



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

June 1, 2020

***Isobel Mackenzie, B.C.'s Seniors Advocate Statement on Seniors' Week***

Victoria, B.C.—“Each year, the first week of June in British Columbia is declared Seniors’ Week. This is traditionally a time when we celebrate the contributions of those one million British Columbians who are over the age of 65. The week is generally filled with events that gather seniors together, with government officials cutting cakes and presenting recognition awards. My office is usually engaged in activities throughout the province and I generally issue a statement that speaks to the diversity of seniors and to the extraordinary contribution they make to our community through prolific volunteering and heroic caregiving.”

“The impact of COVID-19 has muted to some extent our sense of “celebration” as we launch Seniors’ Week in B.C. However, I think there is a reason to celebrate as enthusiastically as in past years. Although these are uncertain times, I find hope in how the public has shown that, when the chips are down, when seniors are in need, we mobilize as a community, a province and a country, and we say loud and clear to seniors, “You matter to us and we are here for you.”

“We saw this early in the pandemic with the spontaneous outpouring of a “good neighbour” response to ensuring that our elderly family, friends and neighbours had the groceries and medications they needed. When the province asked people to call 2-1-1 and volunteer to help seniors in their community, the phone lines momentarily crashed from the overwhelming response. Eight weeks later, we find ourselves with 10,000 volunteers throughout the province who have provided over 50,000 virtual visits and phone calls, almost 11,000 grocery deliveries and over 14,000 meal deliveries to seniors who are isolated at home.

“In addition, everywhere we turn, companies and community fundraisers are stepping up to provide tablets to care homes, allowing seniors to experience “virtual” visits and this commitment is ongoing.”

“Across the country, ordinary Canadians are stepping up and declaring that we need to take better care of frail seniors. Governments at the local, provincial, and federal levels have made loud and clear commitments to support seniors to be safe and well cared for.”

“Conversations that were previously restricted to the world of academics, health care professionals and advocates are now happening around dinner tables from Corner Brook to Nanaimo. This level of engagement and commitment is what we need and as we launch Seniors’ Week during a pandemic. Let us also celebrate this fact: we have shown that, as British Columbians, we clearly cherish and value the older adults in our lives, and we are committed to providing them with the best possible care and support.”

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