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## NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Health

### **Port Alberni receives Age-friendly BC grant**

PORT ALBERNI – Port Alberni seniors will benefit from a \$20,000 age-friendly grant to help create programs or tools that address the needs of the city’s older residents. The City of Port Alberni 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 Port Alberni focus on a wide range of supports to make life easier for their 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 Port Alberni will lead development of an age-friendly plan for the Alberni Valley. As part of this process the city will gather input from seniors, caregivers, service providers and community groups on current services and opportunities. This feedback will be compiled in the plan, which will be distributed to the public, supporting organizations, the health authority, the city and regional district.

“We are proud to have a variety of age-friendly supports in place to benefit seniors in the Alberni Valley, but we know that there is much more to be done,” said Mayor of the City of Port Alberni John Douglas. “As part of our age-friendly project, we will connect with a variety of stakeholders to assess gaps, propose solutions and select priorities for action. We have a vested interest in looking after our own, but also in developing seniors’ care as a further vehicle for economic diversity and stability.”

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.

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](http://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](http://www.familiesfirstbc.ca)

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