



October 1, 2019

Statement from the Seniors Advocate on International Day of the Older Person

In 1990, the United Nations General Assembly declared October 1st of each year as *International Day of the Older Person*.

Over the ensuing 29 years, the population aged 65 and older has been growing worldwide. While there are many challenges faced by all of us as we age, let us take a moment today to realize how fortunate we are to age in a country like Canada. Yes, we absolutely have issues related to income insufficiency, access to care services, appropriate and affordable housing and accessible transportation but no one in Canada, whatever their age, needs to create a GoFundMe campaign to pay for basic medical care as they do in some other countries.

Let us also be thankful we live in a province that recognizes the value of older adults through initiatives such as ending mandatory retirement and creating the first statutory office of a Seniors Advocate.

As we look to the future and the work that lies ahead to ensure all B.C. seniors can age with dignity, living where they want and with whom they want, we should take great comfort in the huge commitment that seniors make to better their communities. There are literally hundreds of thousands of seniors throughout this province volunteering to: deliver meals; provide rides to medical appointments; raise money for hospital foundations; lead chair yoga sessions and visit those who cannot get to the seniors centre. Without this selfless donation of time, government would be spending close to a billion more dollars each year on services.

And just in case you think it is only about seniors helping other seniors, take a careful look at the faces (and hair colour) of those who have galvanized their efforts to raise awareness about the environment and other global issues. You will find that B.C. seniors care very much about future generations and the greater world around them.

Yes, today let us celebrate the incredible resource we have in this province with almost a million citizens endowed with the wisdom, experience, perspective and generosity that can only come with age.

Isobel Mackenzie
Seniors Advocate
Province of British Columbia