



BC Association of Social Workers
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Vancouver, BC V6J 4S5

January 14, 2021

Honourable Adrian Dix
Minister of Health
PO Box 9050, Stan Prov Govt
Victoria, BC V8W9E2

Email: HLTH.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Dear Minister Dix;

Re: Staying Apart to Stay Safe (November, 2020)
Report by the Seniors Advocate

We write to you as members of the Health Advocacy Committee of the B.C. Association of Social Workers. We have reviewed the recent report of the Seniors Advocate, *Staying Apart to Stay Safe*, and wish to express our strong support for her recommendations. Like the Advocate, we understand the need to maintain a balance between the protection of care facility residents and staff from a deadly virus and the maintenance of quality of life that is so important at all stages of life. Her report, as well as recent media stories, which share the experience of residents and their families, illustrate that more work needs to be done to find the right balance.

We support her recommendation to allow more frequent visits from designated essential care partners and to allow a greater number of social visitors. These recommendations will go far to enhance the physical and mental well-being of residents. We are also very much in favour of giving residents and their families a greater say in decision-making within the long-term care and assisted living systems, through a new province-wide Resident and Family Council Association. As social workers, we value self-determination and believe it is vital to a good quality of life. We also believe that involving residents and families in decision making will result in better solutions for all.

We also note that the Advocate suggests visits be conducted in residents' rooms where possible to reduce the current burden on care home staff. We support this idea, particularly as it allows residents and their visitors some privacy.

Finally, our Association urges the Minister to further evaluate the Advocate's recent recommendation to adopt rapid testing of care home staff to further protect residents.

As the pandemic drags on, short-term measures must be adapted to a longer-term time frame. It is clear to us that visitor restrictions in long term care and assisted living are negatively impacting residents

and their families. These impacts are severe and long-lasting. We urge you to act on the Seniors Advocate's recommendations.

The B.C. Association of Social Workers would be pleased to support you in the work in any way we can.

Regards,



Fiona Lewis | Chair
Health Advocacy Committee
BC Association of Social Workers



Michael Crawford | President
BC Association of Social Workers

cc. Isobel MacKenzie, Office of the Seniors Advocate - info@seniorsadvocatebc.ca
Mable Elmore, MLA, Parliamentary Secretary for Seniors' Services and Long-Term Care -
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The BC Association of Social Workers is a voluntary, not-for-profit membership association that supports and promotes the profession of social work and advocates for social justice.