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Message from Parliamentary Secretary Dr. Darryl Plecas



Autumn has arrived with its crisp weather, harvest moon and families gathering with friends and neighbours for potluck suppers.

The cooler temperatures also mean rain, snow, slippery sidewalks and an increased risk of losing one's footing and falling. There are 700,000 seniors in British Columbia; each year one third of these individuals will fall and four-thousand will sustain a hip fracture. These injuries limit seniors' independence and sadly, in British Columbia, falls are the number one cause of injury-related deaths in seniors.

Many of us have fallen ourselves or know of a parent, grandparent, neighbour or friend who has fallen and have seen the physical and emotional toll it can take.

Providing supports for seniors to stay safe from falls helps them stay active and independent longer. It's why the provincial government announced \$4.5 million through the Provincial Health Services Authority last year for the Centre for Hip Health and Mobility to expand programs to help prevent falls and hip fractures, and enhance mobility through early intervention.

Seniors' Fall Prevention Awareness Week and National Senior Safety Week are recognized in November and with that in mind I had the opportunity this month to attend a fall prevention clinic in Surrey. I talked with seniors and health professionals about how to prevent falls and the programs that can help.



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I got to see firsthand the centre's mobile lab – which brings imaging instruments like an x-ray body scan and fall risk assessment tools into communities. This portable lab allows researchers to learn more about the scope of seniors' falls and raise awareness outside of urban areas where services may not be available.

The lab has traveled throughout British Columbia and thanks to the funding provided by the Province, it will expand its reach to visit many more centres in the North, Interior and Vancouver Island. The clinics originally launched within Fraser Health Authority, and now the provincial funding will help take them provincewide by 2018.

Much of this information is available through regional health authorities or by visiting <http://findingbalancebc.ca> or www.FallsClinic.ca.

I encourage all British Columbians to do what they can to reduce the risk for themselves and their loved ones.

Thank you,

Darryl Plecas

Parliamentary Secretary for Seniors to the Minister of Health

For more information about seniors' services and supports, visit www.seniorsbc.ca.