

Municipalities are frontline in seniors' health says Columbia Institute report

VANCOUVER, B.C., October 18, 2016 – A report by the Columbia Institute says municipalities offer critical services to Canada's growing aging population, enabling seniors to live independent, engaged and healthy lives in their communities. These services are the front line step in maintaining seniors' health. Still, there is little recognition of the vital role municipalities play in supporting seniors.

“Municipal services are and will become increasingly important in providing seniors with the support they need to be active and involved in their communities,” says Charley Beresford, Executive Director of the Columbia Institute. “These services play a critical role in supporting aging in place and can prevent seniors from requiring costly health care services. They are the first link in our continuum of health care.”

The report, “Our Future: Seniors, Socialization and Health,” surveys the effectiveness of municipal programs at meeting the holistic needs of older adults through a range of innovative and cost effective programs, such as recreation, wellness, physical fitness and nutrition.

The eight BC Lower Mainland community centres surveyed in the report offer wellness programs, such as fitness, nutritional support and health promotion, as well as activities that enhance creativity, such as painting, writing, quilting and gardening. Many centre programs also aim to stimulate intellectual development through lectures, book clubs, concerts, and travel, and answer the need for a sense of purpose by providing broad opportunities for volunteering.

“Although most health services are the responsibility of the provincial government, municipalities are providing many needed social support systems through their recreation programming,” says Rebecca Tunnacliffe, CEO of the BC Recreation and Parks Association.

Report author Gloria Levi says “Canada's aging population needs collaborative partnerships with local governments, alongside federal, provincial and territorial counterparts, to meet the needs of seniors living in our communities.” She continues, “When we work across the funding jurisdictions and attend to the whole human being, we are getting the best bang for the buck.”

A briefing will be held at the South Granville Seniors Centre at 1420 West 12th Avenue, Vancouver, BC on Tuesday, October 18 from 10 to 11am. RSVP required: sroling@columbiainstitute.ca.

The report is available at <http://www.civicgovernance.ca/future-seniors-socialization-health/>

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