

# Stand UP for SENIORS CARE

## FACT SHEET #3

### Quality care and accountability

#### Every senior has the right to safe, quality care

In recent years, ongoing media reports have exposed the deteriorating conditions in some of B.C.'s residential care facilities. Last spring, a flurry of complaints prompted B.C.'s Ombudsman to launch a province-wide, systemic investigation into the state of seniors' care. About the same time, government committed to post licensing reports on its website, which has not yet happened.

Recently, B.C.'s Auditor General concluded that the Ministry of Health was "not adequately fulfilling its stewardship role" and "the capacity indicators used to monitor the system (were) not comprehensive enough to identify critical system pressures or issues."

Provincial legislation sets out standards for care that include the right to a safe, clean environment, freedom from neglect and abuse, and an individual care plan that provides for nutritional and oral care, and recreational and leisure activities.

Although this legislation has a number of positive features, there are some glaring weaknesses. For example, there are no minimum staffing levels or training requirements. And while there are regulations related to quality care issues, it's not clear that there is appropriate monitoring or enforcement of these regulations by licensing officers.

#### The truth is...

The combination of short-staffing, heavy workloads, residents' higher care needs and high rates of staff turnover are creating substandard caring conditions in many B.C. facilities.

When there are not enough staff to provide care, residents suffer from systemic neglect: a lack of regular baths, recreational opportunities, and monitoring to ensure sufficient hydration; assistance with eating, toileting and grooming, and not enough time to turn people who are bed-ridden.

And yet, the research in this area is conclusive. Inadequate staffing is linked to resident deterioration, malnutrition, falls and hospitalization.

Currently, Ministry of Health licensing inspectors monitor 20 risk factors to determine if facilities are providing quality care. Not one identifies the risk of inadequate staffing levels.

And because the Ministry of Health does not provide information on a facility's history of serious incidents or its risk status (low, medium, high), it is difficult to find out if a facility has a history of licensing violations.

#### OUR SOLUTIONS

- Strengthen residential care facility legislation and enforcement.
- Appoint a provincial advocate for seniors.
- Establish minimum staffing levels for direct care staff, activities and rehabilitation.
- Require facilities to post accurate staffing ratios on a regular basis, and report publicly on staff turnover and retention rates.
- Undertake unannounced inspections at all facilities at least once a year.

