

Ida Chong

Message *from the* Minister of Community Services, the **Honourable Ida Chong**

As a Fellow of the Certified General Accountants of British Columbia, I think of myself as an allied professional to the BC Notaries.

I very much appreciate the image of the scrivener—the craftsperson who makes sure written documents flow smoothly.

As Minister with responsibility for seniors' and women's issues, I am keenly aware of the importance of making certain that residents have quick, seamless access to information about available services and supports, as we continue to ensure BC is the Best Place on Earth.

One of our government's highest priorities is comprehensive planning for an older population. BC's demographics are changing. In 25 years, almost 1 in 4 British Columbians will be over age 65. How to best anticipate the needs and impacts of this "silver tsunami" is a matter of considerable interest.

That is why, in 2005, our government proactively established the Premier's Council on Aging and Seniors Issues. The Council's final report, "Aging Well in British Columbia," was presented to government this past December, identifying some key areas for action to support older people's quality of life.

The report is the result of submissions and input from hundreds of people and organizations across BC. It was inspiring to be part of the

process that brought a groundswell of response. As one participant noted, "Big change is coming, whether we want it or not. We need to seize this opportunity and adapt successfully..."

Seizing the opportunity is what we are doing—acting on Council's number one recommendation, tabling legislation eliminating mandatory retirement in British Columbia. The time for this has come, giving seniors the choice and dignity they deserve, to work as they choose, and providing our economy with the continued support of a skilled and valued workforce.

At the same time, we are developing an action plan to respond to the report's other recommendations, while we continue to make great strides in other priority areas.

We are strengthening and modernizing services to help seniors live independently with new residential care beds, assisted living units, home support, and improved social housing. Through ActNow BC, we are encouraging seniors to stay active and make healthy lifestyle choices. We are also working collaboratively across the health care system to better manage chronic diseases and the care of frail, elderly individuals.

With our support of transportation options—our bus pass program and funding for BCAA's Mature Drivers program—seniors are able to participate more fully and safely in their communities. In working with local governments and offering a wide variety of resources, we're creating more walkable, accessible neighbourhoods.



This small sampling of the vast range of supports for our older citizens demonstrates BC's commitment to building the best system of support in Canada for seniors.

As we look into the not too distant future, we are all challenged to bring a new view of aging and a new role for older people in our province. As Minister responsible for seniors' issues, I look forward to this, knowing we will be richer for the enhanced contribution and involvement of older British Columbians. ▲

Ida Chong was appointed Minister of Community Services and Minister Responsible for Seniors' and Women's Issues on June 16, 2005.

She previously served as Minister of Advanced Education and Minister of State for Women's and Seniors' Services. Ms. Chong, a native of Victoria, was first elected in the riding of Oak Bay—Gordon Head in 1996 and was reelected in 2001 and 2005.

Ms. Chong proudly retains her credentials as a Certified General Accountant. She has won several awards for her work in this field for service at a chapter level, as well as service on a provincial committee. In 1999, she received the CGA Community Service Award and has since been named a Fellow of the Certified General Accountants of BC, a national award for distinguished service.