

SENIORS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA


A Healthy Living Framework



BRITISH
COLUMBIA

The Best Place on Earth



 The savings below are achieved when PC recycled fiber is used in place of virgin fiber. This project generation uses 9232 lbs of paper which has a postconsumer recycled percentage of 50%.

trees preserved for the future	38.77
waterborne waste not created	50.7842 kilograms
wastewater flow saved	74,874.2505 litres
solid waste not generated	826 kilograms
greenhouse gases prevented	1 627 kilograms
energy not consumed	27,465,200 BTUs

Calculations based on research by Environmental Defense and other members of the Paper Task Force.

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A Province for All Generations

This is an exciting time for British Columbians. We are living longer, healthier lives, and with a rapidly growing and diverse older population, we have the opportunity to harness the experience and wisdom of this generation and build a positive legacy for future generations.

Our older citizens shaped this province, contributing to its growth and prosperity, and continue to give generously of their time and skills to our communities. That's why we are pleased to announce the Seniors' Healthy Living Framework which acknowledges this contribution and the important role of older people in our society.

The Premier's Council on Aging and Seniors' Issues talked to British Columbians about the opportunities and challenges associated with an aging population. The Council's report and recommendations have provided a valuable road map for government.

BC Seniors' Week

The Province has proclaimed the first week of June every year as BC Seniors' Week. This is an opportunity for communities to acknowledge and celebrate the diversity of our older population, and to increase public awareness of their vital role in British Columbia.

The Seniors' Healthy Living Framework builds on a solid foundation of successful initiatives, such as ActNow BC, which strives to improve the health of all British Columbians, and we've already eliminated mandatory retirement, giving older people the opportunity to continue working, if they choose.

Preparing for an aging population is a shared responsibility, and implementing this framework will involve many government ministries and agencies, as well as local and federal governments, the business sector, community organizations, and individuals.

The Province is committed to building the best system of support in Canada for our older citizens. The Seniors' Healthy Living Framework will help us achieve this goal, making British Columbia the best place on earth for older people.



(Left to right):
Honourable George Abbott,
Minister of Health Services;
Honourable Blair Lekstrom,
Minister of Community Development;
Honourable Mary Polak,
Minister of Healthy Living
and Sport;
Honourable Gordon Campbell,
Premier of British Columbia;
Honourable Murray Coell,
Minister of Advanced Education and Labour
Market Development;
Honourable Rich Coleman,
Minister of Housing and Social Development

The Need To Act



The aging of our population is a tremendous force that will affect every aspect of our society, from families to workplaces to community infrastructure. The sheer magnitude of the demographic transformation that is coming has never been seen.

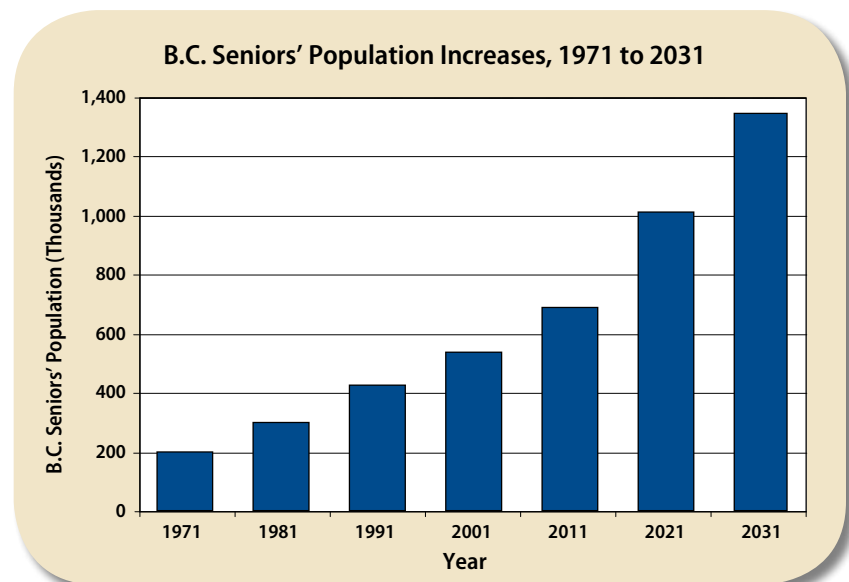
According to the 2006 census, almost a third of British Columbia's population is over the age of 50, while the proportion of children under 15 is the lowest ever. Within the next 10 years there will be fewer school-age children than people over 65, and more people retiring than entering the workforce.

The prospect of far more older people is an exciting opportunity – one that will challenge us to make positive changes in our communities, our institutions, and our attitudes.

Now is the time to act.

Did You Know?

By 2031, more than 1.3 million British Columbians will be over 65 – almost a quarter of our population.



Source: Forecast - BC Stats, 07/07;
Estimated - Statistics Canada

The Seniors' Healthy Living Framework provides a framework for action to support our aging population over the coming years.

The framework has four cornerstones:

- ▶ **Create Age-friendly Communities**
- ▶ **Mobilize and Support Volunteerism**
- ▶ **Promote Healthy Living**
- ▶ **Support Older Workers**

To support actions in these areas, the Province has established a Seniors' Healthy Living Secretariat located in the Ministry of Healthy Living and Sport. The Secretariat will lead implementation of the framework, as well as develop information services for seniors, engage with stakeholders and monitor and report on progress.

The Secretariat will also explore innovative models to provide non-medical home support services, because we know that help with simple tasks such as housekeeping and yardwork can make an enormous difference in helping older people remain in their own homes and communities.

Did You Know?

- ▶ British Columbians have one of the longest life expectancies in the world, and the highest in Canada, at about 81 years.
- ▶ In 2006, about 600,000 British Columbians were 65 years or older, which is 14.6 per cent of the population. The 65+ population is projected to double over the next 20 years.
- ▶ The baby boomers are the largest group in the population – nearly one out of three Canadians was a baby boomer in 2006, and the first of the boomers turns 65 in 2011.



Mature Drivers Program

The British Columbia Automobile Association Traffic Safety Foundation's Mature Drivers workshops are designed to help mature drivers assess their own driving skills, habits and knowledge, while getting tips and strategies to improve driving skills.

Supported by the Province, these workshops use trainers to help other seniors in their community become more aware of physical changes they're going through, and how these changes may impact their safe driving ability. Over 6,500 older drivers have benefited from this peer learning.

For more information call 1-877-297-2254 or visit www.MatureDrivers.ca.

A Solid Foundation: What We've Done

The Province is committed to building the best system of support in Canada for our older citizens. Through significant investments in innovative partnerships and programs, we already have in place a solid foundation of programs and services for older people. Some highlights are:

- ▶ The Province is working to make sure older people and their families get the information they need through resources such as the **BC Seniors' Guide** and the toll free **Health and Seniors Information Line**, as well as the **HealthLines Services BC** which provides 24-hour health information and advice.
- ▶ While most seniors are faring well financially, others need support. That's why the Province is providing the **Seniors' Supplement** to 45,000 low income seniors, and offering programs such as the **Property Tax Deferment** and the **Home Owner Grant**.

Did You Know?

The Green Cities programs – LocalMotion, Spirit Squares, Green City Awards and Towns for Tomorrow – which are helping BC communities become greener, healthier and more active and accessible places to live, include a goal of building age-friendly communities.

- ▶ **ActNow BC** is the most comprehensive health promotion program of its kind in North America, and is encouraging all British Columbians, including seniors, to make healthier eating choices and be more physically active.
- ▶ As we get older, our housing needs change. The Province is helping to meet these individual needs with a range of housing choices and supports, including assisted living apartments through **Independent Living BC**, and the **Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters (SAFER) Program**, which provides monthly payments to more than 15,000 British Columbian renters over the age of 60.
- ▶ Transportation is essential to help older people stay active and engaged in their communities. The Province is providing a variety of transportation options to meet the diverse needs of our older population, including **handyDART Custom Transit**, as well as the **Bus Pass** and **Taxi Saver Programs**.

The Seniors' Healthy Living Framework will build on these and other successes.

For detailed information on government programs and services for seniors, visit www.gov.bc.ca/seniors, or call the BC Health and Seniors' Information Line toll free at 1-800-465-4911. For information on any Province of British Columbia service or program, call Enquiry BC toll free at 1-800-663-7867.



Seniors' Housing and Support Initiative

The Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM) Seniors' Housing and Support Initiative provides grants to support community-based solutions that increase opportunities for B.C.'s older adults to age in place. Created with a \$2.5-million grant from the Province, this initiative has already supported more than 50 pilot projects and 40 dialogue events in communities throughout British Columbia, ranging from accessible transportation to age-friendly community planning.

To see how your community can be a part of the initiative visit their website at www.seniorsincommunities.ca

CORNERSTONE 1

Create Age-friendly Communities



Transforming communities to be age-friendly is critical. The Province will provide tools and incentives for local governments to lead this transformation.

MEASURE OF SUCCESS

Goal: Communities plan for and support an aging population.

Measure: Official community plans include strategies for age-friendly communities.

Changes to our physical and social environments to better support older people can have a powerful impact on mobility, independence, autonomy and quality of life in older age, and will enrich the quest for a healthy lifestyle at all ages.

The Province is working with communities to promote more mixed use, compact, transit-oriented development that will support greenhouse gas reduction. We need to make sure that this development is age-friendly as we explore ways to assess and enhance existing communities to support our older population.

For example, whether we choose to walk and how much we walk is heavily influenced by our physical environment. Attention to street design and amenities can enhance the mobility of older people and their participation in community life.

Making communities age-friendly is one of the most effective strategies to promote healthy and active aging, and will contribute to our goal of sustainable, healthy communities.

PRIORITY ACTION

Work with local government and other partners to promote and implement age-friendly practices in communities throughout British Columbia.

OTHER ACTIONS:

- ▶ Include age-friendly criteria in the Green Cities programs to encourage local governments to address age-friendliness in the development of their initiatives.
- ▶ Explore partnering with the Planning Institute of British Columbia to ensure planners have awareness of aging issues, so that they will incorporate age-friendly design in their plans.
- ▶ Make “Planning for an Aging Society” a research area in the Pacific Leaders Graduate Student Fellowship Program.
- ▶ Continue to expand public transportation services and options, including handyDART.
- ▶ Deliver educational and safety initiatives for motorized scooters.
- ▶ Support the expansion of the BCAA Traffic Safety Foundation’s Mature Drivers Program, which helps seniors assess their driving ability and learn about issues affecting older drivers.
- ▶ Develop and increase the inventory of independent living spaces through Housing Matters BC.
- ▶ Submit an amendment to 2010 National Building Code to require adequate reinforcement in the walls adjacent to toilets, tubs and/or showers for grab bar installation.
- ▶ Table the issue of adaptable housing standards with the Provincial/Territorial Policy Advisory Committee on Codes.



Business Changing With the Times

The Senior Friendly Business Award was created by the Friends of the Centre at the University of Victoria’s Centre on Aging to recognize and promote senior friendly business practices. The annual award honours businesses in the Capital Regional District that provide the most friendly, high quality services and facilities to customers over the age of 55.

The inaugural award was given to the Thrifty Foods store in Sidney, for their age-friendly features which include wider aisles, accessible public washrooms, and friendly and courteous staff.

Partnerships Result in Practical Age-friendly Solutions

British Columbia was fortunate to have had two communities chosen to participate in the Age-friendly Rural and Remote Communities Initiative, led by the Ministers Responsible for Seniors from across Canada.

In Alert Bay, located on Cormorant Island off the northeast coast of Vancouver Island, the 'Namgis First Nation and the Village of Alert Bay submitted a joint proposal to participate in the initiative. Through a series of focus groups, the community identified two important and practical projects: a new Information for Seniors brochure and the installation of community benches throughout the village.

The Village of Lumby, located about 25 km east of Vernon in the North Okanagan, also held a series of focus groups, and quickly identified transportation as a key issue for older people in their community. They are now working to improve seniors' accessibility to programs, services and support by providing low-cost door-to-door transportation to area activities, events and services.

The Villages of Alert Bay and Lumby were supported in this pilot project by partners at the provincial Ministry of Health, 2010 Legacies Now, the British Columbia Recreation and Parks Association, the Public Health Agency of Canada, and the Union of British Columbia Municipalities. Other input from the focus groups was incorporated into Age-friendly Rural and Remote Communities: A Guide, released earlier this year, which will be a valuable tool for other smaller communities.



For more stories on age-friendly communities, and for a copy of Age-friendly Rural and Remote Communities: A Guide, visit www.seniorsincommunities.ca.

What Makes a Community Age-friendly?

- ▶ **Outdoor spaces and buildings** that are pleasant, clean, secure and physically accessible
- ▶ Accessible and affordable **public transportation**
- ▶ **Housing** that is affordable, appropriately located, well-built, well- designed and secure
- ▶ Opportunities for **social participation** in leisure, social, cultural and spiritual activities with people of all ages and cultures
- ▶ **Social inclusion** and respect of older people in civic life
- ▶ Opportunities for **employment and civic participation** that cater to the interests and needs of older persons
- ▶ Availability of age-friendly **communication and information**
- ▶ Community **support and health services** tailored to the needs of older persons

– Adapted from *Global Age-friendly Cities: A Guide*,
World Health Organization, 2007



Did you know?

The Province has recruited an Age-friendly Communities Implementation Team to directly assist and enable local governments to identify barriers and implement actions to create age-friendly communities. The goal is to make B.C. the most age-friendly jurisdiction in Canada by 2010. The team can be contacted at age-friendly@FNTCS.com or by phone at 250-652-7087.

CORNERSTONE 2

Mobilize and Support Volunteerism



Volunteerism provides important benefits for communities and older people, both as recipients and participants. The Province will mobilize volunteers by supporting older people's community participation and independence.

MEASURE OF SUCCESS

Goal: Older people have access within their communities to a range of volunteer services and volunteer opportunities.

Measure: Increase in the number of volunteers over 65.

A strong voluntary sector is crucial for a high quality of life, economic growth and prosperity. The voluntary sector is one of the largest social and economic drivers in British Columbia, and older people form the backbone of the sector.

With an aging population, people working until later in life and volunteers preferring assignments that make use of their specialized skills, the voluntary sector is facing significant challenges in terms of human resources and an increase in demand for services.

Many senior-serving organizations need volunteers and support to deliver their valuable programs and services at the community level. Older British Columbians represent a large pool of highly skilled, capable and active individuals who have a wealth of experience to share.

Government will work with the volunteer sector to improve recruitment and retention of volunteers, and provide support to senior-serving volunteer organizations. We will expand opportunities for all of us – young and old – to benefit from this experience in our communities and organizations.

PRIORITY ACTION

Create an Aging in Action campaign to promote volunteer initiatives that support older people.

OTHER ACTIONS:

- ▶ Establish an Aging in Action Grant Program for volunteer organizations serving older people.
- ▶ Launch a provincial recognition program to celebrate the contributions of older volunteers.
- ▶ Work with partners to develop opportunities and profile older volunteers during events such as the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games, the BC Games and the BC Seniors Games.



Did you know?

B.C. seniors spend more time volunteering annually than any other age group in the province – over 44 million hours in 2004, at an average of 247 hours per year.

Neighbours Helping Neighbours

The **Saanich Volunteer Services Society** is a non-profit agency that coordinates one-to-one direct volunteer service for those who need help to live independently. The society provides supported transportation, companion visiting and a host of other services. Most of their clients are seniors who need help to remain in their own homes; others are individuals with socialization or mobility impairment. All benefit from companionship and reduced isolation.

The positive impacts on the seniors they work with are clear – help with tasks like minor home repairs, income tax preparation or transportation makes a huge difference to their independence and quality of life.

The **Prince George Council of Seniors** is another example of volunteers working together to enhance the quality of life for seniors in their community. Representing approximately 3,000 members, this umbrella organization provides a variety of valuable services to seniors in the Prince George area. The council also maintains a liaison with municipal, provincial and federal governments, and plays an advocacy role on issues of concern to local seniors with the support of its member organizations.

Every day in British Columbia, older people's lives are enriched by the work of volunteer organizations.



We Need You!

VolWeb.ca™ is helping to increase access to volunteer opportunities and celebrates the spirit of volunteerism across B.C. Created by 2010 Legacies Now and supported by the Province, this online service connects volunteers with organizations needing special event volunteers. No long term commitments are required and volunteer times range from one hour to one weekend – you decide. Best of all, it is free and easy to use.

To find out how you can volunteer in your community, or to register as a volunteer organization, visit volweb.ca.

Did you know?

According to the Public Health Agency of Canada, volunteering among seniors in Canada has been linked to improved quality of life, stronger social networks, increased levels of physical activity, and lower mortality rates.



HEALTH CANADA

CORNERSTONE 3

Promote Healthy Living



Did you know?

Recent surveys show that most seniors do not eat enough grain products, milk products or vegetables and fruits.

Making healthy living choices improves quality of life, and helps defer or avoid health care costs. The Province will promote healthy living for older people, to support longer, healthier lives.

MEASURE OF SUCCESS:

Goal: Older people are physically active.

Measure: Increase in physical activity among older people age 50+.

Maintaining good health is key to the quality of life and independence of older people, and the Province is committed to creating supportive environments to enable older people to live healthy, active and independent lives.

Physical activity is a vital component of a healthy lifestyle. It reduces the risk of certain diseases and chronic conditions, and helps to maintain health and independence, allowing people to remain living independently in their own homes and communities for as long as possible.

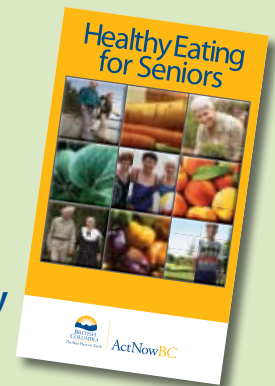
In fact, encouraging healthy lifestyles among seniors can prevent, reduce or even reverse frailty and poor health in old age and may reduce or defer health care costs. By creating environments that encourage healthy lifestyle choices, more older people will improve their health and stay socially connected and may avoid or defer costly health interventions.

PRIORITY ACTION

In partnership with local governments, First Nations, seniors' and community organizations, build ActNow BC Seniors' Community Parks.

OTHER ACTIONS:

- ▶ Implement a provincial Active Aging Plan, including five Active Aging Coordinators, an annual Active Aging Symposium and regional forums to engage multiple stakeholders to create supportive environments to enable healthy lifestyle choices.
- ▶ Develop an ActNow BC program in partnership with Aboriginal communities, to build on the Province's commitment to improve the health of Aboriginal communities.
- ▶ Provide new tools and supports for caregivers and family members who are providing in-home care.
- ▶ Evaluate the opportunities and costs associated with establishing a new Independent Living Savings Account, to allow citizens to make tax-free investments for their future home care and housing needs.
- ▶ Pilot new community-based models to support persons with disabilities, including seniors.
- ▶ Work with partners to support families dealing with dementia.



Healthy Eating

The Healthy Eating for Seniors Guide has information on everything from the benefits of eating well to how to read labels and keep a healthy body weight. It includes information about supplements, tips on how to eat to prevent or manage common chronic diseases, advice on simple ways to eat with less salt and fat and ideas for cooking for one or two.

The guide has recently been published with cultural adaptations in Chinese and Punjabi, and is available at www.actnowbc.ca/en/seniors, or to request a free copy call the Health and Seniors' Information Line toll-free at 1-800-465-4911.



A New Approach to Wellness

Physical activity is a vital component of a healthy lifestyle as we get older. Harry Caine knew that, so when the member of the Tsawwassen Boundary Bay Lions Club saw a wellness park for seniors in China, he wanted to build something similar at home.

The Lions Club partnered with the Corporation of Delta, which provided the land for the park and prepared the site, and through fundraising and a grant from the Province, the idea began to take shape.

Caine worked with Professor Daryl Page and his class from the school of human kinetics at Trinity Western University to research the idea and survey seniors in the area. In the end they decided to design a park that would promote general fitness and recreation through flexibility, strength training and falls prevention.

The Lions Wellness Park opened in September 2007 and is one of the first parks in North America catering to seniors' fitness. In addition to the specialized exercise equipment, the park also provides a meeting point for walks and social activities and includes raised community garden plots.



The Lions Wellness Park is located in Winskill Park, 56th Street at 9th Avenue in Tsawwassen.

The ActNow BC Road to Health Community Tour

The ActNow BC Road to Health Community Tour is coming to you! Each year during the spring and summer, the tour travels to communities throughout the province to promote the benefits of an active, healthy lifestyle.

There are games for the kids, and adults can take a health knowledge quiz and learn tips that will help you look and feel great. At the end take the ActNow BC Healthy Living Pledge and be eligible for prizes. You can also take the Healthy Hearts Assessment at select locations, where registered nurses will help you identify your overall risk for developing heart disease and individual heart health risk factors.

To see when the ActNow BC Road to Health Community Tour will be arriving in a community near you, or to take the pledge online and get active right away, visit www.actnowbc.ca.



ActNowBC



BC Seniors Games

The BC Seniors Games is an annual, multi-sport event held in a different British Columbia community each year. The Games is one of the largest sporting events in BC, with about 3,500 participants age 55 plus from all over the province. With sports ranging from crib and dragon boat racing, the Games promote fitness, mental stimulation, individual achievement and community pride. The 2008 BC Seniors Games are in Prince George, and the 2009 event is taking place in Richmond.



CORNERSTONE 4

Support Older Workers



Many older people want to remain in the labour force, and have valuable skills and abilities. By continuing to eliminate workforce barriers, the Province will support older workers who make this choice.

MEASURE OF SUCCESS:

Goal: Older people are able to continue working if they wish.

Measure: Increase in level of workforce participation among people over age 55.

As British Columbians live longer, healthier lives, many older people want to keep working into their senior years. These are highly-skilled employees, with a lifetime of knowledge and experience that is invaluable to their workplaces and to our province.

Mandatory retirement has been eliminated in British Columbia, but many workplaces may not meet the needs of older workers. Additionally, older employees currently must choose between continuing to work or retiring to receive pension benefits, when they may wish to continue working at least part-time and collect partial benefits.

Employers are increasingly realizing the benefits mature workers bring to the workplace, but more needs to be done to offer incentives and choices for this group, both to recruit them, and more importantly, to retain them.

Did You Know?

The age limit for converting a Registered Retirement Savings Plan (RRSP) into a Registered Retirement Income Plan (RRIF) or annuity has been increased from 69 to 71.

PRIORITY ACTION

Increase flexibility and choice in retirement planning by permitting pension plan members to accrue pension benefits until age 71, and allowing British Columbia registered pension plans to offer phased retirement benefits.

OTHER ACTIONS:

- ▶ Deliver a Targeted Initiative for Older Workers program to retrain older workers affected by changes to British Columbia's economy.
- ▶ Launch a Mature Workers marketing campaign to promote the experience and skills that older workers bring to the workplace.
- ▶ Host a provincial forum on flexible work options for older workers to discuss best practices for creating more flexible workplaces.
- ▶ Explore options to promote pooled pension plans for smaller employers, to increase the participation of British Columbia workers in registered pension plans.
- ▶ Implement a Flexible Work Options Toolkit for the BC Public Service, to promote flexible workplace practices and provide an effective model for other employers.



Did You Know?

- ▶ Nearly one in six individuals aged 65 to 69 is currently employed, compared with a rate of one in ten from a decade ago.
- ▶ The number of employed seniors 70 years and older has nearly doubled since 2001.

