

## Office of the Seniors Advocate Monthly Update - March 2022

### What's Happening in March

[Liver Health Month](#)

[Nutrition Month](#)

[B.C. Seniors Care Providers Day](#) (March 1)

[International Women's Day](#) (March 8)

[World Glaucoma Week](#) (March 6 to 12)

[Brain Awareness Week](#) (March 14 to 20)

### Activities of the Office of the Seniors Advocate

#### **Income and Affordability Survey for Seniors**

The Office of the Seniors Advocate has launched a survey of B.C. seniors living on low incomes. This initiative aims to identify the challenges faced by seniors with limited incomes and determine if the financial supports available to them meet their needs. The survey has been sent out by mail to randomly selected recipients of the B.C. Senior's Supplement program. The deadline is April 8, 2022.

[Learn More](#)

#### **B.C. Care Awards**

The Advocate was pleased to attend the 8th Annual B.C. Care Awards Ceremony to congratulate award winners Maria Fan, Courtney Merrells, Christine Clark, Ionel Prodan, Dave Cheperdak, and Lynda Steele on their achievements. We thank these inspiring individuals for their passion and commitment to providing exceptional care for B.C. seniors.

[Learn More](#)

#### **Home Support Survey**

The Office of the Seniors Advocate is undertaking its second survey of public Home Support recipients and their family caregivers. The important feedback gathered will enable us to better identify the needs of Home Support recipients and make recommendations for change.

[Learn More](#)

## **Monitoring Seniors Services 2021 Report**

We are pleased to announce that the Monitoring Seniors Services 2021 report has been released. This annual report assesses the performance of key seniors services in the province and highlights where seniors' needs are being met and where improvements are most needed.

[Learn More](#)

## **COVID-19 Update**

### **Rapid Tests for Seniors**

COVID-19 rapid antigen tests are now being distributed to people aged 60+ at B.C. pharmacies. Seniors in this age group can pick up 5 tests every 28 days free of charge. Eligible seniors will need to provide their Personal Health Number, full name, and date of birth.

[Learn More](#)

### **COVID-19 Vaccinations**

The Senior's Advocate urges all eligible individuals to register for their COVID-19 booster shot to reduce the risk of serious illness and transmission of the virus. To register, visit the [Get Vaccinated](#) . To ask questions and verify your registration please call **1-833-838-2323**.

Proof of full vaccination is required to access some events, services, and business in British Columbia. This requirement applies to all people born in 2009 or earlier (12+).

[Learn More](#)

### **COVID-19 Restrictions**

Although many COVID-19 public health restrictions have been lifted, the use of masks in all public indoor settings and proof of vaccination requirements remain.

[Learn More](#)

### **Long-Term Care update**

Visitor restrictions in B.C. long-term care homes have now eased to permit visits from both essential and designated visitors, including during outbreaks.

[Learn More](#)

As of March 2, 2022, there are 22 active COVID-19 outbreaks in long term care and assisted living. There are currently 650 active COVID-19 cases among residents and staff in these care homes.

[COVID-19 Statistics](#)

## Provincial News

### **B.C. Budget 2022**

The newly released 2022 B.C. Budget includes some good news for seniors in the upcoming year. The new budget contains continued commitments to long-term care and assisted living in the context of COVID-19, as well as capital funding to improve long-term care infrastructure and eliminate multi-bed units.

Other highlights for seniors include a \$25 million investment to expand training for health care assistants to address staff shortages in long-term care, assisted living, and home care programming.

Seniors subsidized rental housing will also be on the rise with a planned \$100 million in accelerated funding for the development of units for seniors and people with disabilities.

[Learn More](#)

### **Statements from the Provincial Health Officer and Minister of Health**

The Provincial Health Officer and the Minister of Health release regular statements that can be accessed on the [BC Government News](#) website.

### **Recent Announcements from the B.C. Government Impacting Seniors**

- Feb 1, 2022 [New affordable homes to open in Kamloops](#)
- Feb 2, 2022 [Province to finance affordable seniors' housing in Burnaby](#)
- Feb 4, 2022 [Premier's statement on World Cancer Day](#)
- Feb 4, 2022 [More affordable seniors' housing coming to Nanaimo](#)
- Feb 15, 2022 [British Columbians' COVID-19 efforts allow easing of restrictions](#)
- Feb 20, 2022 [Hundreds of new nursing training seats coming provincewide](#)
- Feb 23, 2022 [Budget 2022 moves us forward together to build a StrongerBC](#)
- Feb 23, 2022 [COVID-19 rapid tests for people 70+ to be available at pharmacies](#)

## National News

### **Statements from the Chief Public Health Officer of Canada**

The Chief Public Health Officer of Canada releases regular statements that can be accessed on the [Government of Canada News](#) website.

## Recent Announcements from the Federal Government Impacting Seniors

- Feb 8, 2022 [Government of Canada introduces legislation to support low-income seniors who received pandemic benefits](#)
- Feb 21, 2022 [British Columbia, tax-filing season starts today](#)
- Feb 23, 2022 [Canada supports over 150 new homes for seniors in Vancouver](#)

## Current Issues and Resources

### B.C. Speculation and Vacancy Tax Exemption

Do you have questions about the B.C. speculation and vacancy tax? OSA has recently become aware of confusion regarding tax exemption rules for cases in which one spouse lives in long-term care, while the other continues to reside in the home.

Generally, a B.C. owner is exempt from the tax if the home is their principal residence. Spouses are also entitled to claim the principal residence exemption while it is the principal residence of only one of them.

Our office has found that a spouse living in residential care facility is also entitled to claim the principal residence exemption when the other spouse continues to live in their home.

[Learn More](#)

### One-Time GIS Payment for Seniors Affected by CERB

Many seniors who received the Canada emergency response benefit (CERB) in 2020 saw a loss or reduction in their federal Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) payments as a result.

The federal government will provide an automatic, one-time repayment to alleviate the financial hardship of seniors who saw a loss of GIS or Allowance by compensating them for the full, annualized loss amount. This payment will be non-taxable non-reportable income. Seniors will not need to take any action to receive the one-time payment, which is scheduled to arrive on April 19, 2022.

[Learn More](#)

### Income Tax Tips

The deadline to file taxes is quickly approaching. This year's tax-filing deadline for most individuals is April 30, 2022. See our website for resources and tips, like how to find a free income tax clinic if you or someone you know has a low income and needs assistance completing their annual tax return.

[Learn More](#)

### **Webinar: Protect Yourself from Fraud and Counterfeit Currency**

The RCMP and Bank of Canada are offering a webinar to teach seniors how to avoid scams and fraud attempts. Find out how to spot the top types of fraud and avoid counterfeit bank notes by registering to attend the session taking place on March 24, 2022.

[Learn More](#)

### **National Long-term Care Services Standard Public Review**

The Health Standards Organization (HSO) has launched its 60-day Public Review for the proposed new National Long-Term Care Services Standards. This process is an opportunity for anyone to review and provide feedback on the draft standard before it is finalized and published. The public review is open until March 27th.

[Learn More](#)

## **Recent Research**

### **Frailty-aware care: giving value to frailty assessment across different healthcare settings.**

(BMC Geriatrics)

Frailty assessments provide the opportunity to optimize patient care and identify individuals at risk for adverse health outcomes. This review looks at applying frailty assessments across care settings and impact on health outcomes.

[Learn More](#)

### **The COVID-19 pandemic's impact on older adults' mental health: Contributing factors, coping strategies, and opportunities for improvement.**

(International Geriatric Psychology)

This commentary presents evidence that anxiety and depression have increased during the COVID-19 pandemic in older adults. Sex, age, location, living situation, socioeconomic status, and medical and psychiatric comorbidities influence risk of mental illness in older adults. Mitigation strategies for social isolation are discussed.

[Learn More](#)

## **Barriers and Facilitators to Accessing Digital Health Tools Faced by South Asian Canadians in Surrey, British Columbia: Community-Based Participatory Action Exploration Using Photovoice**

(Journal of Medical Internet Research)

South Asian community members in Canada experience a higher burden of chronic disease than the general population. Digital health tools can support chronic disease self-management. This study used photovoice to understand the barriers (older age, lack of education, poor digital literacy) and facilitators (support from family or community members, positive attitude) to digital health tool.

[Learn More](#)

## **Resident loneliness, social isolation, and unplanned emergency department visits from supportive living facilities: a population-based study in Alberta, Canada.**

(BMC Geriatrics)

This study looked at loneliness and isolation in residents of supportive living facilities and health service use. Risk of unplanned emergency department visits were associated with increased loneliness.

[Learn More](#)

## **Outreach by the OSA**

The Seniors Advocate continues to meet with seniors across the province by attending events and delivering presentations virtually. If you would like to invite the Seniors Advocate to present at your event, please contact our office at [info@seniorsadvocatebc.ca](mailto:info@seniorsadvocatebc.ca).

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