



**Association of Advocates for Care Reform**

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03 January 2012

Honourable Michael de Jong  
Minister of Health  
Room 337, Parliament Buildings  
Victoria BC  
V8V 1X4

Dear Hon. Michael de Jong,

**Re: Establishment of a Seniors' Advocate for British Columbia**

We are writing to indicate our strong support for the establishment of a seniors' advocate for British Columbia.

There is a clear and immediate need for a seniors' advocate to provide a voice for the seniors of BC who will soon form a significant segment of the population. Their diverse realities, concerns and requirements in order to age well, need to be known, recognized and appropriately addressed.

A seniors' advocate would help ensure that the presence of services that promote and support quality of care and life of the seniors in British Columbia are effective. Many of these seniors, as a result of illness or infirmity, will be unable to advocate for themselves and hence, their quality of care and life will be less than it could be.

The aging of seniors cannot be generalized:

Many seniors will age well.

Some seniors will require appropriate and timely services to ensure their well-being and quality of life (e.g. transportation services that are flexible and accessible, provision of and access to community amenities and social groups, as well as home care assistance and support for chronic diseases or incidents of acute illness or disability).

Some seniors may require substantial home care assistance due to the nature of an illness or disability, in order to remain safely and well in their own home. Also, timely, customized ongoing support for family care providers can help ensure a senior's desire to age-in-place, at home is possible.

Other seniors may contract an illness or have a disability that will require fulltime professional nursing care in a residential (complex) care facility – and an integrated professional health care team, to provide timely, appropriate and good care ... and quality of life. It is anticipated that the incidence of dementias will increase as the population ages. Certainly those now entering a residential (complex) care facility are more aged and ill than in the past, often with dual diagnoses that can be medically challenging.

For such a position to be effective, we recommend that the position be:

- independent and report directly to the legislature
- have the authority to access information, influence and effect necessary change
- have resources (monies and staff) sufficient to undertake a substantive pro-active advisory, investigative and advocacy role for the seniors' of BC.
- have formal and informal direct community links to ensure and facilitate timely and ongoing communication with the seniors of the province and their diverse support systems. This would include: seniors' community groups, advocates and care providers as well as academic groups associated with geriatrics and gerontology and professional health care provider associations

Thank you for your expressed interest in the quality of life and care of the current and future seniors of British Columbia.

We look forward to your serious consideration of the establishment of a seniors' advocate for British Columbia, and soon, a positive announcement of such a position.

Kathleen Hamilton  
President, ACR

cc. Kim Carter, BC Ombudsperson  
cc. Hon. Mike Farnsworth, Opposition Critic for Health  
cc. Hon. Katrine Conroy, Opposition Critic for seniors and long term care