

## **REPORT HIGHLIGHTS**

**October 30, 2008**

### **Home and Community Care Services: Meeting Needs and Preparing for the Future**

#### **Introduction**

The Ministry of Health Services currently allocates about \$2 billion annually to five regional health authorities to deliver home and community care services to more than 100,000 clients. Approximately 70% of the users of home and community care are over 65 years of age. BC Stats predicts that, between 2006 and 2031 British Columbia's population of seniors will have increased dramatically. In 2006, those over the age of sixty-five accounted for approximately 15% of the total population. By 2031 this proportion is to increase to 24% – about 1.4 million. Such growth poses challenges for the Ministry of Health Services and the health authorities, which are responsible for ensuring that the needs of citizens are met and that the health system is sustainable in the future.

The Ministry of Health Services is the overall steward of the health system and has a lead role in coordinating provincial-wide planning for health services. Home and community care services are then delivered by the health authorities and through a variety of non-profit and for-profit service providers.

Our audit focussed on the Ministry of Health Service's stewardship role in preparing the home and community care system for the future.

#### **What we concluded**

Overall, we concluded that the Ministry of Health Services is not adequately fulfilling its stewardship role in helping to ensure that the home and community care system has the capacity to meet the needs of the population. Although the ministry has taken action, timely completion of the key initiatives is required to prepare the system for the future.

We make 8 recommendations for improving how the Ministry is preparing for the future grouped into 4 areas: finalizing a clear direction for services, the improvement of management information system infrastructure, integrated capacity planning, and public reporting.

#### **Key Findings**

##### **The ministry is in the process of developing a new strategic direction for home and community care**

The current vision and strategic direction, while set in 2001 and revisited in 2004, is not inclusive of all services. Updating the vision and strategic direction is critical to supporting clear direction for the future delivery of these important services. The ministry is now updating this vision through a consultation process with the health authorities but this has not been finalized. The ministry has established legislation and policy for most home and community care services, however some updates are required here too. The ministry has established clear roles and responsibilities for key stakeholders within the system and has created a council system to coordinate efforts with the health authorities.

**The ministry's management information systems are not meeting the needs of home and community care**

Effective planning requires timely access to relevant information on the provincial-wide system. While the Ministry has established comprehensive reporting requirements, the current information system used to collect information from the health authorities is not meeting these requirements. In 2005, the five regional health authorities agreed to transition from the existing system and establish their own information management systems to meet the ministry's reporting requirements. However, only one of the five has completed this transition. As a result, the ministry's access to information is at risk. Also the ministry has not established a clear timeframe for completing this transition.

**The ministry has not finalized a comprehensive planning framework for health services including home and community care**

Planning for health services, like home and community care, is not a simple task. The ministry must work with the health authorities to ensure that the right type of services, the right number of appropriately equipped units or beds, and an adequate supply of qualified health care professionals are in place to meet needs. We expected the ministry to have a framework in place that coordinates health authority planning, and integrates capital, human resource and information system planning with sector planning. The ministry is in the process of developing such a framework but it was not finalized at the time of our audit and the efforts of the home and community care program were not yet integrated with other key capacity planning processes. We also found that the ministry needs to enhance the information it uses in planning and monitoring home and community care services in order to better understand where the system is not meeting needs.

**Public performance reports do not provide adequate accountability information**

The ministry currently allocates upwards of \$2 billion to the health authorities for the delivery of home and community care services. However, the information provided on the performance of the system to the public is limited and does not provide a comprehensive picture of how these services are performing. We would expect that as the level and quality of information the ministry has on these services improves there should also be an improvement in information available to the public. We also expect the ministry ensure health authority reporting expands to provide the public with information on both planned and actual results.

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