with the Ministry of Health, regional health authorities and industry partners.

## Ongoing Work

A key priority of the health care system strategy is to work with partners to establish the right mix of services for frail seniors and others, which best meet the needs of patients. Actions to increase access to an appropriate continuum of residential care services in the *Ministry of Health Service Plan 2014/15 – 2016-17* include:

- Developing residential care models and quality standards for patients with dementia.
- Improving the home and community care system to better address the needs of B.C.'s seniors who require these services.
- Expanding home support services and home health monitoring technology to help seniors stay at home longer.

## Action Theme 4: Protection

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The seniors action plan focused on protecting seniors from abuse and neglect through the creation of a prevention, identification and response strategy. Consultations with seniors and key stakeholders informed the strategy. In addition, the Province invested \$1.4-million in community response networks to improve and expand community capacity to prevent and respond to elder abuse.

### Completed Actions:

- **Elder Abuse Prevention Strategy:** The province's first elder abuse prevention, identification and response strategy, [Together to Reduce Elder Abuse – B.C.'s Strategy](#), will help strengthen protections from abuse for all seniors, as well as those who report care concerns or complaints. The strategy identifies key actions to reduce the prevalence of elder abuse, including the creation of the Office to Reduce Elder Abuse within the Ministry of Health, and the expanded Seniors Abuse and Information Line. For more information and resources to support elder abuse prevention, visit: [www.gov.bc.ca/elderabuse](http://www.gov.bc.ca/elderabuse).
- **Community Response Networks:** In February 2012, the Province provided \$1.4 million to the BC Association of Community Response Networks to expand activity in up to 100 communities across the province over three years. This funding is supporting prevention and education activities, in collaboration with local stakeholders, to reduce and respond to elder abuse and neglect. As of April 2014, Community Response Networks are active in a total of 109 B.C. communities.

### Related Strategies:

- The [Home and Community Care Policy Manual](#) sets out ministry requirements for health authorities in planning and delivering publicly subsidized home and community care services. In October 2012, the manual was updated to require staff to report possible abuse and neglect.

- **Assisted Living Serious Incident Reporting:** Policy 8 (Serious Incident Reporting) in the provincial [assisted living health and safety standards and guidelines](#), requires operators maintain a record of incidents that occur within the residence and report serious incidents to the registrar. It sets out a formal process for Assisted Living Registrar staff in monitoring operators' compliance with serious incident reporting requirements, including required and possible follow-up actions to ensure an operator takes appropriate action. The Assisted Living Registrar has expanded the list of reportable serious incidents to include: missing persons, a police call, and flood causing personal injury or building damage.
- **BC Care Aide & Community Health Worker Registry:** In March 2013, the ministry released its review of the registry, examining the strengths and weaknesses of the current system. As a result, the ministry developed a plan with short-term, mid-term and long-term strategies to ensure residents, patients, their families and service providers can be confident the registry is operating as it was intended to. Actions that have taken place to date include:
  - The registry has developed an [education recognition process](#) to ensure educational institutions follow the BC Health Care Assistant program provincial curriculum, and meet the minimum prescribed quality standards for program delivery. These requirements will need to be met in order for graduates to be recognized by the registry and be eligible for registration. Full implementation of the education recognition process is expected by Spring 2015.
  - A comprehensive assessment of B.C.'s private pay providers was finalized in March 2014, and the report is now with the Ministry of Health for review. The feasibility of including the private pay sector in the registry mandate – as well as how this mandate may be achieved – will require careful consideration as we move forward with the phased approach of the registry model.
  - The application process for the registry now requires disclosure regarding past incidences of discipline or termination for abuse. Applicants who indicate past indiscretions may not proceed with the online process and must contact the registry for a case-by-case assessment.

## Action Theme 5: Flexible Services

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The seniors action plan focused on ensuring seniors have access to the supports they need to age in place in their own homes and communities. The Province has invested, in partnership with the United Way, in the expansion of non-medical home support to communities throughout British Columbia. In addition, the Province has increased support for end-of-life care, established clinical guidelines for frail seniors in hospital care, established policies to provide flexibility in accommodating spouses with different care needs, and produced dementia guidelines to support caregivers.

### Completed Actions:

- **Non-Medical Home Support, April 2014:** Since 2012, the Government of B.C. has provided the United Way of the Lower Mainland with approximately \$22 million to expand non-medical home support services for seniors in up to 68 communities across the province through the Better at Home program. Better at Home is an innovative, community-based program, which supports seniors to remain in their own homes longer by giving them access to simple services such as transportation to appointments, yard work, friendly visiting and light housekeeping. There are 60 Better at Home sites. For more information, visit: [www.betterathome.ca](http://www.betterathome.ca).
- **End of Life Care, April 2012:** Training for family physicians and home health teams providing end-of-life care was strengthened. New training materials are now available to help physicians and home health teams improve the quality of care of patients with life-limiting and chronic illnesses.
- **Palliative Support Line, April 2012:** If you have a terminal illness and are eligible to receive palliative nursing care through the provincial Home and Community Care program, you, your loved ones and your caregivers now have access to after-hours telephone support in your home, with the expansion of the After-Hours Palliative Nursing Service. In its first year of service, 365 calls were managed by the new phone line.

- **Hospital Care, June 2012:** The Ministry of Health, in collaboration with health authorities, has developed new clinical guidelines for seniors in emergency and hospital, to make sure they get the best care to support their recovery. The guidelines provide hospital staff with standards of best care for patients, based on the latest medical evidence. These guidelines are fully implemented in Island Health, and all other health authorities are currently working on implementation. Ministry policy requires all health authorities to have these clinical guidelines implemented for all older adults (70+) at all acute care hospitals by the end of September 2014.
- **Accommodating Spouses, September 2012:** The ministry developed a new policy to provide health authorities with increased flexibility in residential care placements, which allows for the option of couples residing together in residential care when it is in their best interest and after exploring all other options to maintain the spousal relationship.
- **Dementia Guidelines, October 2012:** Improved quality of care for persons with dementia is being supported through the development of best practice, non-pharmacological approaches in all of B.C.'s health care settings. With a specific focus on the appropriate use of antipsychotic drugs in residential care settings, best practice guidelines applied with a practical, electronic decision support tool will assist in clinical assessments and care decisions of persons who may be experiencing behavioural and psychological symptoms of dementia.

#### Actions Underway:

- **Home Health Care:** Health authorities are implementing enhanced home-based support programs to assist seniors to remain in their own homes. For example, the Home is Best program helps seniors who would otherwise need residential care, live safely at home and avoid future hospital emergency admissions. The program specifically targets seniors waiting for a residential care bed or residential care eligibility assessment, with additional in-home care supports tailored to an individual's needs. Home is Best is being expanded or rolled out in all regional health authorities, working together with physicians and community services to ensure all available supports are integrated into a care plan, which meets the needs of seniors, their families and caregivers. As of 2012/13, health authorities have been allocated up to \$50 million annually for three years for targeted primary and community care programs to better support patients and their families.



## Related Strategies:

- **The Provincial Dementia Action Plan for British Columbia**: Released in November 2012, the action plan outlines provincewide priorities for improved dementia care through health system and service redesign work currently underway. It is intended to support collaborative action over the next two years by individuals, health professionals, health authorities and community organizations to achieve quality care and support for people with dementia – from prevention through to end of life.
- **Age-Friendly Recognition**: In 2012 and 2013, 17 local governments received Age-friendly BC Recognition awards for their commitment to support older residents to remain healthy and active in their communities. Applications for 2014 recognition are being reviewed and successful communities will be announced later in 2014.
- **Better at Home Evaluation**: The Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research, the Ministry of Health and the United Way of the Lower Mainland will evaluate the effect of the Better at Home program on seniors' quality of life, the program's cost-effectiveness, and the associated savings to the health care sector.
- **Age-Friendly Grants**: In 2014, 26 local governments received Age-friendly Community Planning and Project Grants of up to \$20,000, funded by the Province and administered by the Union of British Columbia Municipalities. To date, 128 communities have been offered grants or direct support to assist community planning strategies and/or projects focused on supporting seniors to age in place.
- **CanAssist**: The Ministry of Health invested \$2M in CanAssist (University of Victoria) to work in partnership with the regional health authorities to provide innovative technologies to clients/patients from a range of priority populations.
- **Provincial End-of-Life Action Plan**: On March 25, 2013, the ministry released [The Provincial End-of-Life Care Action Plan for British Columbia](#) to guide health authorities, physicians, health care providers and community organizations in planning integrated primary and community care services to meet the needs of people coping with end of life, including their families and caregivers. The action plan supports quality hospice, palliative and end-of-life care services throughout British Columbia – with a focus on supporting individuals with life-limiting illnesses to remain at home in their community, reducing the need for hospital or emergency department visits, and improving co-ordination of care across all settings. The plan aims to improve access to quality, end-of-life care for patients and families, while fostering the sustainability of B.C.'s publicly funded health care system.

- **Hospices Support:** As part of the end-of life action plan, funding was provided to support a number of hospices, including: \$950,000 to help complete and equip the Vancouver Hospice Society's hospice; \$2 million for Marion Hospice in Vancouver; \$3 million for Peace Arch Hospice in White Rock; and \$2 million for Canuck Place Children's Hospice. These investments will provide those facing end of life with the medical, emotional and spiritual support they need.
- **End-of-Life Care Centre of Excellence:** The B.C. Government has committed \$2 million to establish a provincial centre for excellence in end-of-life care, known as the B.C. Centre for Palliative Care. Once established, the centre will be expected to accelerate innovation and best practice in the care of people with life-limiting illnesses. The centre will focus on research, education, information management, policy and clinical care. The resulting knowledge and tools created will be shared with health care professionals and other interested individuals and organizations.

### More Hospice Beds in B.C.

Government committed to doubling the number of hospice beds in British Columbia by 2020. As of Sept.30, 2013, there were 261 end-of-life care beds, as well as 58 flexible residential care beds in the province. These beds, located in residential care facilities and hospices, are used to support people at end of life as close to home as possible, particularly in small communities.

Research shows Canadians prefer to die at home or in their own communities instead of in hospital settings. Hospice palliative care is provided by a team with specialized skills and knowledge and can be delivered at home, in residential care and in stand-alone hospice residences. Hospice care is delivered in each of these settings in B.C. by health authorities and hospice societies, which provide many services to enhance the publicly subsidized health care system – from volunteer and bereavement services to fundraising.

## Action Theme 6: Modernization

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The Province is working to ensure our home and community care system is sustainable and continues to meet the needs of B.C. seniors. The Ministry of Health's service plan and refreshed health system strategy prioritizes the need for patient-centred care and a provincial system of primary and community care built around inter-professional teams and functions.

### Completed Actions:

- **Patient Care Quality:** In December 2012, the ministry completed a comprehensive evaluation of the Patient Care Quality program. The evaluation found the program is meeting its objectives to provide a clear, consistent, timely and transparent care quality complaints process for British Columbians. The ministry will be implementing the recommendations, including working with the health authorities and the Assisted Living Registrar to clarify protocols for complaints received in assisted living and residential care.
- **Reporting Concerns:** In November 2012, the ministry issued a policy communiqué establishing provincial minimum standards for health authority safe reporting/whistleblowing policies. As of July 2013, all health authorities have improved safe reporting policies, which include a commitment to prevent reprisal against anyone who reports alleged wrongdoing or a care quality complaint through an established process such as a Patient Care Quality Office.
- **Best Practices Review:** The Ministry of Health, in partnership with the Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research, hosted an international forum in Vancouver on Jan. 15, 2014, which brought together government and health authority leaders, researchers and international experts to discuss best practices in home care for seniors. Key researchers from around the world met with B.C. leaders, creating opportunities to learn from experts and share ideas on improving home care support for seniors and their caregivers. For a summary of the forum, see [Best Practices in Home Care for Seniors](#).

Some key objectives were:

- To discuss the driving forces for reforms in home care for seniors and strategies currently underway.
- To examine what changes are underway in how home care is organized, financed, provided, governed, regulated and assessed.
- To look at existing evidence in other jurisdictions as a way of showing the effect of system-level policy changes to home care and to the outcomes for seniors and their caregivers.

## Actions Underway:

- **Licensing Review:** An independent review of the community care facility licensing and enforcement system for residential care will be undertaken to identify what changes are needed to ensure consistent standards of care are met across the province. In phase one of the project, the ministry engaged the services of contractors to:
  - Provide a review of current literature, an environmental scan, and a synthesis of best practices and promising future practices in regulatory work for residential care, with a description of approach and team work and/or multi-disciplinary models.
  - Examine governance and structural models for the regulation of residential care facilities in B.C. and provide a comparative analysis, with a literature review and research from government and private sector models (health care and non-health care related, including from other jurisdictions).

Subsequent phases of the project will be integrated into the ministry's ongoing work to develop residential care models and provincewide quality standards appropriate to the changing care needs of residents, as outlined in B.C.'s health system strategy.

- **Implementation of the Elder Abuse Prevention Strategy:** Implementation of the short- and long-term actions in [Together to Reduce Elder Abuse – B.C.'s Strategy](#) is well under way – both within government and through numerous non-profit and private sector organizations. The establishment of the multi-sector, 14-member Council to Reduce Elder Abuse has strengthened collaboration and co-ordination across sectors. The participation of all British Columbians is fundamental to changing societal attitudes toward elder abuse and building a society in which elder abuse is not tolerated.

### Elder Abuse Prevention Strategy Accomplishments

As of July 2013, the hours and capacity of the toll-free, provincewide Seniors Abuse and Information Line were expanded to seven days per week, 12 hours per day (except holidays). Operated by the BC Centre for Elder Advocacy and Support, the phone line provides support to older adults and others seeking information or assistance with respect to elder abuse.

The Council to Reduce Elder Abuse, which held its first meeting on Dec. 13, 2013, was established to facilitate implementation of actions set out in [Together to Reduce Elder Abuse – B.C.'s Strategy](#) to build on existing efforts, create new approaches, and galvanize all members of society (collective and individual) to take action against elder abuse. The council will leverage resources between sectors, organizations, communities and individuals to better recognize, respond to, and prevent elder abuse.

## The Future

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As this report shows, the ministry, health authorities and community partners have completed most of the actions in the seniors action plan. Initial efforts focused on improving administrative fairness within the current legislative and regulatory framework, and on enhancing access to information. Updated websites have made it easier for seniors and their families to access the information they need to navigate the system. Progress has been made on standardizing benefits and protections provided to seniors in residential care. The Seniors Health Care Support Line now gives seniors more opportunities to raise concerns and complaints and to ensure they are heard, and, on March 19, 2014, the Province appointed Isobel Mackenzie as the first seniors advocate to serve and represent the interests of seniors in British Columbia.

The ministry is committed to building on the work completed in the seniors action plan to achieve long-term objectives of providing flexible services to seniors and modernizing B.C.'s home and community care system. This work will continue, in alignment with the ministry's health system strategy and service plan, in addressing issues raised by the ombudsperson in her report on seniors' care. Key priorities for government include establishing a provincial system of integrated and primary community care and ensuring the right combination of services is in place to meet the needs of frail seniors.