



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
2012HLTH0054-000756
May 29, 2012

Ministry of Health

Consultations kick off on seniors advocate

VICTORIA – Ten public consultations will take place throughout the province in the coming weeks as one of the ways seniors, their families, service providers, and other organizations can help shape the future role of a seniors advocate.

To register to attend one of the public meetings in person, people can phone 1 855 356-9614 or email: SeniorsAdvocate@gov.bc.ca

People unable to attend a consultation can still have their say on the role of an advocate until the end of July by emailing or writing. This input will help define options for the role and function of the Office of the Seniors Advocate, including how the office could collaborate with existing organizations.

“Through the seniors action plan, we are changing the way seniors access and receive care throughout B.C.,” said Health Minister Michael de Jong, who kicked off the public consultations in Victoria. “But we cannot move forward without consulting the groups most affected, seniors and their families. We are listening to what British Columbians want from a seniors advocate.”

The commitment to establish an Office of the Seniors Advocate is a key component of the Province’s seniors action plan that was announced on Feb. 14, 2012. An advocate supports the commitment in that plan to ensure a more accessible, transparent and accountable approach to seniors care.

“It is important that the role of the seniors advocate be determined not just by government, but by seniors and their families, as well as caregivers and service providers,” added Parliamentary Secretary for Seniors to the Minister of Health Ron Cantelon. “That is why engaging the public to help develop the Office of the Seniors Advocate is so important.”

The launch of this consultation process is one of the key deliverables in the seniors action plan. More information about the plan, including progress on various actions and a discussion paper on the seniors advocate, can be found online at: www.seniorsbc.ca

Through Improving the Care of B.C. Seniors: An Action Plan, the Province is building a more accessible, transparent and accountable approach to seniors’ care. The plan contains specific deliverables to help seniors and their families navigate the health system, easily access information about care options and have a clear and simple way to register complaints.

A backgrounder follows.

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BACKGROUNDER

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Have your say on the seniors advocate

Consultations:

To register to attend one of the public meetings in person, people can phone 1-855-356-9614 or email: SeniorsAdvocate@gov.bc.ca

Consultations will be held in the following cities:

- Victoria – May 29
- Surrey – June 1
- Vancouver – June 4 and 5
- Abbotsford – June 8
- Parksville – June 11
- Kelowna – June 20
- Cranbrook – June 22
- Prince George – June 25
- Dawson Creek – June 27

People unable to attend a consultation meeting in person can have their say on the role of an advocate until the end of July by emailing SeniorsAdvocate@gov.bc.ca or in writing to:

Seniors Action Plan
Ministry of Health
PO Box 9825, STN PROV GOV
Victoria, B.C. V8W 9W4

Highlights from the plan:

- Several actions in the plan have recently been accomplished, including:
 - New advance care planning information and tools have been released to help capable adult British Columbians make their future health-care wishes known in advance of a time when they may be incapable of doing so.
 - The After-Hours Palliative Nursing Service has been expanded provincewide to help British Columbians with terminal illnesses, as well as their loved ones and caregivers, access after-hours nursing support in their own homes over the telephone.
 - New training materials to help physicians and home-health teams improve the quality of care of patients with life-limiting and chronic illnesses.
 - Piloting a new risk assessment tool for residential facilities to provide a more accurate indication of potential risks to quality and safety, as well as establishing enforcement processes that ensure compliance.

- In the coming months, more actions will be rolled out, including:
 - Ensuring concerns are responded to and resolved in a timely way through the creation of a toll-free telephone line for seniors and families to launch June 2012.
 - Improved access to information for seniors and their families so they can make better care choices. This includes online access to facility reports, easier access to information on health care and support options and policies around eligibility, charges and hardship waivers – all by September 2012.
 - Protection and safety of seniors through the development of a provincial elder abuse prevention, identification and response plan by December 2012.
 - Meeting the support needs of seniors in their community so they age in place by expanding non-medical home support from five communities to up to 65 communities over three years and initiating opportunities for new housing and care options.

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