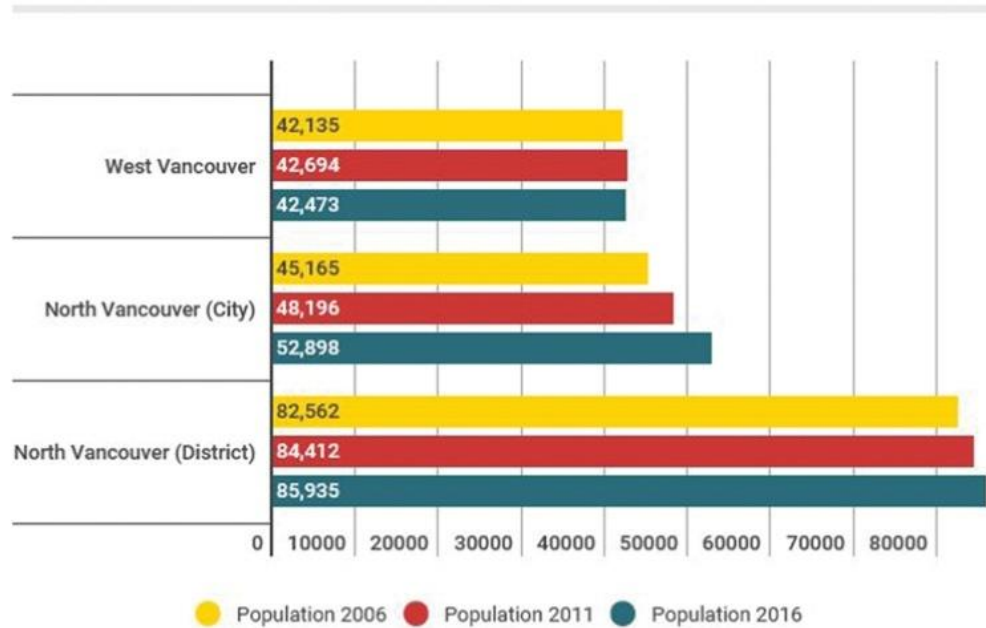


Day of Older Persons offers a chance for reflection

Margaret Coates / Contributing writer

SEPTEMBER 25, 2019 07:03 PM

North Shore population changes



Source: Statistics Canada

The population of B.C. seniors is expected to rise sharply over the next 22 years.[graphic Infogr.am](#)

International Day of Older Persons is coming up next month.

On Oct. 1, we celebrate older adults and senior citizens all over the world. The World Health Organization, which is the co-ordinating authority for United Nations health-related issues, states that almost 700 million people are now over the age of 60 – and by 2050, two-billion people, more than 20 per cent of the world's population, will be 60 or older.

On the North Shore, there were 35,385 people over the age of 65, or 19.5% of the 181,306 total population, according to Statistics Canada's 2016 census. It seems the North Shore's senior population has already almost reached the 20-per-cent proportion projected for the world by 2050. The government of British Columbia's BC Stats report from 2018 states that the seniors' population in the province is projected to grow by 75 per cent by the year 2041, with seniors representing more than a quarter of the people living in the province at the end of the projection period.

WHO states that the increase in the number of older people is very rapid and requires close attention to the particular needs and challenges faced by older persons. But just as important, the organization states, is to recognize the incredible contribution older people are still making to society. Older people are not, as many want us to believe, a "drain" on society in terms of health care and the economy.

In this column I have often written about the various needs, challenges, issues and concerns facing older adults, including health and wellness issues particular to older adults such as falls prevention, healthy eating and the value of exercise for overall well-being. I have written about financial issues such as end of life concerns and monetary concerns; how to age in place and the immense amount of caregiving hours performed by seniors. I have noted the effect of social isolation on seniors' ability to age well (remember, the effects of isolation are equated with the harm that smoking 15 cigarettes a day can cause).

The contributions that seniors make to society have been noted as well. I have written about volunteering, with seniors contributing extraordinary amounts of hours, seniors continued contribution to the economy through taxes and transfer of wealth, their buying power (what would many restaurants do without the "lunch bunch" of seniors throughout the week), and endless hours of free care given to loved ones and friends. Also, many seniors remain in the work force after the age of 65, thus contributing to the economy. According to the Statistics Canada website's Working Seniors in Canada section, in 2015, "one in five Canadians aged 65 and older, or nearly 1.1 million seniors, reported working during the year. This is the highest proportion recorded since the 1981 Census."

Let's also not forget the contributions that seniors gave to the overall fabric of Canadian society in the way of civic duty, creation and fostering of values, building of community and preserving our rich history.

WHO has been actively involved in promoting public awareness and attention on the International Day of Older Persons. Discussions are centered on topics such as: aging populations and the provision of adequate health care for aged persons; volunteer work; social care; and ways to be more inclusive of older persons in the workforce. Its theme for 2019 is the journey to age equality, with one of the aims being to "draw attention to the existence of old age inequalities, preventing old age inequalities and exploring societal and structural changes around old age."

Activities around the province are also being planned to celebrate the International Day of Older Persons. One such activity is being held on the North Shore at Silver Harbour Seniors' Activity Centre, organized by the Municipal Pension Retirees' Association. Silver Harbour will be presenting B.C.'s Seniors Advocate, Isobel Mackenzie, who will speak on seniors' issues, including affordable housing, transportation, and aging in place. David Watt, chair of MPRA, says that he is "pleased that his organization and Silver Harbour can collaborate in bringing Isobel Mackenzie to the North Shore as a way to celebrate the International Day of the Older Person."

This free event will be held on Oct. 1, at 1:30 p.m. at Silver Harbour – so come out and hear Mackenzie speak.

Seniors are an important part of our community. Let's be mindful of their accomplishments and continued contributions.