

November 17, 2005 – Kelowna, British Columbia Summary of Presentations

The following information was received with great interest by the Council. This information will be integrated with input from the public, presentations at subsequent meetings, and background readings and research on the various topics, as the Council begins to develop recommendations for its final report.

The information presented here does not necessarily reflect the position of the Government of British Columbia or the Premier's Council on Aging and Seniors' Issues.

Council members were informed by briefings on three related themes during their November 7 session in Kelowna:

- Senior-friendly communities
- Safety and protection
- Social-inclusion/networks & linking the generations

Senior-friendly communities

The Council heard three presentations on the theme of *senior-friendly communities* – each presentation delivered by a different resource person. The speakers included:

- Richard Taylor, Executive Director of the [Union of BC Municipalities](#)
- Theresa Eichler, Community Planning Manager, [City of Kelowna](#)
- Reid Oddleifson, Recreation Services Manager, [City of Kelowna](#)

All three speakers pointed out that local governments, by their very nature, make many decisions that affect the degree to which communities are “senior-friendly” or not.

Some highlight points from these presentations include:

- Municipalities are in a position to create communities that encourage the integration of seniors rather than isolation.
- Municipal control over zoning affects not only the *kind* of housing, and the *mix* of housing, but also the proximity of housing to other community features such as retail, health care, parks, recreation.
- Municipal decisions about design and standards affect items such as longer green lights at intersections (for people who cannot walk as fast as they once could), and wider, safer sidewalks.
- Municipalities are in a position to broker partnerships that bring together non-profit groups, school boards, health authorities and local residents to fine-tune a community to make it more senior-friendly.

In Kelowna – which has a higher percentage of seniors than BC or Canada – planners note that seniors who are retiring earlier and staying active longer in life often find themselves “asset rich but cash-poor.”

Safety and Protection

The Council heard three presentations on the theme of *safety and protection* – each presentation delivered by a different resource person. The speakers included:

- Jay Chalke, Public Guardian and Trustee from the office of the [Public Guardian and Trustee of BC](#)
- Manjit Bains, Vice President of the [Business Practices and Consumer Protection Agency](#)
- Terry Pakenham, Manager of the [Vernon RCMP Safe Communities Unit](#)

All three speakers pointed out that many public-safety issues are, if not exclusive to seniors, much more likely to affect the senior population.

- Abuse and fraud in situations where the victim is made more vulnerable by age or illness
- Telemarketing con-artist scams – specifically targeted at isolated seniors with a pool of personal savings.
- A *fear* of crime that – regardless of the actual statistics – often undermines seniors' quality of life.

The speakers and Council members raised a number of possibilities for addressing the safety and protection concerns of seniors. Some of these ideas included:

- Updating guardianship legislation and raising public awareness about related issues
- Updating consumer-protection legislation – especially with respect to sales of funeral and cemetery-services; and raising public awareness and simplifying access to advice and assistance about consumer fraud.
- Reducing the opportunities for crime against seniors' by improving access to (safe) public transit, putting more foot-police on the street, and developing long-term crime-prevention strategies for an aging population.
- Encouraging individuals to make careful plans for possible incapacity (to reduce the possibility of abuse).
- More sharing of information on crime-prevention between communities, local government and police.

Social inclusion/networks & Linking generations

The Council heard three presentations on the theme of *social inclusion/networks & linking generations* – each presentation delivered by a different resource or team. Presenters included:

- The presentation team of Brian Mackay, Manager for Social Work and Bev Dahl, Manager for Volunteers – both with the [Interior Health Authority](#)
- Vi Sorenson, Executive Director of Kelowna's [Seniors Outreach Services Society](#)
- Sonia Newman, Executive Director of the [Westside Health Network Society](#) in Kelowna

The presentation from Brian Mackay and Bev Dahl from the Interior Health Authority set the tone for this series of briefings when they made the point – “The busier people are, the healthier they stay.”

All three presentations emphasised the role that volunteering can play in maintaining the health and the general well being of seniors – both as recipients of volunteer services (visits to isolated individuals, delivery of home-meals) and as volunteer participants in delivering services to others.

Volunteer opportunities for the generations to interact were especially popular and seen as effective: examples included candy-strippers, seniors helping at childcare facilities, and seniors participating in computer learning programs with high school students as tutors.

In addition to reviewing the benefits of such programs, the speakers also pointed out some of the challenges to developing and maintaining these organizations:

- Uncertainty about funding from year-to-year, and reduction of publicly-funded services to seniors.
- Transportation barriers – eager volunteers with no cars, or unable to afford increased gas costs.
- Insurance issues for volunteers using their own vehicles.

In spite of these barriers, volunteer-based programs to remedy social isolation appear to be successful and growing.