

MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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Seniors Advocate asks the public to look out for the elderly during COVID-19 pandemic

Victoria—B.C.'s Seniors Advocate Isobel Mackenzie is asking all British Columbians to look out for the elderly in our community.

“While the provincial health officer has advised that most people who contract COVID-19 will experience mild symptoms, it is a more serious illness for the elderly, and we need to ensure that people who are not feeling well refrain from close contact with seniors and those who have underlying health conditions. We also need to support seniors to ensure they are properly washing their hands, cleaning surfaces they come into contact with, limiting their exposure to others in the community who may be ill and practicing social distancing for the time being,” said Mackenzie.

“Seniors living in the community often depend on care workers, family and friends to assist them with everything from taking their medications, grocery shopping and cooking meals to more complex personal care needs. These seniors may find that some of the people they rely on may be feeling unwell and it is recommended that person refrain from direct contact until they feel better. That is why, now, more than ever, it is important for all of us to look out for our elderly friends, neighbours and family members living in the community,” added Mackenzie.

The Seniors Advocate is asking all British Columbians to contact their elderly friends, family, and neighbours who might need some extra help and see how that person is doing. “It could be anything from helping a senior get some groceries, taking out their garbage, bringing over a cooked meal or bringing them up to speed on the latest COVID-19 recommendations from our provincial health officer. These are things we can all do to help, and they are important measures to keep seniors who are living in the community healthy and to reduce anxiety both for seniors and for their family members.”

The Office of the Seniors Advocate (OSA) has a toll-free information and referral line for seniors or others looking for community resources not related to health care. “We have a toll-free number that people can call to find out about community resources that might be available, and we have just partnered with bc211 to expand our hours of operation,” stated Mackenzie.

Seniors with non-medical related inquires can phone the OSA's toll-free number at 1-877-952-3181. For medical questions, please phone 8-1-1.

Learn more: www.seniorsadvocatebc.ca

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BACKGROUND

- There are 990,000 people age 65 and over in B.C. (19%)
- There are 124,000 people age 85 and over in B.C. (2 % of the population)
- 63% of seniors age 85 and older are living with medium to high complexity chronic conditions
- 15% of seniors age 85 and older live in residential care and end of life

The following community-based services for seniors could be impacted:

Home Support Services

Approximately 27,000 seniors receive public home support services each day. These services can range from personal care to help at home. The provincial home support program has a pandemic disaster management plan that would triage home support clients to essential service levels if necessary.

Adult Day Programs

There are 6,500 B.C. Seniors who participate in Adult Day Programs. These programs are operated in centres located in the community and seniors spend an entire day at the program receiving a meal and participating in social activities. The program also provides respite for caregivers when their loved one attends a day program.

Better at Home Programs

There are over 10,000 B.C. seniors who receive services through the “Better at Home” program. Services can range from bi-weekly cleaning, rides to medical appointments, friendly visits, grocery shopping and other supports. These services are delivered through a combination of paid staff and volunteers.

HandyDart

There are 45,000 HandyDart clients in B.C. with physical limitations and cognitive impairment who rely on the door-to-door pick-up and drop-off transportation service. Approximately 7,000 rides per day are provided across BC.

Seniors Centres

There are approximately 100 senior centres across B.C. These centres are usually staffed by a combination of staff and volunteers and the services vary by centre, but many include a lunch program.

In addition to government supported services, there are several commercial services that seniors may rely on that may also experience some temporary disruptions such as private home care, deliveries of food/meals, pharmacy delivery of medications and private transportation such as taxis.