

DELEGATION REQUEST

Names of persons speaking: Jennifer Pass, Alison van Schie

Organization you are representing: Comox Valley Elders Take Action

Primary purpose of the organization: advocating for improvements in needed services for seniors

Number of members

20 (+/-)

Mailing address

3164 Hellicar Road
Courtenay, V9J 1M9

Contact name: Jennifer Pass

Subject matter:

Need for more respite for home caregivers in the Comox Valley

Requested meeting date:

Tue, 02/25/2025

Audio-visual equipment needed:

Screen (we will bring computer and power point presentation)

Chair Cole-Hamilton and members of the board. My name is Jennifer Pass, and I am the co-ordinator of Comox Valley Elders Take Action.

THE NEED FOR RESPITE FOR FAMILY CAREGIVERS IN COMOX VALLEY. Respite is a break for a family caregiver. Gov't programs include someone coming into the home for a couple of hours, up to 6 weeks per year of care in long term care and drop off programs. All of these provide some respite for the family caregiver. But these programs are often not offered until the caregiver is very overburdened, they are offered inconsistently and they are expensive. (I will come back to this point)

(why is this needed)

- In BC there are over 1,000,000 “informal” caregivers providing care to family member, neighbour or friend.
(<https://www.familycaregiversbc.ca/>)
- One in 4 Canadians is a family caregiver
(<https://canadiancaregiving.org/national-caregiving-strategy/#:~:text=One%20in%20four%20Canadians%20give,and%20our%20eld>)
- In the Comox Valley, the incidence of Alzheimer's disease is 19 per 1,000 individuals. By 2039, the 75+ age group is expected to almost double. With that, “the demand for services, care and treatment will also double,” Susan Auchterlonie (president Comox Valley HealthCare Foundation) (Dec. 2024)

- Alzheimers, is only one of several conditions that would necessitate care at home. (there are other types of dementia, and other reasons for needing care)

BC family caregivers are burning out

From Seniors Advocate Isobel Mackenzie's report of June 26/23

- 40K Home Support Clients in 2021/2022.
- 94% of home support clients have a family member who does provide the care!
- 20% of Family caregivers provide in excess of 36 hours of care per week
- 34% of Caregivers experience Caregiver Distress – it is pretty clear that THEY CANNOT DO THIS ANYMORE!

Caregivers in the Comox Valley need more respite. The need for respite in BC has been documented in 3 reports of the BC Seniors Advocate. (2015, 2023 and 2025)

(quotes from Seniors Advocate) 'B.C. seniors are living longer and staying healthier until later in life but wait lists for vital services to support healthy aging continue to grow," BC Seniors Advocate. (2015, 2023 and 2025)

THE PROBLEM IS:

- When family caregivers "burn-out" residential care is the only option – many caregivers could (and want to) continue, but they do need support and respite. (and residential care is more expensive for the government, and less desirable for citizens)

LOCAL PROGRAMS:

A volunteer-run respite program is operational in the Comox Valley in Cumberland at the Cumberland Community Church. (a once a month 2 hour program).

This program has been developed and is run by retired social worker, Alison van Schie. Alison and ETA are making presentations at other churches and not-for profits to encourage the start of more programs.

SO WHAT ARE WE ASKING COUCIL TO DO:

While we are working to encourage the not-for-profits in the Comox Valley to start more 2 hour once a month respite programs, to provide stimulation and socialization for seniors and respite for their family caregivers this is not enough.

1. We also want to encourage local governments and municipalities to press our provincial government to improve respite for family caregivers (more drop off programs, better home programs, more one week programs) , **make it free** (as in other provinces)—it would still be cheaper than provincial funding for long term care).

Background to “**make it free**”: This recommendation is supported by BC Seniors Advocate, Dan Levitt:

Dan Levitt spoke a couple of weeks ago in Courtenay. He noted that aging in place is out of reach.

Some stats from his presentation: Over the last 5 years:

- a) 11% increase in people receiving home care
- b) 5% decrease in client rate per 1000 population 75 plus, over last 7 years
- c) senior with an annual income of \$30,000 pays \$9,000. for one hour of home support a week (nearly 30% of income)
- d) 56% increase in waitlist for “Better at Home” services.

In the slide on recommendations, Dan Levitt includes:

Eliminate the daily charge for home support

This is one of the recommendations he has made to B.C. provincial government

1. Elders Take Action is hosting a talk by BC Seniors Advocate on June 4, 2025 specifically on the subject of respite. We hope you will attend the next presentation by the Seniors Advocate in the Comox Valley. At Florence Filberg, on June 2, 2025 (afternoon – 2:00 pm to 3:30- exact time will come out closer to event and depending on Dan Levitt’s schedule.)