

JANUARY 2021

THE BEAT

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION FOR THE
SENIORS SERVICES SOCIETY OF BC

NEW YEAR, NEW HORIZONS

Hope smiles from the threshold of the year to come, whispering, 'It will be happier.'

-Alfred Lord Tennyson, 1809-1892

2020 was a difficult year, especially for seniors. Not only were people over 60 hardest hit by the physical effects of the coronavirus and COVID-19, the principal measure to contain the pandemic was isolation, which is one of the greatest threats to the health and welfare of seniors.

An untold number have suffered. Many of them have been lost to us. As we look ahead to 2021 with hope anew, we honour their memory, and carry them with us even as we move forward.

And move forward we must. As communities, as individuals, and as service organisations. 2020 has highlighted the challenges seniors across British Columbia face. Housing insecurity, food insecurity, isolation- all are challenges facing our seniors in 2021. They are not, however insurmountable challenges. For all the hardships of 2020, the Seniors Services Society of BC has also seen some great successes. Successes that will carry forward into the new year.

A HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

2020 was a difficult year, especially for seniors; however, for some it ended on a great note.

Between October and December of 2020, four seniors made the transition from the Seniors Services Society of BC's Temporary Housing Program to permanent housing- a huge achievement. Further to that, another seven seniors, all homeless, also found permanent housing through the hard work and diligence of SSSBC's housing outreach workers.

These eleven seniors were able to celebrate the holidays in new homes, safe, secure, and supported. A great way to end 2020.

DIGITAL INCLUSION: INVESTING IN SENIORS

One of the challenges many seniors face is accessibility to online resources. Such resources can include rental listings, online grocery shopping, and even access to government and community programs.

To help alleviate such issues, Coast Capital New Westminster stepped up and generously purchased 15 easy-to-learn tablets for 15 seniors selected by the Seniors Services Society of BC, an expense that would not have been affordable without Coast Capital's support.

To educate seniors on how to make use of this technology, volunteers from Our Lady of Mercy Young Adult Ministry then came forward with an offer to train the recipients on using the tablets!

We cannot express our gratitude enough to Coast Capital New Westminster and Our Lady of Mercy Young Adult Ministry for these amazing gifts to our seniors. Thank you!



THE SOLUTIONS LAB: DREAMING AND DESIGNING SOLUTIONS TO THE SENIORS HOUSING AFFORDABILITY CRISIS

The Seniors Housing Stability Solutions Lab was convened by the Seniors Services Society of BC (SSSBC) and included 55 organizations representing non-profit housing; private-sector housing; real estate; municipal, provincial and federal government; community and seniors centres; social services; academic institutions; homelessness services; and health authorities, as well as seniors with lived experience. The challenge statement for the Lab was: "What might enable low-income senior renters in multi-unit buildings to retain their housing, age in the right place, and thrive?"

Over the course of fourteen months and four labs, participants identified problems, networked, tested, advanced solutions and ideas. At the conclusion of the Lab, participants agreed to advance two solutions towards implementation:

1. Senior-led System Redesign

This solution involves the formation of a Seniors Tenants' Advisory consisting of senior advocates, as well as landlord and service provider representatives. The Advisory will act as an independent body to consult on seniors initiatives at the systems level and provide oversight on policy and program design and implementation. This advocacy group will also advocate for a reimagining of municipal zoning to be more inclusionary of seniors housing and non-profit or below-market development.

2. Seniors Supportive Housing Collaborative

This solution involves the creation of a network of seniors housing and service providers to streamline service coordination. This network will include partnerships between the municipality, a local seniors-serving society, a low-income seniors housing-provider, and a seniors advocate. Each municipal hub will allow low-income seniors to connect with housing-related services, with all hubs connected to SSSBC, who will serve as a provincial hub. Through this hub, seniors can connect to resources across BC, and transition through the housing system through a no-barrier approach to receiving services. Referral processes will be streamlined and housing providers can directly connect seniors living in their buildings to services.

In addition SSSBC is spearheading a grassroots movement for a dedicated Ministry of Seniors in BC, to help integrate services with multi-year funding. SSSBC has rallied over 55 different stakeholders to back the petition.

A BC Ministry of Seniors would guide policy development to create and deliver programs and services that support the health and social wellbeing of seniors. The Ministry would promote the values of inclusion, diversity, and healthy active living to change perceptions about and to promote the benefits of age-friendly communities. The Ministry would also respond to the changing needs of seniors to ensure all seniors can live healthy and fulfilling lives as they age in their communities.

Already, solutions designed during the Solution Lab workshops are seeing action in the real world. For example, the movement to advocate for a BC Ministry of Seniors is a direct result of cross-sector cooperation facilitated by the Lab. With increased investment in housing stability for low-income senior renters, the health and wellbeing of vulnerable BC residents can be improved, leading to more sustainable and cohesive communities.

For more information on the Solutions Lab, visit: <https://www.seniorsservicessociety.ca/blog/seniors-housing-lab/>

LIVING WAGE EMPLOYER DESIGNATION

The Seniors Services Society of BC is pleased to announce we have been designated a Living Wage Employer by the Living Wage for Families Campaign!

A living wage is defined as "the hourly amount a family needs to cover basic expenses", such as food, clothing, rental housing, child care, and transportation. The Living Wage for Families Campaign "encourages employers to pay a living wage as well as advocates for government policies that would help families make ends meet".

The Seniors Services Society of BC has been certified by the campaign as such an employer. It is an honour to be recognised for taking care of our staff as well as the seniors in our community.

Thank you for this honour!

AGING IN THE RIGHT PLACE RESEARCH PROJECT

"Aging in the right place" is a concept that recognizes the importance of supporting seniors to live as long as possible in their homes and communities, while understanding that where a senior lives must meet their unique health and psychosocial needs.

The Seniors Services Society of BC (SSSBC) has embarked on an exciting new research project as a member of the *Aging in the Right Place Partnership*, a research collaborative of 70 academic, non-profit, government, and healthcare organizations in Montreal, Calgary, and Vancouver. The Partnership is federally funded as part of Canada's National Housing Strategy. During this project, researchers from Simon Fraser University (SFU) will be conducting an evaluation of SSSBC's Temporary Housing Program.

The Temporary Housing Program provides homeless and at-risk seniors with short-term accommodation and connects them to an outreach worker who supports them to secure permanent housing. To evaluate this program, researchers from SFU will interview program clients and staff, and will also conduct an in-depth review of the program's buildings, units, and statistics. The evaluation is expected to run from October 2020 through March 2021.

From this research, SSSBC will be able to identify strengths and gaps in the Temporary Housing Program that will guide improvements in service delivery. The findings from the research will also allow the Society to explore new avenues for expanding the capacity of the program to reach more vulnerable homeless and at-risk seniors across BC. And, through the Aging in the Right Place Partnership, SSSBC will be able to share findings from the evaluation with housing and service providers across Canada to inform the development of similar programs in other regions.



MEET THE BOARD

Philip Bonardelli, Treasurer



Q: How did you come to be involved with the Seniors Services Society of BC?

A: I lived in the same strata as Lorraine Logan, a former SSSBC board member. As Strata Treasurer there, I presented the budget in 2016. Lorraine said I did very well and that she had better things for me, were I interested. She introduced me to the Senior Services Society of BC and its vision and asked whether I would consider being part of it. I am shy, not much of an advocate, but felt this was somewhere I could contribute to my community. I stepped through a door into another world where needs can be met and people are helped.

Q: How long have you been a board member?

A: I joined the board in 2017, so, three years now.

Q: What inspired you to run for the board?

A: At first, I thought I was helping Lorraine. I know now I am part of a much broader community. This last time I ran, I did so to make a difference. Finances are an enabler of action, and I saw how we- the Board, staff, and volunteers- turned SSSBC from being a small society struggling for funds to something that enables us to meet the vision of a commonwealth: more specifically that seniors live in dignity with a good quality of life.

Q: Do you have any advice for future board members to help them be successful in the role?

A: Maybe give some tools and insights in the financial area that enables the Board, the CEO and all SSS employees and volunteers to do their part.

SANTA FOR SENIORS



Thank you to all the community members who supported our 2020 Santa for Seniors program!

This year has set new records for generosity, as the community raised over \$30,000 for low-income and isolated seniors to enjoy the holidays. Another \$4,075 came in the form of gift cards purchased from our Christmas trees at London Drugs on 6th Street and Sapperton Save-on Foods.

With these donations, the Seniors Services Society of BC was able to provide gift cards for 90 seniors, as well as 36 turkey dinners! Due to donations surpassing all expectations, the surplus funds will continue to support seniors into the new year under the Santa for Seniors donation groups of Groceries & Medicines, and Temporary Housing Necessities (household appliances, bedding, etc.)

In addition, an anonymous group of donors from North Vancouver sent in microwaves, coffee makers, kettles, and other appliances for seniors who are working to get back on their feet! The appliances in the photo below are just a sampling of the items these generous folks donated! A very big thank you to you all!

And again, thank you to all our supporters for making this holiday one of hope and cheer for the seniors in our community. Thank you all.



OUR DONORS

We couldn't do the work we do without our amazing donors. Thank you to all who supported us throughout 2020; you've had a huge impact on the lives of the seniors we serve, in a very difficult year. Below are individuals and organisations who contributed in the last four months of the year with a cash or in-kind donation of \$500 or more. Thank you, to ALL of our donors.



October - December 2020

\$500+

Astoria Retirement Residence
Sanjiv Bhalla
Boorman Archery Ltd.
Bosley's New West
Bria Communities
Centra Cares Foundation
Chantal Dawes
Jordan Fisher
latse Local 891
ICBC Communications & Community Affairs Dept.
IFD Corporation
Diana Martins-Garbutt
Dr. Jonathan A. Ng Inc.
Karla Diane Scribner
Alison Silgardo
Vancity Savings Credit
Visier Solutions Inc
Ketan Vohora

Kindness in words create confidence. Kindness in thinking creates profoundness. Kindness in giving creates love.

—Lao Tzu, Unknown (6th century – 4th century BC)
Registered Charity Number #80138 8547 RR0001