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## Message from Minister of State for Seniors

### 2012 Year of Action for BC Seniors



February marked the first anniversary of our government's Improving Care for BC Seniors: An Action Plan (Seniors Action Plan). I am pleased to report that a tremendous amount has been accomplished over the past fiscal year.

In February 2013, our government also returned to the legislature with a Throne Speech which highlighted our commitment to improving care for seniors. In Budget 2013 we continued to invest in the areas of most importance to seniors, while also delivering a balanced budget. Health ministry spending will climb \$2.4 billion over the next 3 years and over half of that sum will serve seniors. We are also continuing to partner with community organizations and local governments to improve services for seniors.

#### Seniors Action Plan Update

Among the first actions completed in our Seniors Action Plan was improving the ways seniors and their families navigate the health system, easily access information, and engage with the health system. This ensures seniors voices are heard when it comes to their future health decisions.

We have also launched the provincial Dementia Action Plan that outlines priorities for improved dementia care with a clear focus on collaborative action with individuals, health professionals, health authorities, and community organizations.

We launched a new toll-free Seniors Health Care Support Line to give seniors, their families and their caregivers' access to more support to resolve health care issues, and navigate the system. They can do this by calling 1-877-952-3181, Monday – Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

For those of us who are online, our SeniorsBC ([www.seniorsbc.ca](http://www.seniorsbc.ca)) and Home and Community Care ([www.gov.bc.ca/hcc](http://www.gov.bc.ca/hcc)) websites were completely redesigned in the fall of 2012. The websites are now more user-friendly, with improved navigation and search functions and we are continuing to add more resources on a wide range of topics that seniors have told us are of interest to them and their families.

Keeping with the theme of providing more accessible information, the tenth edition of the popular BC Seniors' Guide was also released in the fall of 2012 and contains updates to many services and programs and is now available in multiple languages. The guide includes information and resources about provincial and federal programs, with sections on health benefits, lifestyle, housing, transportation, finances, safety and security and other services. Seniors can view the guide online, or can order print copies in English, French, Chinese or Punjabi, by calling toll-free 1-877-952-3181.

The Ministry of Health has made significant progress in all areas of the Seniors Action Plan over the last year. Initial efforts were focused on improving administrative fairness and access to information within the current legislative and regulatory framework. Going forward, the focus will be on modernization and ensuring that our home and community care system is sustainable and continues to meet the needs of seniors in our province now and for decades to come.

To learn more about our Seniors Action Plan and to track our successes and progress, please visit [www.gov.bc.ca/seniorsactionplan](http://www.gov.bc.ca/seniorsactionplan).

### **Speech from the Throne**

The Speech from the Throne, delivered on February 12, 2013, reinforced our commitment to two key items found in our Seniors Action Plan, including legislation to establish a Seniors Advocate, and plans to bring forward a strategy to address Elder Abuse.

On February 20, 2013, we introduced Bill 10, the Seniors Advocate Act, which became law on March 14, 2013. British Columbia is now the first jurisdiction in Canada to have a legislated seniors advocate. Once again B.C. is a national leader in ensuring seniors' voices continue to be heard. The Seniors Advocate will identify systemic issues and make recommendations to government that bring forward positive changes for seniors.

#### **Improving Care for B.C. Seniors: An Action Plan**



Identifying and responding to Elder Abuse is also a priority for our government. *“Together to Reduce Elder Abuse – B.C.’s Strategy”* launched this month and will serve as a road map to help prevent, identify and respond to elder abuse in British Columbia.

### **Budget 2013**

Many of you, like me, grew up during the Depression or during World War II and understand the need to live within your means. Budget 2013 does just that and avoids the overpowering temptation to overspend while honouring our commitment to protect health care and other vital services.

Our efforts are paying off. British Columbians are some of the healthiest in the world. We continue to have the longest life expectancy in Canada, have the best survival rate for heart disease, the lowest incidence of and best survival rates of cancer. All this has been accomplished while maintaining the second lowest rate of health spending per capita among provinces. All British Columbians concerned with having access to superb health care while balancing our budget, should be proud of this extraordinary accomplishment.

Budget 2013 also contains approximately \$81 million for the Seniors Home Renovation Tax Credit to keep life affordable, and allow seniors to stay in their homes, where they prefer to be.

### **Continued commitment to seniors**

We are committed to provide the best care for seniors through investment, innovation and collaboration with seniors, their families, care providers and industry professionals.

In partnership with the Union of British Columbia Municipalities, our government awarded 27 communities with age-friendly grants, of up to \$20,000, to create programs and tools that address the needs of their older residents and to help seniors feel more comfortable in their communities. Since 2007 this program has delivered \$1.75 million to 117 communities across B.C., encouraging them to become more “age friendly”.

We also partnered with the United Way of the Lower Mainland to expand the Better at Home program with a \$15 million investment. This non-medical home support program is being expanded to 56 communities and will help provide seniors with the tools they need to live safely at home.

These are just some of the things our government is working on to improve seniors’ care. I look forward to keeping you abreast of our progress.

Sincerely,

Hon. Ralph Sultan

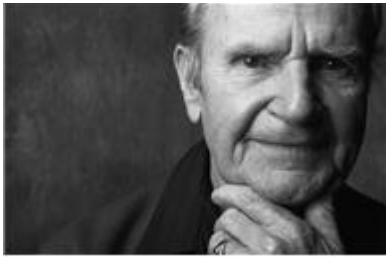
Minister of State for Seniors



## Seniors Advocate: Creating A Voice for Seniors

The *Seniors Advocate Act* (Act) was introduced by the Minister of Health on February 20, 2013 during the spring legislative session and was passed on March 14, 2013. The Act paves the way for the creation of an Office of the Seniors Advocate, a key commitment in the Seniors Action Plan and a priority identified in the 2013 Speech from the Throne. Seniors, their families and stakeholder groups have been anticipating the legislation since consultations were held last year.

To gather input from as many British Columbians as possible on the role and function of the Seniors Advocate, the Ministry of Health conducted a province-wide consultation from May to July 2012. Approximately 500 participants attended the consultations and over 100 mail, email and web submissions were received from individuals and organizations. The wide variety of ideas and comments received through this process were used to help government build the advocate legislation.



According to the Act, the Seniors Advocate will be a voice for seniors and will be responsible for monitoring seniors' services, promoting awareness of seniors' issues, working collaboratively to identify solutions to systemic challenges, and making

recommendations to government to improve the welfare of seniors. The advocate will also have a broad mandate that covers a range of issues in health care, personal care, housing, transportation and income support.

The Seniors Advocate will be a statutory officer, similar to the Provincial Health Officer or the Chief Coroner, and will report to the minister responsible for seniors. The advocate will have the authority to: appoint a council of advisors; identify work priorities; make independent recommendations to government; require service providers to provide information; and hire employees and outside experts.

Once established, the Office of the Seniors Advocate will focus on identifying positive solutions to systemic issues that affect a large number of seniors. Since there are already several agencies and bodies in the province that specialize in individual advocacy and support for seniors, the office will not handle individual cases. Instead, individual concerns will be referred to an appropriate agency with expertise and authority in the area. Where an individual complaint reveals a broader systemic issue, the advocate may launch a policy review or investigation.

British Columbia is the first jurisdiction in Canada to establish a seniors advocate – an important step toward improving the quality of life of older British Columbians. For updates on the Seniors Advocate please visit: [www.gov.bc.ca/seniorsadvocate](http://www.gov.bc.ca/seniorsadvocate).

## New Provincial Strategy to Reduce Elder Abuse in B.C.

Elder abuse is a societal problem that concerns each and every one of us. It can take many forms including physical, emotional, financial and sexual abuse, and often involves a person in a position of trust or a situation of dependency. Some examples include intimidation, physical assault, scams, misuse of a power of attorney, overmedicating, and censoring mail. Elder abuse can have devastating impacts on seniors and their families.

Protecting older adults from elder abuse is a government priority. In February 2012, the BC Government committed to implementing a provincial elder abuse prevention strategy. To help guide the development of the strategy, the Ministry of Health held province-wide consultations in February and March 2012, with sectors and individuals involved in elder abuse prevention, as well as focus groups with seniors and their families. Approximately 150 stakeholders from numerous sectors attended a total of 10 meetings and identified key priorities and ideas for moving forward. The consultations helped to identify the crucial need for coordinated action across all sectors – public, private and non-profit, as well as individuals and families.

The resulting BC Government's elder abuse prevention strategy, *Together to Reduce Elder Abuse – B.C.'s Strategy* (TREA Strategy), released in March 2013, provides a framework for coordinated, multi-sector efforts to reduce abuse. It is a challenge to all British Columbians to help reduce elder abuse through improved prevention, recognition and response.

The TREA Strategy includes short and long term measures to prevent, recognize and respond to elder abuse in British Columbia. Some key short term actions include:

- Expanding the hours of the Seniors Abuse and Information Line (formerly the Seniors Advocacy and Information Line), which will make it easier for individuals to get information, advice, emotional support and assistance with respect to elder abuse by calling toll free 1-866-437-1940.
- Providing information kits to help community groups, front-line service providers and individuals recognize elder abuse and encourage individuals to have the confidence to speak out or to ask for assistance.
- Establishing a multi-sector Council to Reduce Elder Abuse, responsible for coordinating among sectors and galvanizing society to commit to take action to prevent elder abuse.

Our collective goal is to foster a societal, cultural and attitudinal shift and ultimately reduce the incidence of elder abuse in our communities. For more information and resources on elder abuse prevention and the TREA Strategy, please visit: [www.seniorsbc.ca/elderabuse](http://www.seniorsbc.ca/elderabuse).





# Introducing the BC Services Card!

On February 15, 2013, the province introduced the BC Services Card, which will be phased in over a five-year period as part of government's plan to modernize B.C.'s health care system. The new card replaces the CareCard, can be combined with the driver's licence for convenience and also acts as government-issued identification.

All BC Services Cards have an expiry date, enhanced security features and most have a photograph, which will help to improve patient safety and reduce card misuse.



There is no additional fee for the BC Services Card, combining it with a driver's licence will mean one less card in your wallet, and getting yours is easy.

The Medical Services Plan (MSP) is the first program available through the new card and most eligible adults will have to renew enrolment in MSP by 2018 and apply for a BC Services Card at a driver licensing office. Whether you decide to combine your BC Services Card with your driver's licence or not, your privacy is still protected. Health care providers will not be able to see your driving record, and police or ICBC agents will not have access to your health information.

CareCards and Gold CareCards can continue to be used to access health services until 2018. After 2018, failure to renew enrolment in MSP may result in cancellation of MSP coverage, which could mean paying for medical services like a visit to the doctor. In emergency situations, no one will be denied essential medical services.

There are tools available to help B.C. residents learn more about the BC Services Card, including a YouTube video, e-learning tool and news release. For more information about the new card, please visit: [www.BCServicesCard.ca](http://www.BCServicesCard.ca) or call 1-800-663-7867 (604-660-2421 in Metro Vancouver and 250-387-6121 in Victoria).

## Ordering the My Voice Advance Care Planning Guide

Last April, the Ministry of Health released *My Voice: Expressing My Wishes for Future Health Care Treatment (My Voice)* as a key commitment in the Seniors Action Plan. My Voice is an award-winning advance care planning guide and workbook that helps capable adults make and record their future health care decisions in advance of a time when they may be incapable of deciding for themselves. *My Voice* explains what advance care planning is, why it is important, and provides optional pages and forms to make an advance care plan, including Representation Agreement and/or Advance Directive forms that are legally valid when properly completed. Hard copies of *My Voice* in single or bulk quantities can now be ordered by visiting the Crown Publications website at: [www.crownpub.bc.ca/Product/Details/7610003494\\_S](http://www.crownpub.bc.ca/Product/Details/7610003494_S) or by calling toll free 1-800-663-6105 or 205-387-6409 in the Victoria area, Monday-Friday from 8:30am to 4:30pm. You can also download a free copy at: [www.gov.bc.ca/advancecare](http://www.gov.bc.ca/advancecare).

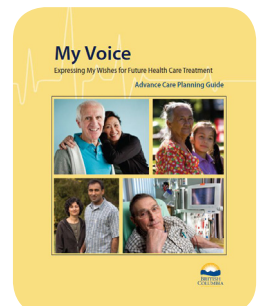


### BC Ferries Seniors' Discount

BC Ferries is advising seniors with the new BC Services Card to present the new card to the ticket agent for inspection to obtain their seniors' discount. To expedite ticketing, seniors are asked to have their card ready and to arrive a few minutes earlier than normal.

BC Ferries will continue to accept the BC Gold CareCard for B.C. seniors to obtain the seniors' discount. The discount is available to B.C. residents 65 years of age and older, Monday through Thursday, excluding holidays.

For more information, call 1-888-BCFERRY (1-888-223-3779) toll free, or (250) 386-3431 in Victoria.





## Sunny Orange Shake

This is a smooth, calcium-rich shake that tastes wonderfully fresh. Enjoy it by itself or with a whole grain bagel for breakfast. It also makes a good snack or you could have it instead of fruit and milk to complete a meal.

### Serves 1

Makes 1 ¼ cups (300 mL)

Preparation time: 10 minutes

### Ingredients

¾ cup (175 mL) low-fat vanilla yogurt

2 tbsp (25 mL) skim milk powder

½ cup (125 mL) orange juice

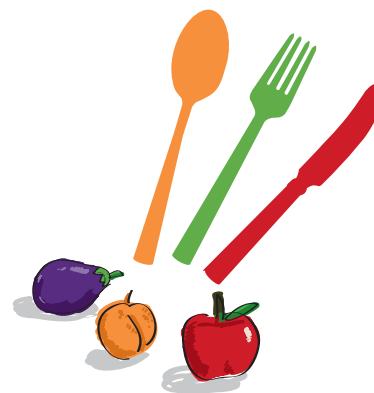
### Instructions

Combine all ingredients together in a blender and blend until smooth. Serve right away.

### Variations

Use milk instead of orange juice and add ½ cup (125 mL) frozen blueberries. Or try with blended juices, such as orange/pineapple or orange/apricot.

*Thanks to Dietitians of Canada, Cook Great Food, 2001, published by Robert Rose.*



**Source: Healthy Eating for Seniors handbook**

### Good To Know Per Serving:

Calories: 278 Protein: 11G

Fat: 2G Carbohydrate: 51G

Fibre: 0.4G Sodium: 151MGS

Calcium: 355MGS

## Healthy Eating for Seniors



## How to order your **FREE** copy of the Healthy Eating for Seniors handbook

The Healthy Eating for Seniors handbook is available in English, French, Chinese and Punjabi and includes tasty recipes for smaller portions, advice on how to cut salt and fat from a diet, tips on how to read food labels, and much more. Recipes and tips have been adjusted to suit ethnic populations. To order a free copy please call HealthLink BC at 8-1-1 or download a copy from: [www.gov.bc.ca/seniorshealthyeating](http://www.gov.bc.ca/seniorshealthyeating)

The Healthy Eating for Seniors audio book is also available at all public libraries in B.C.