

Alliance
of
Seniors' Centres
A united voice for seniors' centres in British Columbia

April 21, 2020

The Honourable Ahmed Hussen
Minister of Families, Children, and Social Development

The Honourable Diane Lebouthillier
Minister of National Revenue

The Honourable Bill Morneau
Minister of Finance

The Honourable Deb Schulte
Minister of Seniors

Re: Income tax, the Guaranteed Income Supplement, and Vulnerable Seniors

Dear Honourable Ministers:

Senior-serving organizations in Vancouver are being besieged with calls from low-income seniors who are worried about being able to get their income tax filed on time by the end of May 2020. If they are unable to get their income tax filed by this deadline, they risk losing their Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) according to the rules currently in place. As you will be very aware, the GIS is crucial to keeping seniors out of poverty.

Many low-income seniors rely on community-based volunteer income tax clinics in order to file their income tax. However, as a result of COVID-19 these income tax clinics are now closed. Some seniors' organizations, such as our member organizations, are working at developing remote income tax clinics. This is a difficult and time-consuming undertaking. Even if these income tax clinics are set up, they will not be able to deal with the volume of seniors who rely on this service to complete the necessary work by the end of May.

Deemed a vulnerable group in terms of COVID-19, seniors have been asked not to go out. This raises concerns as to how seniors are going to be able to get their T4's to the income tax preparers. Seniors are calling our centres in large numbers and expressing their panic.

Since GIS is a financial lifeline for vulnerable seniors we are asking the following:

- That the deadline to file income taxes be extended until the end of December 2020 for seniors 65 years of age and older.
- That in the interim, seniors GIS be maintained at their 2019 rate but that the quarterly cost of living increases continue to apply.

Member Organizations:



**SOUTH GRANVILLE
SENIORS CENTRE**



WESN
WEST END SENIORS' NETWORK

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We are appreciative of the Federal Government's quick response to help Canadians all across the country feel secure and respect the conditions for beating this pandemic.

Now we look forward to your willingness to ensure that one of the most vulnerable groups in our country continues to receive benefits while organizations work out how to ensure that their income taxes can be completed safely.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter. We are awaiting your reply.

Marion Pollack
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411 Seniors Centre Society
Vancouver, BC

Les Blond
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South Granville Seniors Centre
Vancouver, BC

Jane Goodridge
President, Alliance of Seniors' Centres of BC
Board Member, West End Seniors' Network
Vancouver, BC

Member Organizations:

