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Message from Parliamentary Secretary Dr. Darryl Plecas

Spring is here and with it comes milder weather, flowers in bloom and hints that summer is just around the corner.

We have been busy during the current legislative session working on issues that matter to seniors, including the introduction of amendments to legislation that will benefit British Columbians in assisted living residences.

There are more details in this newsletter on the amendments, which will allow many seniors to remain longer in their current home-like setting, which I feel is great news.



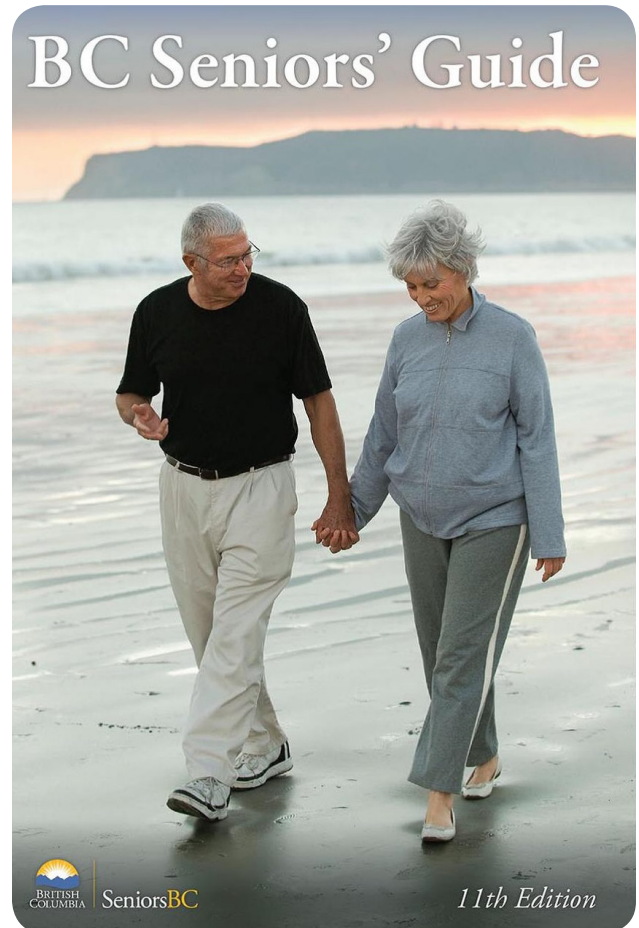
Sincerely,
Darryl Plecas
Parliamentary Secretary for Seniors to the Minister of Health

BC Seniors' Guide – Updated 11th Edition and New eBook Format

The Ministry of Health has recently completed updates to the popular *BC Seniors' Guide*. Among other enhancements, the revised edition will help seniors with lower incomes identify programs, services, grants, and subsidies that may be available to them.

The English version of the updated 11th edition of the *BC Seniors' Guide* is now available, and translated versions in Chinese, Punjabi and French will be available shortly. For more information, or to access the *BC Seniors' Guide* as a PDF or in the new, easier-to-read ebook format, visit www.gov.bc.ca/seniorsguide

To order a free print copy of the *BC Seniors' Guide*, call 1-877-952-3181 (toll-free in B.C.), or 250-952-3181 in Victoria.



Modernizing Community Care and Assisted Living

On March 7, 2016, Health Minister Terry Lake introduced amendments to the *Community Care and Assisted Living Act* to provide more flexibility and greater protection for people in assisted living residences. The changes are intended to allow residents to stay longer in assisted living before having to move into residential care, as well as giving the assisted living registrar the discretion to inspect an assisted living residence for health and safety risks at any time.

For more information, visit <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2016HLTH0014-000338>

Income Supports for Seniors

In March 2015, the Office of the Seniors Advocate released its *B.C. Seniors Survey: Bridging the Gaps* report (www.seniorsadvocatebc.ca/osa-reports/b-c-seniors-survey-bridging-the-gaps), which found that many seniors surveyed were not aware of programs and services that could benefit them. Consult the 11th edition of the *BC Seniors' Guide* (www.gov.bc.ca/seniorsguide) to learn about government programs and services available to you, including the income support programs described below.

Old Age Security (OAS) Pension

The Old Age Security (OAS) pension is paid monthly to Canadian citizens and legal residents of Canada aged 65+ who meet the residency requirements. You should apply for OAS benefits at least six months before your 65th birthday or the date you become eligible.

For more information and full eligibility requirements, call Service Canada (toll-free) at 1-800-277-9914, or visit www.esdc.gc.ca/en/cpp/oas/index.page

Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS)

The Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) provides additional money, on top of the Old Age Security pension, to eligible low-income seniors living in Canada. You must apply to receive the GIS.

For more information and full eligibility requirements, call Service Canada (toll-free) at 1-800-277-9914, or visit www.esdc.gc.ca/en/cpp/oas/gis/index.page

Allowance/Allowance for the Survivor

If you are a spouse or common-law partner of someone receiving both Old Age Security and the Guaranteed Income Supplement, you may qualify for a benefit called the Allowance. The Allowance provides extra money to eligible low-income individuals aged 60 to 64.

Senior's Supplement

The Senior's Supplement is a monthly payment from the Province of B.C. to low-income seniors who are receiving federal Old Age Security and the Guaranteed Income Supplement or federal Allowances. It is paid automatically to those who are eligible – seniors do not need to apply.

For more information and full eligibility requirements, call the Senior's Supplement call centre (toll-free) at 1-866-866-0800 or visit www.sdsi.gov.bc.ca/mhr/ss.htm

If your spouse or common-law partner dies (or has died), you are 60 to 64, and you have low income, you may receive a benefit called the Allowance for the Survivor until you reach age 65.

You must apply to receive the Allowance or the Allowance for the Survivor. For more information and full eligibility requirements, call Service Canada (toll-free) at 1-800-277-9914, or visit the following websites:

www.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/services/pensions/oas/allowance.shtml

www.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/services/pensions/oas/allowance-survivor.shtml

Income Assistance for Seniors Not Receiving Old Age Security Pension

If you are 65 or over and not eligible for the Old Age Security pension and the Guaranteed Income Supplement, you may be eligible for income assistance from the Province of B.C. Eligibility is based on your income, assets and shelter costs.

For more information and full eligibility requirements, call the Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation (toll-free) at 1-866-866-0800, then press 3 – or visit www.sdsi.gov.bc.ca/bcea.htm

Canada Pension Plan

The Canada Pension Plan (CPP) provides a retirement pension and other benefits for those who have contributed to the plan through paid employment in Canada. You must apply to receive CPP benefits. Retirement benefits do not begin automatically unless you were receiving CPP disability benefits when you turned 65. Apply at least six months before you want your CPP pension to begin.

For more information and full eligibility requirements, call Service Canada (toll-free) at 1-800-277-9914 or visit www.esdc.gc.ca/en/cpp/index.page

Office of the Seniors Advocate Report – Monitoring Seniors’ Services

On January 27, 2016, the Office of the Seniors Advocate released its inaugural *Monitoring Seniors’ Services* report, the first of its planned yearly update reports on key seniors’ services in the province. The report highlights where seniors’ needs are being met, and where improvements are needed.

To read the report online, visit www.seniorsadvocatebc.ca/osa-reports/monitoring-seniors-services/

What do you need to age well?

Aging Well is a new online resource—on the HealthyFamiliesBC.ca website—to help you think about and plan for a healthy and independent future.

Aging Well has information, tools, and videos so you can learn about how to prepare for the years ahead, with links to further information and support. Learn more about health and wellness, finance, transportation, housing, and social connection—areas of your life that are all important when it comes to healthy aging.

Thinking about and planning for your future helps you anticipate your needs as you age so you can avoid the need to make tough decisions if a crisis takes place. It can also help you know where to find the right information and support if you need it.

Visit www.HealthyFamiliesBC.ca/Aging-Well to learn more about what you can do now to prepare for a healthy future.



The Cedric Literary Awards for Writers 50+

Building on the success of last year's inaugural **Cedric Literary Awards**, B.C. writers "of a certain age" are once again being encouraged to submit their unpublished works of fiction, creative non-fiction, and poetry to this year's competition.

The awards program, the first of its kind in Canada, invites unpublished B.C. writers aged "50 and better" to submit their work between February 1 and May 1, 2016. In its first year, the Cedric Literary Awards received 168 submissions from writers across the province. "The Cedrics" accepts manuscripts in English and French, in three main categories: fiction, creative non-fiction, and poetry. The winner in each category receives a \$3,000 award. There is an additional prize of \$3,000 for First Nations writers.

For more information:

- Email Veronica Osborn, Executive Director, at vosborn@thecedrics.ca
- Call 250-370-0200 or 250-888-8839 (long-distance charges may apply), or
- Visit www.thecedrics.ca

Resources to Raise Awareness of Elder Abuse

On March 6, 2013, the Government of B.C. released its elder abuse prevention strategy, *Together to Reduce Elder Abuse—B.C.'s Strategy* (www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/people/seniors/health-safety/pdf/trea_strategy.pdf). The strategy includes a focus on raising awareness of elder abuse, including how to recognize and prevent it, how to respond, and where to go for assistance.



As part of its work to raise awareness of elder abuse, the Ministry of Health has developed and distributed Elder Abuse Prevention Information Kits to help people prevent and recognize elder abuse, and to encourage them to speak out against elder abuse and to ask for assistance if they need it. The kits include seven brochures that address elder abuse in all its forms, as well as contact details for the toll-free **Seniors Abuse and Information Line**, which you can call for more information or for assistance: **1-866-437-1940**.

The Forum of Federal/Provincial/Territorial (F/P/T) Ministers Responsible for Seniors has developed a number of related resources, including a brochure entitled “What every older Canadian should know about Powers of Attorney (for financial matters and property) and Joint Bank Accounts.” To help British Columbians understand how powers of attorney work in B.C., the Province has produced a *fact sheet with B.C.-specific information* to accompany the F/P/T brochure. Both resources are available at www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/family-social-supports/seniors/financial-legal-matters/substitute-decision-making

For more information about efforts to address elder abuse in B.C., including *Together to Reduce Elder Abuse—B.C.'s Strategy*, Elder Abuse Prevention Information Kits (available in English, Chinese, French, and Punjabi), and additional resources, visit www.gov.bc.ca/elderabuse

Active People, Active Places

In November 2015, the Government of B.C. launched a provincial physical activity strategy called *Active People, Active Places*. The strategy includes a focus on older adults, and discusses the many benefits of physical activity to individuals, families, communities, the environment, business and the economy, and to the overall health of the population. At the individual level, the strategy points out that being physically active improves physical and mental well-being, helps reduce chronic diseases and risk factors such as high blood pressure, and increases mobility, independence, and quality of life for older adults. All that, and it's fun, too!



To read *Active People, Active Places: British Columbia Physical Activity Strategy*, visit www.health.gov.bc.ca/library/publications/year/2015/active-people-active-places-web-2015.pdf

For more physical activity information and resources for older adults, visit www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/family-social-supports/seniors/health-safety/active-aging/physical-activity

Healthy aging tip: Maintain your muscles

Weight-bearing activities in your daily routine will build muscle mass and help prevent falls. Lifting weights, walking, dancing, climbing stairs, gardening, yoga, Tai Chi, and golf are activities that can help maintain your muscle mass.

For more tips, visit www.HealthyFamiliesBC.ca/Aging-Well

Recipe: Fruit Lax

This is a high fibre recipe that's great for regularity. Use Fruit Lax as a spread on toast or mix it into hot cereal or plain low-fat, unsweetened yogurt. Fruit Lax keeps two weeks in the fridge or you can freeze it.



Preparation time: 10 minutes

Makes: 2½ cups (625 mL)

Serves: 25 portions of 2 Tbsp (25mL) each

Per serving

- Calories: 75
- Carbohydrate: 20 g
- Calcium: 12 mgs
- Protein: 0.6 g
- Fat: 0 g
- Fibre: 1.7 g
- Sodium: 2 mgs

Ingredients

- 1 cup (250 mL) dried, pitted prunes
- 1 cup (250 mL) raisins
- 1 cup (250 mL) pitted dates
- 1/2 cup (125 mL) orange juice
- 2/3 cup (150 mL) prune juice

Instructions

1. Combine all ingredients in a bowl and soak overnight in the refrigerator.
2. Blend in a blender until smooth and serve.

Thanks to Dietitian Services at HealthLink BC



See the Healthy Eating for Seniors handbook for more recipes. Healthy Eating for Seniors is available online and in print in English, Chinese, French, and Punjabi, and as an audio book at all public libraries in B.C. It includes a variety of tasty recipes with nutritional information, smaller portion sizes, and cultural adaptations where appropriate.

To order a free copy, call HealthLink BC at 8-1-1, or download a PDF copy from www.gov.bc.ca/seniorshealthyeating