

## OLDER AND WISER: More awareness needed of useful local resources

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Hot off the press is the 2016 Seniors Directory – A Resource for Seniors Living on the North Shore. Let's check it out.

Produced by the North Shore News in partnership with North Shore Community Resources, the directory packs a lot into its 62 pages. Scanning the table of contents we find listings and information on finances; health and support services; housing services; legal resources and personal security; meal programs and shopping services; social, education and recreation programs; transportation; and volunteer opportunities. There's a handy service index in the directory, a new index for advertisers and a page to make notes.

The value of the seniors directory becomes apparent when we look at the results of the B.C. Seniors Survey: Bridging the Gaps recently released by the B.C. Seniors Advocate. The advocate undertook the survey to find out what seniors know about the services that are available to them. For those interested, the methodology used for the survey can be found on the Seniors Advocate's website, [seniorsadvocatebc.ca \(http://seniorsadvocatebc.ca\)](http://seniorsadvocatebc.ca).

Here's a sampling of what the advocate found. Senior homeowners with household incomes less than \$30,000 are least likely to be aware of the Provincial Property Tax Deferral program. Just over 60 per cent of low income seniors do not know about the MSP Premium Assistance program. Less than 70 per cent of respondents do not know about the Provincial Home Adaptations for Independence Program and only 42 per cent of seniors know about the SAFER program. That's a bit of a surprise.

The advocate notes that these are long-standing programs aimed directly at low-income seniors and yet a large number of those targeted seniors are not taking advantage of them. We know where, or more precisely who, to target our efforts to here.

The seniors advocate found that those least aware of the services available to them were in the oldest age bracket and had the lowest incomes. Of course those are the seniors who are often most vulnerable and in need of services to support and care for them.

The lessons here, as the advocate rightly observes, are twofold. Important information on services and programs and the benefits of those programs are not getting to those who need it most and it is not sufficient to just offer or provide supports. We also need to make sure that seniors are connected to those supports.

How can we do that? The seniors directory isn't much good if it is sitting on a shelf. We need to get a copy into the hands of as many seniors as we can. And for those of us who want to be able to help older family members, friends and acquaintances access resources, having the seniors directory in our own hands wouldn't be a bad idea either.

The 2016 edition of the seniors directory is now available at community centres and library branches across the North Shore, at the North Shore News office, or online at [nscr.bc.ca \(http://nscr.bc.ca\)](http://nscr.bc.ca).

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