

New Plan for Seniors Outlined

By David Hogben, Vancouver Sun

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Healthy Living and Sport Minister Mary Polak acknowledged Friday the province needs to improve support for seniors who need help to continue living at home, rather than being forced into long-term care.

Polak made the statement after Dr. Patricia Baird, the former chairwoman of the premier's council on aging and senior's issues, highlighted the need for better support for seniors.

"Providing a few hours of help each week can make the difference between being able to stay at home or needing to be transferred to a residential facility," Baird told a news conference called to unveil the province's strategy for coping with an aging population. Polak agreed such a program could ultimately save taxpayers money.

Expanding the availability of home support would cost money, but could save much more by reducing the heavier burden of funding long-term care facilities.

Polak said determining how to expand home care for seniors would be tackled by a new Seniors' Healthy Living Secretariat, which will be responsible for developing information resources for seniors and monitoring progress on seniors' issues.

Polak told reporters the province has developed four cornerstones: developing "age-friendly communities," supporting volunteerism, promoting healthy lifestyles and supporting older workers.

Polak said the province must continue planning for the province's rapidly aging population.

"We are facing a massive demographic shift," she told reporters at the South Granville Seniors Centre.

Despite criticizing lack of progress in improving home care for seniors, Baird said she supported the province's initiatives on preparing for the aging population.

"I am very pleased about everything in the framework," said Baird, whose council studied issues arising from an aging population and made recommendations to the government.

Art Kube, president of the Council of Senior Citizens' Organizations of B.C., said after the news conference that his group supports universal home care for seniors.

"It will reduce health care costs in the long run," Kube said.

Courtesy: <http://www.globalaging.org/elderrights/world/2008/new.htm>