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# Community-based seniors' services are vital

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Margaret Coates / North Shore News

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Older and  
**WISER**  
Margaret Coates



Have you ever wondered how much value there is in community-based seniors' services?

According to Raising the Profile, a group striving to get support for seniors programs and services, "there is a lack of recognition and understanding of the vital role the CBSS sector plays in contributing to seniors' overall wellness. Additionally, there is an obvious inequality in resources and funding to provide adequate seniors services across B.C. and a genuine need for more sustainability in order to address the growing challenges of an aging population, now and into the future.

Raising the profile of the CBSS sector is critical to increasing the provincial commitment that will make a real impact on the health and wellness of older adults across B.C."

In early November, a Provincial Summit on Aging explored the issues of funding, sustainability, capacity building and the particular role of CBSS in the community and for seniors themselves.

The primary objective of the summit was to raise the profile and increase the capacity of the CBSS sector which includes non-profit leaders and municipal seniors service providers.

The summit, which was supported by the City of Surrey, in partnership with the Raising the Profile Project, B.C. Ministry of Health, the Active Aging Research Team at the Centre for Hip Health and Mobility, United Way of the Lower Mainland, United Way's Better at Home Program, and the B.C. Recreation and Parks Association, was attended by executive directors, program providers, provincial organizations that support CBSS, community foundations, the private sector, municipal and provincial government representatives, seniors who are community leaders, and researchers working on seniors' wellness initiatives.

Centres and programs for seniors are absolutely necessary in our community because they function to support seniors' independence, decrease isolation, increase fitness, increase socialization, increase overall well-being, provide volunteer activities, and provide educational opportunities and much more.

On the North Shore, community-based seniors' services provide seniors with access to a range of low-barrier programs in these areas: nutritional supports, affordable housing, physical activity, education, recreation and creative arts programs, information, referral, advocacy and transportation.

For a list of programs and services see the seniors' directory put out by North Shore Community Resources Society and the North Shore News which can be found at [issuu.com/nsnfeatures/docs/seniors\\_directory\\_2017](http://issuu.com/nsnfeatures/docs/seniors_directory_2017).

Many people who have decided to attend a seniors program for whatever reason have remarked that doing so changed their lives for the better.

Overheard by one attendee at a seniors centre: "I decided to get myself off the couch and get to Silver Harbour, or I'd be isolated at home and probably get depressed."

It's not uncommon to hear, "This place (centre) saved my life."

I know pre-seniors or junior seniors often don't want to attend a seniors' centre because they think it only serves the purposes of a frail and aged person.

But I challenge some of you to think about what is being offered – pottery classes, Zumba, weaving, woodworking, computer classes, information about the community or travelling, and so much more.

You may not want to join in activities but you could volunteer for a committee, board or program.

Most seniors' centres and programs have a huge volunteer contingent in order to meet the needs of the community of seniors. Funding for seniors' centres and programs often comes from municipal governments, community foundations, the United Way, local businesses/donors, community gaming grants, the federal New Horizons Program, regional health authorities and the Ministry of Health.

Also, some centres are supported by members and individuals.

Despite these sources, funding is challenging for most groups and organizations – the pie is small and seems to be shrinking all the time, competition for scarce resources is sometimes fierce and the process for getting funds is often time consuming and complex.

It's not unheard of that obtaining a grant for a couple of thousand dollars is a very long and complicated process.

But seniors' centres and programs need the support of communities, individuals and government. In order to draw attention to CBSS, the Provincial Summit on Aging drew up a declaration, signed by key stakeholders and decision makers that

recognizes the importance of community-based health promotion and prevention work, and the accomplishments and key strategies that continue to strengthen the CBSS sector.

This document can be found at [seniorsraisingtheprofile.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Summit-Declaration-Final.pdf](https://seniorsraisingtheprofile.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Summit-Declaration-Final.pdf).

*Margaret Coates is the co-ordinator of Lionsview Seniors' Planning Society. She has lived on the North Shore for 48 years and has worked for and with seniors for 20 of those years. Ideas for future columns are welcome Email: [lions\\_view@telus.net](mailto:lions_view@telus.net).*

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