ACTIVE AGING

SYMPOSIUM

Summary of Discussion from March 27, 2007
Vancouver, British Columbia

Healthy Children, Women and Seniors
Population Health and Wellness
Ministry of Health
June 2007

Table of Contents

Background

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines Active Aging as "the process of optimizing opportunities for health, participation and security in order to enhance quality of life as people age" (WHO, 2002). The purpose of the Active Aging Symposium (Symposium) was to provide a provincial forum to share ideas, promote discussion and identify action for active aging in British Columbia.

The Symposium brought together key stakeholder organizations that have an influence on active aging to develop opportunities to enhance knowledge, enable learning and identify actions through:
- o sharing of best and promising practices that support active aging.
- o facilitating collaboration and cross-sector partnership.
- o discussion of cross-sectoral opportunities, collaboration can be encouraged and supported in British Columbia.

Participants represented Health Authorities, provincial/federal ministries and agencies, First Nations, municipalities, a wide range of seniors' organizations, and organizations involved with seniors. Approximately 100 people attended the event.

Overview of the Symposium

The Honourable Ida Chong, via pre-recorded video, and MLA Mary Polak provided the opening remarks.

A number of presentations on promising practices followed. The Ministry of Health (MoH) outlined its vision and plans for Active Aging. The British Columbia Recreation and Parks (BCRPA) presented the findings of their community consultation on active aging from across the province. The Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM) shared the results of their local government survey. BC's partner communities - District of Saanich, Alert Bay and Lumby - spoke of their experience and involvement in the WHO Age-Friendly Cities Project and the Canadian Rural and Remote Communities Initiative.

In the afternoon, the Vancouver Island Health Authority (VIHA) gave a presentation on their vision for making VIHA a centre of excellence in seniors' health. Representatives from the Squamish Creative Connections

Committee presented examples of how local seniors, health authorities and local government can work together successfully to promote active aging in the community.

As part of the Symposium, participants were asked to identify actions that facilitate collaboration and cross-sectoral partnership, and discuss how this can be further encouraged and supported throughout British Columbia. The main themes for discussion were promoting collaboration, sharing information, and planning for action.

These themes were identified at the March 2006 Expert Forum on Healthy Aging and confirmed by BCRPA's *Provincial Consultations on Active Aging* as necessary components of a comprehensive Provincial Active Aging Framework for British Columbia.

Active Aging in BC
Summary of Presentation by Tessa Graham from MoH

The presentation began with an overview of international, national and provincial historical milestones that have led active aging in BC to where it is today. It was followed by a video from National Geographic on *The Secrets of Long Life* to illustrate the cultural diversity of successful aging and best practices for the promotion of longevity and healthy aging.

The speaker spoke of the five priority areas for active aging: healthy eating, physical activity, falls prevention, social connectedness and tobacco reduction. These priorities are firmly anchored in research, consultation, evidence and policy development. The presentation ended with a call for collaborative action to address the challenges and opportunities of our aging population and promote active aging throughout British Columbia.

Community Consultation on Active Aging
Summary of Presentation by Suzanne Strutt from BCRPA

The presentation began with an explanation of the goals of the project: To conduct a province-wide consultation on active aging; to inform the work of the BCRPA and its Active Communities Initiative; to aid in the development of the province-wide Active Aging Framework. A description of the

consultation process was given. Three key outcomes of the consultation process were explained: A change of attitudes and approaches to active aging, support systems for active aging, and age-friendly communities. Two key recommendations were made. First, that there be more mechanisms for sharing information about active aging. Second, that a multi-disciplinary planning tool be developed to assist communities to plan for active aging.

Environmental Scan of Community Readiness for Aging Population
Summary of Presentation by Harmony Folz from UBCM

Harmony presented the preliminary results of UBCM's *Environmental Scan of Community Readiness for an Aging Population Survey*. All local governments in BC were invited to participate. The response rate was thirty-three percent. A consensus definition of "senior" was provided with forty-seven percent of respondents identifying seniors as 65+. Several respondents noted that they currently have in place, policies and plans that benefit seniors, including community designs that support seniors, a planning process that consults seniors, age-friendly community strategies, housing programs, transportation programs, exercise programs and services, nutrition services, preventative health programs, public safety and emergency services, and community engagement and volunteer opportunities.

The WHO Age-friendly Cities Project and the Canadian Rural and Remote Age-friendly Communities Initiative
Summary of Presentation by Tessa Graham from MoH

The presentation began with an introduction to the WHO Age-friendly Cities Project. A definition of "Age-friendly" was provided and an explanation of what constitutes an age-friendly environment was given. An illustration of participating cities was shown. The project will result in an international Age-Friendly Cities Guide to be released October 1, 2007, the International Day of Older Persons.

The speaker also introduced the Canadian Age-Friendly Rural and Remote Communities Initiative which mirrors the WHO Age-friendly Cities Project.

An illustration showing participating communities across Canada was provided. Two British Columbia communities are participating in the initiative: Village of Lumby and Village of Alert Bay. An Age-friendly Rural and Remote Community Guide will be released on October, 1, 2007, and gifted to the WHO to support seniors living in smaller communities around the world.

WHO Age-friendly Cities Project: The Vancouver Protocol

Summary of Presentation by Elaine Gallagher from U. Vic Centre on Aging

The presentation began with an introduction to the objectives of the WHO Age-friendly Cities Project and a description of the process was provided. The first phase of the project – Community Assessment – was described. This phase includes the identification of age-friendly and non-age-friendly features of communities and the elicitation of local ideas and suggestions to improve age friendliness in communities. The second phase of the project - Community Dissemination – involves the dissemination of local findings regarding the community's age-friendliness to the participants in the focus groups, civil society, the media and decision-makers with a view to catalyzing subsequent action. Reports are being drawn up for the WHO and the Public Health Agency of Canada to use in the development of indexes for age-friendliness in Cities.

Fireside Chat

Summary of Discussion by Mayor John Rowell, Village Administrator Frank Kosa and Councilor Susan Brice

The purpose of the fireside chat with Mayor John Rowell, Frank Kosa and Councilor Susan Brice was to promote discussion on several key themes. Mayor John Rowell was asked how the Village of Alert Bay became involved with the Rural and Remote Age-friendly Communities project. This is particularly important as it was noted that almost half of Cormorant Island is under the jurisdiction of the Village of Alert Bay, while the other half is under the jurisdiction of the 'Namgis First Nation. Questions to Mayor John Rowell addressed the community's unique geographic and

cultural collaborative effort to support the Age-friendly Communities initiative.

Questions to Frank Kosa addressed the challenges and issues that led to the Village of Lumby participating in the Age-friendly Rural and Remote Communities project. The Village Administrator shared results from recently held focus group interviews with seniors in the community and their caregivers. Positive features of growing old in rural and/or remote communities were shared and particular challenges for smaller municipalities to address when creating the conditions for an age-friendly community were discussed.

Councilor Susan Brice discussed the involvement of the District of Saanich in the WHO Age-friendly Cities Guide. The Councilor shared what she learned from the focus groups regarding the advantages and barriers for age-friendliness in Saanich. Plans for the implementation of the focus group findings were shared and some of the important areas for community action were addressed.

A Centre of Excellence in Seniors' Care
Summary of Presentation by Janet Gavinchuk and Grant Hollett from VIHA

The presentation began with an introduction to VIHA's strategic priorities which includes becoming a centre of excellence for seniors care. Several illustrations gave population statistics for the region. Other illustrations gave a snapshot of population change by age group in each health region, the percent of the population with confirmed chronic conditions by region, mortality rates by region, life expectancy rates by region and low income and living alone statistics by city, and health expenditures by age group.

A summary of actions to date was provided, which includes the establishment of core strategy working groups, review of previous work and plans within VIHA, viewing strategy with a determinants of health perspective, and two forums held in March 2007. A summary of key inputs from the Leaders' forum was given, which includes integrating current initiatives, building capacity, creating partnerships, focusing on geriatric giants (falls, dementia and elder-friendly care), improving urgent care access and exploring other service models. Sharing between health authorities,

identifications and updates of best practices and partnerships with local communities and other health service providers are needed to succeed.

Taking Charge: Creative Connections in Squamish
Summary of Presentation by Sonja Lebans, Karen Clarke and Ellen Hall

The presentation opened with a discussion of the importance of community engagement. Community Health Advisory Committees provide advice to Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH) management about when and how to engage the relevant communities in VCH strategic planning. The committees raise community issues for VCH consideration and assist in bringing the voice of the community into planning and policy development.

The VCH Community Engagement with Seniors initiative seeks to ensure relevant issues for seniors are brought to the attention of the Community Health Advisory committees. The result has been a Creative Connections Program that seeks to address key issues relevant to seniors in the community. Some of the Creative Connections services brought to seniors in the community are a Keep Well Program, Shopper Flyer, Transit Survey and a Community Mapping Program. The presentation concluded with a community representative who spoke to her unique experience as a local senior in the Squamish Community.

What We Heard About the Key Areas of Focus

Over the course of the day participants worked with facilitators and recorders to address three common themes for working toward a collaborative framework for Active Aging: Promoting collaboration, sharing information and planning for action.

Ideas generated were consolidated into key themes to provide a high level summary of the day's discussions.

Promoting Collaboration

Leadership and **coordination** are needed to support a sustainable provincial coalition and to promote collaboration in the most cost-effective way. Some ideas for leadership and coordination include:

- Support at a higher level, backed by a Deputy Minister
- Form a working committee coalition to act as an information house
- Allow decision-making at a local level
- Allow UBCM to coordinate activities
- Have MoH provide coordination
- Identify a general contractor to lead /organize coordination of the project (paid position)
- Have a council of "champions" to coordinate and be responsible for programs

Information and **networking** are necessary for a sustainable provincial coalition and for efficient and cost-effective collaboration. Some ideas raised include:

- Share information horizontally to break down silos and avoid duplication
- Share and celebrate success stories
- Mentor new communities
- Workshops like the Active Aging Symposium held regularly
- Hold informal meetings, teleconferences
- Grassroots programming and communities of practice
- Stakeholder connections
- Develop a service inventory
- Provide access to results/information on what others have done
- Feature examples of local models of collaboration

Ongoing **education** and **communication** are vital to a sustainable provincial coalition on active aging and to efficient and cost-effective collaboration. Some ideas raised include:

- Top-down and bottom-up communication and direction
- Media sharing: Power-point, DVD, videos, television programming
- Clear language tools
- Make sure language is speaking to generational gaps
- Flexibility – tools can be tailored to different communities

- Multi-dimensional communication approach – face-to-face; electronic; youth/senior mentoring
- Cultural shift in social marketing
- On-line portal
- Information access to older people
- Have an annual face-to-face meeting

Sharing Information

Multi-dimensional communication tools are needed to share information effectively. Some ideas raised include:
- Hold an annual forum
- Use internet, seniors groups, libraries as clearing houses, senior's services, public health units, multi-cultural publications and community forums
- Post research initiatives on website for access
- Newspaper, guidebooks and newsletters, religious groups, social groups
- Local government representatives making on site presentations
- Employer responsibility
- Word of mouth
- Technology to access MoH policy rounds
- Increased communication between health authorities

The development of **sustainable mechanisms** for sharing information is necessary. Some ideas raised include:
- Development of common goals and tools to find solutions
- Including a scope (local, regional, provincial, national) that brings together different sectors
- Leveraging innovative technology – use what technology can enable: video teleconferencing, web-casting, pod-casting
- Accessing facilities via colleges, schools
- Getting seniors talking through local venues, groups, regional organizations, community schools, churches, senior's organizations, etc.
- Development of measurement and evaluation tools

The identification of **best-practices** helps in the establishment of sustainable mechanisms for information sharing. Some examples that were raised include:

- Topic specific coalitions (BC Falls and Injury Coalition)
- Active Communities Initiative
- Working with media – i.e. nutrition spots for seniors
- Health Authority education programs and hospital outreach
- Senior Advisory Committees
- Senior Centre in Elementary Schools
- Senior-youth mentorship
- Seniors, kids and dogs
- New Westminster information sharing (Seniors' Task Force)
- Senior peer counsellors

Planning for Action

Leadership and **coordination** as shared principles for collaborative action for active aging in British Columbia are necessary to develop a multi-organizational planning tool to assist communities to plan for active aging. Some ideas raised include:

- Leadership – should be at the top of the list
- Create a provincial coordinating body – Active Aging British Columbia (AABC) Coordinating office
- Establish AABC coordinators at community level/local level
- Obtain the Premier's sanction to say there is coordination
- Common principles
- Collaboration – add the planning and zoning aspects (local governments)

Accountability and a **funding structure** as shared principles for collaborative action for active aging in British Columbia are necessary to develop a multi-organizational planning tool to assist communities to plan for active aging. Some ideas raised include:

- Accountability and evaluation – performance measures
- A commitment to implement
- Identification of funding sources, resources, existing programs and leadership

Networking and clear **communication and engagement** as shared principles for collaborative action for active aging in British Columbia are necessary to develop a multi-organizational planning tool to assist communities to plan for active aging. Some ideas raised include:

- Conduct broader networking at provincial level
- Stakeholder consultation
- Public awareness – target younger generations too
- Create guidelines that embrace, overarch and guide all different interests
- Build relationships
- Adaptable, flexible, plain language
- Identify features of the planning tool – plain language, user friendly, adaptable and flexible, clarity of issues

Next Steps

1. MoH will continue to work with key stakeholders to develop an Active Aging Plan for British Columbia to be launched Fall 2007.
2. To support the call for cross-sectoral collaboration, MoH will host an annual Active Aging Symposium to celebrate successes, share promising practices, network and build collaborative partnerships over the next three years.
3. MoH will support regional forums to help organizations build partnerships within their local communities.
4. MoH will continue to develop tools/resources to help older British Columbians to be healthy, active and engaged in their communities, namely:

   - *Active Aging in British Columbia: A Call for Collaborative Action.*
   - A best/promising practices report to be released Fall 2007.
   - Support the development of a database of promising/best practices.
   - The Age-Friendly Urban/ Rural/Remote Community Guides to be released Fall 2007.

The above MoH commitments support active seniors which is a key focus of ActNow BC; support the recommendations of the Premier's Council on Aging and Seniors' Issues; and is moving the Province towards achieving two of the Government's Great Goals for a Golden Decade, namely – to lead the way in North America in healthy living and physical fitness; and to build the best system of support in Canada for persons with disabilities, those with special needs, children at risk, and seniors.

Conclusion

The symposium was a very successful event. Participants were highly engaged throughout the day, expressed support for the forum in bringing stakeholder groups together to develop collaborative action on active aging and indicated an interest in holding ongoing forums focused on active aging.