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Ministry of Health

Williams Lake receives Age-friendly BC grant

WILLIAMS LAKE – Williams Lake seniors will benefit from a \$20,000 age-friendly grant to help create programs or tools that address the needs of older residents.

The City of Williams Lake is one of 27 communities receiving grants for 2013.

“This year’s grant recipients have recognized the importance of ensuring that communities and businesses meet the needs of residents of all ages,” said Minister of State for Seniors Ralph Sultan. “Successful projects like the one here in Williams Lake focus on a wide range of supports to make life easier for older residents. Many of these programs are supporting seniors to remain socially active and connected to their communities and are helping to reduce isolation, which is one of the top issues that I hear from seniors across B.C. when I meet with them.”

The City of Williams Lake is working in partnership with the Senior Citizens Activity Centre to renovate the centre’s kitchen, provide the provincial Food Safe course for members, and work with local farmers. The newly renovated kitchen will become a joint venture with the Cariboo Growers Local Food Co-op, a group of local farmers and market gardeners, who require a community kitchen. The kitchen will be available for use by the farmers and the seniors’ centre, and seniors will be mentored in food preservation and preparation. Cooking workshops called Meals to Go will be offered to teach cooking skills and will also provide enough meals for seniors to take home for dinners for a week.

“As B.C.’s population continues to age, it is important that we look to ways to support the health of seniors and ensure that our communities are age-friendly and accessible,” said Cariboo-Chilcotin MLA Donna Barnett. “It is great news for seniors here in the Cariboo, and across B.C., that local governments are engaging in projects and programs that support our oldest residents.”

The age-friendly planning and project grant program is a partnership between the government of B.C. and the Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM). Grants of up to \$20,000 are provided through UBCM to help establish, or continue, a variety of projects that support healthy, active seniors.

“Like many other communities across the province, the number of seniors in our community continues to grow and that is why we have made it a priority to ensure that we have a variety of age-friendly supports in place to benefit our older residents,” said Kerry Cook, mayor of Williams Lake. “The work that we have underway in partnership with the Senior Citizen’s Activity Centre is a perfect example of how age-friendly programs benefit not only seniors, but also the wider community.”

Applications for age-friendly planning and projects grants were reviewed by staff from UBCM and the Ministry of Health. They were scored on a variety of factors, including: goals, proposed activities, involvement of seniors and other key partners, budget, and innovation and sustainability.

Since 2007, 117 B.C. communities have received funding to support age-friendly planning and projects. Examples include: age-friendly assessments, ensuring services are more accessible, supporting transportation and social connection to help prevent social isolation, and improving the community by increasing garden and green space. In September 2012, government announced \$500,000 was available for the 2013 round of grants. Fourteen of the 27 successful applicants for 2013 have not received previous funding through the program.

The age-friendly grant program is just one aspect of Age-friendly BC, which focuses on providing communities with support, information and recognition to help meet the needs of an aging population. Local governments can achieve age-friendly recognition and officially become an Age-friendly BC community once they have completed four basic steps that focus on community engagement, commitment, assessment and action.

To learn more about Age-friendly B.C. and the Age-friendly Planning and Project grant program, please visit: www.gov.bc.ca/agefriendly

The age-friendly grant program reflects the goals of B.C.’s Family Agenda, which supports seniors by encouraging healthy, active aging. To learn more, visit: www.familiesfirstbc.ca

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