



BC Seniors Living Association (BCSLA) Releases Position Paper in Response to Election Platforms

For Immediate Release

October 22, 2020 – Vancouver, BC – On the eve of BC’s provincial election, BC Seniors Living Association (BCSLA) released a comprehensive position paper reflecting the private pay independent living, assisted living and long term care operator’s response to election platforms released by BC’s political parties.

The position paper outlines the association member’s position that private pay independent living, assisted living and long term care operators are a partner of the provincial government, fulfilling a need to meet the seniors housing and services demand today, and into the future. The paper acknowledges that it is the private sector that will be able to help the province meet the growing demand for seniors housing, and has the project development, risk mitigation and service experience to help meet this demand efficiently and effectively.

Although a self-regulated sector, the private pay operators, particularly independent living, were overlooked when policy decisions were being made with regards to pandemic pay and establishing guidelines for Infection Prevention Control (IPC) and visitation guidelines.

“It is important for our association to remind the government and public that there is one senior’s population in BC,” said BCSLA CEO, Lee Coonfer. “We need to ensure that all seniors are included and accommodated when decisions are being made by the government, including those seniors who choose to reside in private pay independent and assisted living and long term care communities.”

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BC Seniors Living Association:

BC Seniors Living Association is a voluntary, membership-driven organization dedicated to being a valuable source for member development, education and growth. The organization works to promote and protect the best interests of its members in BC. The four cornerstones of BCSLA is actively advocating, educating, mediating and celebrating retirement communities and their residents. For more information, please visit our website: www.bcsla.ca/

Social Media:

Twitter: @BCSeniorsLiving, Facebook: BC Seniors Living Association

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BC SENIORS LIVING ASSOCIATION



**PROMOTING, SUPPORTING AND
ADVOCATING FOR PRIVATE PAY SENIORS
LIVING PROVIDERS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA**

OCTOBER 2020

A WORD FROM THE CEO

Never before in BC's history has an election paid so much attention to seniors' issues than this Provincial election in 2020. COVID 19 has placed an intense spot light on the seniors living sector and its ability to safely and effectively house seniors safely and in a manner that allows for healthy ageing. The focus has been, and rightfully so, on the best interest of the senior. And upon reflection, it has been determined that the senior sector in BC could use some improvement. Hence many election promises have been made to upgrade existing sites, allow for tax credits so that seniors can stay home longer and there has even been whispers of government seeking control of all long term care capacity. It has been BCSLA's position that the private/family pay seniors living operators are partners of the BC government. This was clearly communicated in our first veer MLA Day last November in Victoria. And as a partner of the province, the private/family pay sector needs the following:

- To be a participant in the policy discussions governing seniors in BC.
- An investment environment in the BC that encourages the development of seniors living capacity that is sorely needed to meet the increasing demand for seniors housing.
- Policy to be applied consistently across the independent living, assisted living and long term, care sectors regardless of whether they are private pay or funded.
- Independent living sector eligibility for COVID 19 related cost compensation that was given to the assisted living and long term care sector.
- Protection from other costs that have risen due to COVID 19 such as insurance and WorkSafe BC premium increases.
- Liability protection.

There is only one seniors' population in BC and our priorities and our focus needs to be on how to best serve their interests. This can only be done when the government and private/family pay operators work together to ensure there is sufficient seniors housing to meet demand, that an individual's right to choose where they wish to live in their retirement is respected and independent living is included as part of the continuum of seniors housing in BC. All elections are important. For the seniors sector, this election is even more so. To this end, BCSLA is clearly communicating our members' issues as part of the election debate and are reaching out to all candidates to ensure that the seniors' voice is heard.

LEE COONFER, CEO



SENIOR'S LIVING IN BC - AN OVERVIEW

- BC is currently faced with a mounting challenge of providing adequate seniors living housing and support and ensuring the safety of all senior living residents during COVID-19.
- It is widely recognized that the current system of funded Assisted Living and Long Term Care is stretched beyond its capacity to provide the housing and care to meet the current demand, not to mention the needs of those seniors who are still independent but are looking to have a choice in how they spend their retirement years.
- By 2031, the Province forecasts that the seniors' population will grow to exceed 1.4 million people.

That is a an increase of roughly 35% from today's population.

- The following questions need to be addressed today:
 - o How will seniors living demands be met?
 - o How will we address the increase in human resources needed to not only meet demand today but the growing demand expected in the future?
 - o How much are the taxpayers willing to pay to build the housing seniors need?
- Although both the NDP and Liberal parties have announced Seniors Platforms during the campaign that limits choice for the independent senior, have significant tax payer dollars attached to them, their pledges represent mere stop-gap measures that do not address the future needs from a capacity stand point and do very little to address the human resources challenges the seniors living sector faces today and will continue to face into the future.

IN ORDER TO PROVIDE BC SENIORS WITH THE QUALITY OF LIFE AND THE CHOICE THEY DESERVE IN HOW THEY SPEND THEIR RETIREMENT – THE PROVINCE NEEDS TO RECOGNIZE THE POSITIVE CONTRIBUTIONS AND THE ROLE THE PRIVATE PAY OPERATORS HAVE TO PLAY

PRIVATE PAY INDEPENDENT LIVING, ASSISTED LIVING AND LONG TERM CARE PROVIDERS ARE THE PROVINCE'S PARTNER; OFFERING SENIORS IN BC THE CHOICE IN HOW THEY LIVE THEIR RETIREMENT YEARS

- Private Pay Independent and Assisted Living and Long Term Care providers play a significant role today in meeting the needs of seniors in BC. There are a number of private operators who do engage in contracted services with the government to help provide essential additional capacity.
- Providing seniors with the choice of how and where they live helps alleviate some of the strain on the funded system by allowing seniors the option to pay for their own housing needs and choosing where they live. And through our innovative services and engaging community settings, keeping BC seniors independent, active and healthy will avoid transitioning to the current funded assisted living and long term care facilities, which are already at capacity.
- At the rate of growth forecasted by the Province, the funding measures announced fall woefully short and the policies fail to meet the human resources challenges on the horizon.
- In order to meet the current demand forecasted by the Province, private pay operators will need to play a more significant role in meeting this demand. And they are well positioned to do so given their expertise in:
 - o Greenfield expansion
 - o Merger and Acquisition
 - o Repurposing Buildings
 - o Accommodating Risks Associated with Development Projects
- To meet the human resource challenges, BCSLA members are experts in finding creative solutions by:
 - o Providing flexibility for employees
 - o Providing onsite training and cross training
 - o Implementing innovative technologies
 - o Partnering with schools and red seal program

BCSLA MISSION: A PROVINCE WHERE PRIVATE PAY PROVIDERS THRIVE AND INNOVATE TO OFFER INCREASING DIVERSITY OF CHOICE IN SENIORS LIVING

To achieve this objective, which ultimately will help create a more engaged, healthy and independent seniors' population in BC, private pay operators need to work constructively with Government in the following areas:

1. Providing Public Policy for All BC Seniors in a Consistent and Efficient Manner

- COVID 19 required all senior's communities to move and adapt quickly to new and ever changing challenges. The pandemic showed us that when faced with challenges such as COVID, it is amazing how the sector can work constructively together to share best practices and experiences so, as a whole, the operators can provide improved service and procedures to safeguard their residents and employees.
- The Province needs to adopt the same philosophy and engage all areas of the seniors living sector, whether it is private pay, funded, denominational or not-for-profit. All sectors impacted by the public policy need to be engaged and accommodated.

To this end, it is BCSLA's position that:

- **PANDEMIC PAY SHOULD BE AVAILABLE TO ALL FRONT LINE WORKERS** whether they work in independent or assisted living or long term care, for a funded or private operator or in unionized or open shop locations. Just like the seniors in BC, the employees who work to house and care for them need to be given the respect they deserve and be treated equally.
- **INDEPENDENT LIVING OPERATORS NEED TO BE ELIGIBLE TO BE COMPENSATED FOR INFECTION PREVENTION CONTROL AND OTHER PROVINCIAL HEALTH ORDER ASSOCIATED COSTS.** Limiting the eligibility for the funds to include only Assisted Living and Long Term Care places an unfair burden on Independent Living operators, who residents and staff are just as vulnerable to COVID-19.





2. Easing the Cost Pressures Being Faced by Operators

- As we have established, COVID 19 has also required seniors living operators to incur significant additional costs in order to comply with Provincial Health Orders, employ effective IPC measures and disrupted the workplace due to the exclusion of independent living employees for pandemic pay. These costs have accumulated and are proving to be a significant challenge to some operators, despite any government compensation. Debt loads are increasing and the cost of borrowing rising. This financial picture is not sustainable in the long term.

To this end, it is BCSLA's position that:

THE PROVINCE MUST DO WHAT IT CAN TO AVOID ADDITIONAL COSTS BEING THRUST UPON THE SENIORS LIVING SECTOR. This includes:

- Deferring any WorkSafe BC premium increases and the raising of the salary cap used to calculate these premiums. Assist the sector in working with insurance providers to avoid significant insurance premium increases and liability coverage. Otherwise, assure the sector that the indemnity provision in the Emergency Program Act (EPA) will be extended to ensure liability coverage for the duration of the pandemic.
- Working with the private pay seniors community developers to help streamline the development permitting process and help lower associated permitting costs to ensure that development capital stays in BC and builds the capacity that the province so desperately needs.



3. Continue to Promote and Practice Positive Constructive Engagement

- As we have said, COVID 19 has forced the seniors living sector to confront a number of challenges as we collectively act to ensure the safety of residents and our employees while continuing to provide living environment that are as engaging, therapeutic and connected as safely possible.
- There are successes to be celebrated. And the one that BCSLA and its members would like to acknowledge and recognize is the efforts made by the Ministry of Health to constructively engage all providers and operators in the seniors sector, private pay included.

To this end, it is BCSLA's position that:

THE PROVINCE CONTINUE TO PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES TO ENGAGE ALL PROVIDERS AND OPERATORS IN REGULAR DIALOGUE IN ORDER TO COLLECTIVELY DESIGNS SOLUTIONS FOR THE CHALLENGES THE SENIORS SECTOR WILL FACE IN THE COMING DECADES.

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