



OSA Reports Under Way

The OSA will be releasing its first Monitoring Report of Seniors' Services January 27th. This publication is a status report on a range of services that fall within the OSA's five mandated areas, from assisted living wait lists to HandyDart service levels to incidents of resident aggression and disease outbreak in residential care facilities in the province. The OSA will release its monitoring reports annually as a way to compare year over year how the needs of seniors are being met by service providers.



Seniors Advocate Isobel Mackenzie is spending time in B.C.'s emergency room departments observing experiences of seniors.

Reports scheduled to be released in 2016 include a review of home support, a report on supplemental health benefits, a review of B.C.'s PharmaCare system, as well as a focused look at hospital discharge experiences for seniors.

Focused on the issues that matter to B.C. seniors

Transportation



Housing



Income Support



Health Care



Personal Supports

OSA Survey Updates

Results of our survey of home support clients and their families are now in. We would like to thank those who took the time to share their thoughts and observations with us. We received over 9,000 responses from clients and family members, a robust sample size that will help inform our review of British Columbia's home support system, work that is currently under way.

Recruitment for over 1,000 volunteer surveyors is currently under way for the OSA's survey of all residents in publicly funded residential care in B.C. Volunteer surveyors will be responsible for engaging with and listening to the voices of over 27,000 residents. The results from this survey will be used to make recommendations to improve the quality and services our health care system delivers to our most vulnerable seniors. The volunteers will play a key role in making the survey successful and are needed in communities across B.C. beginning in March. Training and orientation will be provided. If you are interested in volunteering and can commit a minimum of 30 hours, please contact Project Manager Lillian Parsons at LParsons@providencehealth.bc.ca for more information.

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Toll-Free 1.877.952.3181 | Monday to Friday, 8:30-4:30
Translation services available in more than 180 languages.
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Town Halls

January 29 – Tofino

Time: 10:00 a.m.-12:00 noon

Location: Tofino Legion RCL #65, 331 Main Street

The Seniors Advocate, Isobel Mackenzie, wants to hear from seniors and their family members who live in Tofino and area. You are invited to meet the Advocate and let her know what is working and not working for seniors in Tofino.

The Advocate will discuss her role, seniors' concerns heard in B.C., home care issues, access to seniors' services and housing. The audience is encouraged to participate in questions and discussion.

To set up a town hall, presentation or site visit in your community, contact the Office by email at Info@seniorsadvocatebc.ca

Tax Time Coming

The OSA is reminding seniors to file tax returns. Even if you don't earn enough income to file income taxes, it is still important to do so. There are a number of income supports that rely on your tax return for eligibility. These include the federal Guaranteed Income Supplement and Old Age Security programs, as well as a number of provincial programs, including:

- The Senior's Supplement, which provides a monthly payment of \$49.30
- Medical Services Plan (MSP) Premium Assistance, which offers reduced monthly premiums on a sliding scale, with households earning less than \$22,000 paying no monthly fee
- The BC Bus Pass Program, which provides an annual bus pass for only \$45

Volunteer Tax Preparation Clinics exist in a number of B.C. communities to help you fill out your forms for free. To find one near you, call 1-800-959-8281 or visit <http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/tx/ndvds/vlntn/clncs/bc-eng.html>.

Council of Advisers Activities

The OSA relies on a 30-member volunteer Council of Advisers to help guide our work. The COA currently has two sub-committees working on specific issues. One group is focusing on a submission on behalf of our office that will be made to the new Federal Government highlighting priority areas relating to seniors' issues. The second committee will focus on issues of cultural sensitivity relating to seniors and will identify where improvements are most needed.

Medical Services Plan (MSP) Premium Assistance

Seniors who have not already done so should check if they are eligible for financial assistance with their monthly Medical Services Plan (MSP) premiums. These premiums increased January 1, 2016, by approximately four per cent over 2015 costs for people making above \$30,000.

The Regular Premium Assistance program has five levels of subsidy for individuals and families earning less than \$30,000. This is based on an individual's net income (or a couple's combined net income) for the preceding tax year, less deductions for age, family size, disability and any reported Universal Child Care Benefit and Registered Disability Savings Plan Income. Regular Premium Assistance may be provided retroactively up to six years from the date of application.

To learn more about, and apply for, Regular and Temporary Premium Assistance, visit <http://www2.gov.bc.ca> or call 1-800-663-7100.

B.C. Seniors may also be eligible for the following subsidies:

- ◆ Fair PharmaCare subsidizes costs for eligible drugs. 1.800.663.7100
- ◆ Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters (SAFER) provides monthly payments to subsidize rents for low and moderate income seniors. 1.800.257.7756
- ◆ Home Adaptations for Independence (HAFI) provides grants to low-income seniors to modify their homes. 1.800.257.7756
- ◆ Property Tax Deferral Program allows seniors to defer paying property taxes. 1.888.355.2700