

STATEMENT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 11, 2023

Statement from BC Seniors Advocate regarding retirement in 2024

“I have met with Health Minister Adrian Dix to advise him that this will be my final year serving as Seniors Advocate for the Province of British Columbia and advise him to begin a public recruitment process to choose my successor.

“When the position of Seniors Advocate was created, there was no term to the appointment, and for a variety of reasons, I do believe these types of offices should have defined terms. While I could happily continue this richly rewarding work forever, I am aware that I cannot and should not go on indefinitely. With this in mind, I advised the Minister of my intent to retire from the role of Seniors Advocate for British Columbia on what will be the 10th anniversary of my appointment, March 31, 2024.

“Over the next year, I will continue to lead the work of this office and I look forward to continued engagement with B.C. seniors over the next eleven months including the celebration of Seniors Week in early June. In addition to our annual monitoring reports, our office has systemic reviews related to Assisted Living, Rural Seniors, Community Programs and Long-Term Care underway. There may be additional issues that arise, but given their importance and urgency, I expect to conclude and release these larger systemic reviews prior to my departure.

“As Seniors Advocate for British Columbia, I have had the opportunity to meet and work with seniors from every imaginable background and geography. This has informed me, it has changed me, and I will be forever grateful for the privilege of this experience.

“Over the past 30 years, I have had the good fortune to work with dedicated health care professionals and this has been especially so in my role as Seniors Advocate. Throughout the health and social service network of this province, from Deputy Ministers and Health Authority CEOs, to frontline nurses, care aides, social workers, cleaners, food service workers, volunteers and community activists, there are tens of thousands of individuals who come to work every day to make B.C. a better place for the aging population. The work to improve is never done and we can always do better, but I am confident that we will continue to make progress because I see on a daily basis the overwhelming love and support families offer their aging loved ones and that as a society, we care about our fellow citizens.

“In this position I have also had the privilege of working with elected officials at all levels of government and from different political parties. Without exception I have found them all to be dedicated to making their communities better and to serving the needs of their growing seniors’ population. There is not always agreement on how best to achieve the desired outcome, but there is unanimity in the goal of allowing seniors in B.C. to age with dignity and comfort in their own communities.

“When I met with the Minister, I also took the opportunity to thank him and his government for the respect and support they have provided to the Office of the Seniors Advocate and to me personally as the Advocate. I would also extend this gratitude to previous Health Minister Terry Lake and to the previous government who created this office and appointed me, through a public hiring process, as the first BC Seniors Advocate.

“The nature of this office and the work of an advocate is always to look at what is possible. The role of government is to balance these aspirations with the reality of infinite demands for finite resources. It has been my experience that this dynamic tension has always been approached with an understanding of our respective roles and a respect for the challenges we all face. When I look back over the past 30 years of my work in various aspects of services for seniors, I recognize improvements have been made, however, I also see how much more we can do. In the words of Florence Nightingale more than 150 years ago, “Were there none who were discontented with what they have, the world would never reach anything better”.

“I look forward to a busy year continuing my work while the government moves forward in recruiting my successor. I have offered my full support in smooth transition, and I am confident that over the next year, the government will find someone with the passion and skills to continue the important work of this office.”

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The Office of the Seniors Advocate is an independent office of the provincial government with a mandate of monitoring seniors’ services and reporting on systemic issues affecting seniors. The office also provides information and referral to seniors and their caregivers by calling toll-free 1 877 952-3181, BC211, via email at info@seniorsadvocatebc.ca, Canada Post and the OSA web site <https://www.seniorsadvocatebc.ca/>.

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