



United Way
British Columbia

Working with communities in
BC's North, Interior, Lower Mainland,
Central & Northern Vancouver Island

NEWS RELEASE
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A Growing Crisis: Rising Living Costs Push BC Seniors to the Brink of Homelessness

New report finds rapidly rising cost of living coupled with inadequate retirement incomes is contributing to the seniors' housing precarity crisis.



Central Office, Burnaby, BC — Imagine a life spent working hard, only to find yourself retiring in your 60s or 70s, facing the prospect of homelessness. This harsh reality is increasingly common among seniors in British Columbia, as revealed in a comprehensive 66-page report titled 'Aging in Uncertainty: The Growing Housing Crisis for BC Seniors.'

This report, jointly released by United Way British Columbia (United Way BC) and a coalition of BC Non-Profit community-based seniors' organizations, spotlights the critical issue of seniors struggling to secure affordable housing in the face of soaring living costs, stagnant government retirement incomes, and a shortage of affordable housing.

According to the findings, BC's seniors experience an alarmingly high rate of financial hardship, with 15.2% of seniors considered low income. Shockingly, in 2020, one in four seniors in BC had after-tax incomes below \$21,800—almost \$10,000 below the minimum wage.

Kahir Lalji, Provincial Director of Government Relations & Government Programs at United Way British Columbia, expressed concern, saying, "Access to subsidized seniors' housing, where rent is capped at 30% of income, is dwindling in BC. Meanwhile, low-cost private market options are vanishing due to skyrocketing rents, evictions, renovictions, redevelopments, and seasonal influxes of people into communities."

The report's insights were gathered from interviews with sixteen seniors' service and housing organizations and individuals who have lived through the experience of housing precarity. One striking revelation is that seniors who have worked tirelessly throughout their lives are suddenly teetering on the brink of homelessness during what should be their golden years.

For instance, Lucy, aged 73, lost her long-time job and ended up in a homeless shelter. Fearing for her safety, she resorted to living out of her car until non-profit organizations intervened, helping her find affordable housing for women. Lucy reflects on the struggle, "When I'm thinking of housing for seniors, you know, when you have to make a decision whether you want to get your medications or eat that month, or if you're paying rent, that's pretty, pretty scary."

The report lays out six critical goals and 16 specific recommendations to make housing more affordable and accessible for older adults. The first three goals address the need for increased low-income rental housing stock in BC for all age groups, while the final three goals focus on the unique requirements of the senior population.

These recommendations include augmenting the Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters subsidy, providing funding to non-profits delivering on-site tenant and social connection support for vulnerable seniors in low-income rental housing, expanding access to seniors' supportive and transitional housing, and enhancing mental health support for seniors.

"We believe that these recommendations will provide valuable perspectives to the government and other partners in addressing the intricate challenge of enhancing housing safety and affordability for all British Columbians, particularly seniors," Lalji remarked. "We value our trusted partnership with government and community partners, and United Way BC will continue to collaborate to find solutions to complex social issues to best support seniors aging in place."

This report was prepared by United Way British Columbia's Housing Working Group, which is a committee of the Community Based Seniors' Services Leadership Council.

For more information, please read the [backgrounder attached](#).

To access the full report, please visit [Healthy Aging Programs for Seniors | United Way BC \(uwbc.ca\)](#)

For media inquiries and interviews about the report, Kahir Lalji, Provincial Director of Government Relations & Government Programs at United Way British Columbia, is available for comment. Please contact United Way BC Senior Communications Specialist Pinder Rehal at PinderR@uwbc.ca to arrange an interview.

Local community-based seniors' service providers are also available for comment in the following communities: Vancouver, Burnaby, Surrey, Langley, Nanaimo, Southern Vancouver Island, Kelowna, Golden, Penticton, Prince George, and Fort St. John. These organizations can speak to the seniors' housing precarity crisis at a local level and share local stories. Journalists are encouraged to contact our partner organizations directly with interview requests.

Community	Media Contact
Vancouver	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anna Hofmarks (Director of Community Services, Collingwood Neighbourhood House): 604-506-3424 ahofmarks@cnh.bc.ca • Claudine Matlo (Executive Director, West End Seniors' Network): 604-669-5051 executivedirector@wesn.ca
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Surrey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nicole Tait (Director Community Services, Brella Community Services Society): 604-655-9884 Nicole.tait@brellasociety.ca
Langley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wendy Rachwalski (Manager of Community Services, Langley Senior Resources Society): 604-530-3020 X 305 Wendyr@lsrs.ca
Nanaimo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deborah Hollins (Executive Director, Nanaimo Family Life Association): 250-754-3331 (201) d_hollins@nflabc.org
Southern Vancouver Island	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sylvia Ceacero (Executive Director, Alliance to End Homelessness in the Capital Region): 250-415-1717 sceacero@victoriahomelessness.ca <i>Available for interviews in both English and French</i>
Kelowna	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ian Gerbrandt (Executive Director, Seniors Outreach & Resource Centre): 236-795-7045 executive.director@seniorsoutreach.ca
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About United Way British Columbia – working with communities in BC's North, Interior, Lower Mainland, and Central & Northern Vancouver Island

United Way supports healthy, caring, and inclusive communities by strengthening vital connections that support people in need. Representing the five regions of Central and Northern Vancouver Island, Lower Mainland, Southern Interior, Thompson Nicola Cariboo, and Northern BC, our organization serves a population of more than 4 million people, with a focus on urgent response, kids and youth, seniors, poverty, mental health and food security.

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