
NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
2014HLTH0023-000333
March 19, 2014

Ministry of Health

B.C. appoints Canada's first seniors advocate

VICTORIA – The Government of British Columbia has appointed Isobel Mackenzie as Canada's first seniors advocate, announced Health Minister Terry Lake today.

"Isobel Mackenzie brings with her 18 years of experience working on behalf of seniors at a local, provincial and national level," said Lake. "I am confident that we have found a strong voice for British Columbia's nearly 700,000 seniors and I welcome Isobel as our first seniors advocate."

The Office of the Seniors Advocate will monitor seniors' services, promote awareness and work collaboratively with seniors, families, policymakers, service providers and others to identify solutions to systemic issues and make recommendations to government on ways to improve care for our aging population.

"I have spent nearly two decades working directly with seniors, their families and their care providers and learning about the individual issues that affect seniors as they age and receive care," said seniors advocate Isobel Mackenzie. "I am honoured to accept this important position and look forward to applying my experience as I set priorities and establish my mandate in the coming weeks and months."

After an executive search led by the Public Service Agency, Ms. Mackenzie accepted the position of seniors advocate with an official start date of March 31, 2014.

"It will take a collaborative effort to continue to address the complex needs of our seniors in B.C.," said Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health for Seniors, Linda Larson. "The Office of the Seniors Advocate will complement our robust system of supports already in place and is sure to be a vital source of information as we continue to shape policy and provide supports for seniors."

Following public consultations across the province, government introduced Bill 10, the Seniors Advocate Act, making B.C. the first province in Canada to pass legislation to create an Office of the Seniors Advocate. The appointment of a seniors advocate fulfils a commitment made in government's Seniors Action Plan.

For more information, please visit the Office of the Seniors Advocate page located on the SeniorsBC website: www.gov.bc.ca/seniorsadvocate

To review the Seniors Advocate Act, please visit:
http://www.leg.bc.ca/39th5th/3rd_read/gov10-3.htm

Two backgrounders follow.

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BACKGROUND 1

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Isobel Mackenzie

Isobel Mackenzie has worked on behalf of seniors for the past 18 years at the local, provincial and national level. Her work spans from health care to social and community services providing her with a strong working knowledge of the breadth of issues that affect seniors and the challenges of developing system level solutions.

Ms. Mackenzie brings with her a wealth of governance, policy and advocacy experience and has dedicated many years to working on boards that represent the interests of seniors.

Since 1995 her leadership has helped to grow Beacon Community Services from a small organization to British Columbia's largest not-for-profit community and senior-serving body. Under her direction, over 1200 staff and 400 volunteers have devoted themselves, on a daily basis, to helping over 7000 seniors in Victoria with the provision of home support, licensed care, assisted living, Meals on Wheels, independent housing assistance and a wide variety of volunteer services.

As part of her work, Ms. Mackenzie introduced a new model of dementia care – Licensed Dementia Care – that has become a national best practice and supported Beacon Community Services to achieve the first certificate of recognition, setting a nationally recognized benchmark for worker safety in the delivery of community care.

From 2007 – 2011, Ms. Mackenzie also served as the B.C. director for the Canadian Home Care Association, a national organization that brings together representatives from ten provinces and three territories to examine home care from a national perspective.

Ms. Mackenzie has a long history of advocacy work and led the first successful Work Safe BC Safety Audit for Home Care in Canada, establishing the benchmark of safety standards for home care workers.

Until her recent appointment as seniors advocate, Ms. Mackenzie was also as a member of the Care Aid Registry Advisory Committee, which oversees the registry developed by the government to protect vulnerable seniors.

In addition to that work, Ms. Mackenzie has represented both home care and the non-profit sector in her role as board director for the BC Care Providers Association since 2012 and for the past seven years, she has served as the commissioner for the Medical Services Commission of BC, responsible for administering the Medicare Protection Act.

Her focus and passion over the years earned Ms. Mackenzie a nomination for “Health Care Hero” from the Health Employers Association of BC and in 2012 she was chosen as British Columbia’s CEO of the Year for non-profits.

Ms. Mackenzie’s has been tireless in her efforts to support seniors, working collaboratively with the senior leadership of the British Columbia Government and Service Employees’ Union to champion the recognition of care aides and to standardize training and qualifications.

This full-bodied combination of experience has put Ms. Mackenzie face to face with seniors, their families and their care providers throughout the province. Strong communication skills and experience building relationships with diverse stakeholders from the policy table to the community, contributes to Ms. Mackenzie’s skilled strategic leadership and her ability to address complex issues that matter most to B.C. seniors.

Ms. Mackenzie is passionate about creating policy and service delivery approaches that meet the complex and individualized needs of B.C. seniors and she is a strong systems thinker and innovator known for practical, creative and cost effective solutions.

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BACKGROUND 2

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Overview of seniors complaint, investigative and referral bodies

British Columbia has a robust network of organizations, regulatory bodies, appeal boards and tribunals that provide avenues that seniors, their families and caregivers can access to address individual concerns and complaints about seniors' care and consumer services.

The Office of the Seniors Advocate is a key component of this system of oversight and support, playing its part to address the broad systemic issues that affect a large number of seniors.

For a complete list of organization and regulatory bodies that can address individual concerns and complaints, please visit the Office of the Seniors Advocate webpage located on the SeniorsBC website:

<http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/topic.page?id=1D981002CA1E4F56A1437155A770C040>

Overview of British Columbia's complaint, investigative and referral bodies:

Health Care and Personal Care:

- Office of the Assisted Living Registrar
- Community Care Licensing
- Community Care and Assisted Living Appeal Board
- Patient Care Quality Offices
- Patient Care Quality Review Board
- Seniors Health Care Support Line
- College of Physicians and Surgeons of BC
- College of Registered Nurses of British Columbia
- Patient and Client Relations, Ministry of Health

General:

- Information and Privacy Commissioner
- MLA Constituency Offices

General – Administrative Fairness:

- BC Ombudsperson

General – Business and Consumer Services:

- Better Business Bureau

- Consumer Protection BC

Finance:

- Certified General Accounts of BC – Professional Conduct Department
- Institute of Chartered Accountants of British Columbia
- Ombudsman for the Banking Service Industry
- Financial Institutions Commission

Justice:

- Victim Link
- BC Centre for Elder Advocacy and Support
- Seniors Abuse and Information Line
- BC Association of Community Response Networks
- Law Society of British Columbia
- BC Human Rights Tribunal

Housing:

- Residential Tenancy Branch
- The Condominium Home Owners Association of BC
- Real Estate Council of BC

Insurance:

- Insurance Corporation of BC
- Insurance Council of British Columbia

Transportation:

- Review of a Driver Medical Fitness Decision

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