

November 28, 2007

Dear Premier Campbell:

The BC Health Coalition is deeply concerned about the crisis surrounding seniors' health care in BC. In 2005, you established the *Premier's Council on Aging and Seniors Issues* to "provide government with recommendations on how B.C. can best meet the needs of our growing seniors population." In November 2006, Dr. Patricia Baird presented the Council's report, *Aging Well in BC*. Seniors from across the province participated in this process in good faith, and they are still waiting for action. To date, you have not implemented any of the key recommendations regarding seniors' health care. We call on you to immediately implement key recommendations, including:

- Improving and expanding home support services
- Providing sufficient residential care beds for those whose medical needs cannot otherwise be met in the community

In the year since the Baird report, problems have escalated with seniors' health care that severely impact the dignity and health of elders in our communities. Around the province, our coalition members are reporting concerns with staffing ratios and quality of care at residential care facilities. According to a recent Statistics Canada report, BC spends the least of any province on residential care for seniors. In 2005-2006, BC spent \$1874/capita on seniors' residential care compared with the \$3201 spent by Newfoundland. Your government's lack of action has increased suffering for seniors in this province. We demand that you immediately:

- Improve monitoring and enforcement of the provisions in the Community Care and Assisted Living Act (including requirements to post information in the facility about care standards, how to report concerns, and inspection reports) and ensuring public access to information.
- Establish a continuum of advocacy and support for seniors in care through the requirement of a fully functioning family council in each facility.
- Create a provincial advocate responsible for seniors care
- Ensure that seniors get the care they need by improving staffing levels and staffing mix in recognition of the fact that the acuity of residents in residential care has dramatically increased in recent years.
- Reverse the privatization trend, and invest in not-for-profit health care. Up until a few years ago, the residential care sector was 70% not-for-profit. The vast majority of new beds are being awarded to for-profit corporations like Retirement Concepts.
- Institute effective whistleblower protection for staff, residents and family members.

Sincerely,



Joyce Jones, Co-Chair, BC Health Coalition



Ann Shannon, Co-Chair, BC Health Coalition