

**Bowen Island Seniors Needs Assessment  
Report**

Presented to:

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## Acknowledgements

Without the willingness of Bowen Island seniors to contribute to this assessment it would not have been possible.

Special thanks also needs to go to Cindy MacLeod. Her expertise and commitment allowed this assessment to be carried out in a professional and caring manner, she went above and beyond! The added assistance of several other health care professionals that serve Bowen Island was greatly appreciated.

## **I. Introduction**

The Vancouver Coastal Health Authority provided the Abbeyfield House of Bowen Island Board with \$2,500.00 to undertake an assessment of the health care needs of Bowen seniors. The purpose of this assessment is two fold, one to identify current health care needs of Bowen Island seniors and two to project future health care needs. This report is the result of that assessment and is intended to inform future health service planning for Bowen Island seniors.

## **II. Context**

Bowen Island is a small island municipality, with a growing population located a short ferry ride from West Vancouver. The islands' community is close knit which creates an environment in which people want to age in place among the people and places they are connected to.

The population of Bowen Island is 3,362 (2006 Census) which represents a 13.7% increase since 2001 compared to a 6.5% increase in the GVRD. According to the 2006 Census seniors 65+ represent 12% of the population and those 45 – 64 represent 37% which clearly forecasts increasing seniors needs.

Currently Bowen Island is primarily made up of single family homes on large, often hilly properties. There are no housing alternatives i.e. condominiums that a senior can chose to down size to and rental opportunities are few (Bowen Island Affordable Housing Assessment, 2007). Bowen Court is a seniors (55+) co-op that has been on the island for 20+ years, which provides 19 self-contained units and currently has a substantial waitlist for individuals looking for affordable housing. Public transportation is limited to a periodic bus service which is not easily assessable to all residents of Bowen Island.

Vancouver Coastal Health provides support to the population of Bowen Island which includes Home Care nursing and Long Term Care Services. Home Support Services have been inadequate as often home support workers are not available to meet Home Health authorized requests.

Abbeyfield House of Bowen Island is a non-profit society dedicated to supporting Bowen Island seniors to age in place. An Abbeyfield is a “home like” facility that provides congregate housing for independent seniors. Although this has been the focus there is a willingness to provide a greater component of “care” if the need and resources support this.

### **III. Methodology**

For the purposes of this assessment “senior” was defined as 65 years and older. The intention was to draw participants equally from those that were currently known and being served by the Home Health program, those that were living at Bowen Court and those that were living in their private homes. The plan was to include participants with a range of health status from healthy and totally independent to those with significant health care issues and care needs.

This assessment included three separate but related parts:

- All participants were assessed using the Minimum Data Set (MDS) Assessment which is a standard assessment tool within VCH. It was administered by Cindy MacLeod, a Vancouver Coastal Health employee trained in its use. Cindy was contracted by the Abbeyfield House of Bowen Island.
- All participants were asked an additional five questions which were intended to determine the amount of interest in a variety of potential health support services. These included:
  1. If there was a program that offered meals for seniors at a location near the Cove would you attend it? If so how often?
  2. Would you attend a program on Bowen that provided meals and activities for seniors and a break for you caregiver once or twice a week?
  3. If you required care while recuperating from an illness or injury would you prefer to stay in a facility on Bowen rather than in hospital on the mainland?
  4. Would you consider moving into supportive housing for seniors on Bowen if it existed?
  5. Should your health condition decline, would you prefer to stay in your present home with help, or would you want to move to a spot with other seniors?
- Bowen Island residents were asked to assist in identifying seniors that have moved off island due to a lack of health care and support services.

An invitation to participate in this assessment and to identify seniors that had relocated off island was placed in the local newspaper The Undercurrent and doctors offices. Long Term Care and Home Care staff supporting Bowen Island were consulted and they provided information regarding individuals known to the health care system. Those not known to the system either self-identified or were identified by a local physician.

### **IV. Profile**

The number of seniors included in the assessment were 24, which represents 5% of the seniors population.. Of these 22 participants were 75 years or older. Our goal had been to assess 30 seniors but the number of self-identified seniors was fewer than we had hoped for. The participants represented a wide range of age, health status and living arrangements (living alone, with spouse, with family, at Bowen Court). The participant population was weighted towards those seniors known to the health care

system with identified health issues and therefore the results can not be extrapolated to the larger seniors population.

## **V. Results**

The results are reported by the three separate parts of the assessment.

- a. MDS Assessment results
- b. Additional questions results
- c. Residents that have relocated off island results

### MDS Assessment

The MDS assesses a number of areas this assessment focused on three areas:

- Instrumental Activities of Daily Living (IADL) which are general daily living tasks such as housework, preparing meals and using a telephone.
- Activities of Daily Living (ADL) which are daily living tasks such as walking, bathing, dressing
- Cognitive Functions which include memory and ability to make decisions

IADL results:

18 out of 24 participants (75%) are experiencing difficulty in this area ranging from level 1 which indicates some difficulty in one of the three areas to level 6 which indicates great difficulty in all three areas.

ADL results:

8 out of 24 participants (33%) are experiencing difficulty in this area ranging from level 2 which indicates they require limited assistance to level 6 which indicates total care

Cognitive Function results:

Short term memory loss exists in several participants but not to the point it is impacting their independence.

8 out of 24 (33%) are experiencing mild to severe cognitive impairment with 4 (16.5%) experiencing severe impairment.

\*\* It is significant to note that all of these participants including those that require total care are living at home on Bowen Island with limited and often inadequate health care supports.

### Additional Questions

These questions were intentionally general and the responses varied from those that would use the services today if available to those that thought they would in future to those that didn't think they needed them.



supports and services, including housing options. Of these 8 have moved into Assisted Living settings on the Mainland and 5 have moved into facility care. It was not known where the other seniors moved to. This is not necessarily a conclusive list but definitely identifies a pattern in responses to unmet health care needs.

## **VI. Conclusion and Recommendations**

It is the desire of the majority of seniors on Bowen Island to age in place. This is consistent with the philosophy of Vancouver Coastal Health – Home Health Program. The Home Health staff that serve Bowen Island need to be acknowledged and appreciated for their commitment and creativity. Despite the limitations of the resources they have to work with they do their very best to serve the needs of Bowen seniors.

The results of this assessment clearly identify significant needs that must be addressed in order to attain the shared goal of supporting Bowen Island seniors to age in place. The fact that 39 seniors have had to leave the island is a testimony that the time to act is now. The fact that every senior on Bowen Island despite their health care needs, are living at home with minimal or inadequate public supports speaks largely to the tenacity of these seniors and the support of their family and friends. As the seniors population escalates on Bowen so will the demand for services. We have the opportunity to be prepared.

Based on the results of this assessment we recommend that:

- ✓ Transportation options for seniors locally and off-island for medical appointments need to be developed.
- ✓ Home Support services must be made available. Creative means of delivery need to be developed.
- ✓ A congregate meal needs to be developed to reduce isolation and to increase nutrition.
- ✓ Respite options need to be developed to provide informal caregivers with the break they need in order to maintain their loved ones at home.
- ✓ Seniors activities need to be enhanced for socialization and reduced isolation.
- ✓ Convalescent care needs to be developed on island to enable seniors to return home to Bowen Island to be closer to family and friends rather than utilizing mainland services.
- ✓ Vancouver Coastal Health, Bowen Island Municipality and Abbeyfield House of Bowen Island Board of Directors need to work together to develop creative solutions to these needs.

