

## NEWS RELEASE

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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#### **Reach out to a senior this holiday season Small gestures can make a difference**

VICTORIA – The holiday season is meant to be a time of togetherness and celebration but many seniors report feeling lonely and isolated this time of year.

Today, BC Seniors Advocate Dan Levitt is calling on all British Columbians to reach out to older adults in their communities who may be alone over the holidays, whether they are close friends and family, or a neighbour or acquaintance.

“Many seniors spend the holidays by themselves and a small, caring gesture can make a big difference for both the giver and the receiver,” says Levitt. “A simple phone call or a visit can remind someone they are not forgotten.”

He encourages people to take simple, practical steps to connect with seniors:

- Make a phone or video call, just to check in.
- Invite a senior for a walk, coffee or a brief visit.
- Offer to assist with simple tasks, like getting groceries, clearing the driveway, or giving a ride.
- Contact care homes to ask about visiting. Many residents appreciate short, friendly visits during the holidays.

The Seniors Advocate also encourages older adults who are feeling lonely or isolated to consider engaging with their community. “Reaching out can feel difficult, but taking even one small action can open the door to new connections,” he says.

Seniors can try:

- Contacting a community or seniors centre. Many hold events, holiday meals and offer drop-in activities.
- Calling a local seniors organization or support line, such as the Red Cross Friendly Calls service (details below).
- Joining group activities in person or online.
- Letting friends, family and neighbours know a visit or conversation would be welcome.

Social connection is important for healthy ageing and is vital to seniors’ wellbeing. Loneliness can have serious effects on both physical and mental health. Research shows that older adults are at increased risk of isolation, especially during the holiday season.

“Let’s reach out so seniors feel valued, connected and cared for, not only during the holidays, but throughout the year,” says Levitt.

**Resources for seniors facing isolation:**

- **Red Cross Friendly Calls Program** - Matches people with trained Red Cross personnel who connect with them regularly to check in, provide emotional support and encourage healthy coping strategies. Call [1-833-979-9779](tel:1-833-979-9779) or [sign up online](#).
- **Office of the Seniors Advocate Information and Referral Line** – Seniors’ services specialists can help connect older adults to friendly calls programs, seniors’ centres and other local and provincial supports. Call **1-877-952-3181**.
- **BC-211** – Staff can find local, friendly visitor or caller programs and other seniors’ supports. Call **2-1-1**.

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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, via email at [info@seniorsadvocatebc.ca](mailto:info@seniorsadvocatebc.ca), Canada Post and the OSA web site <https://www.seniorsadvocatebc.ca/>.

**Media contact:**

OSA Communications  
250 213-2024  
[osa.comms@gov.bc.ca](mailto:osa.comms@gov.bc.ca)  
[www.seniorsadvocatebc.ca](http://www.seniorsadvocatebc.ca)