VICTORIA – With more people than ever to qualify for assistance with Medical Services Plan premiums next year, B.C. seniors advocate Isobel Mackenzie joined Health Minister Terry Lake to remind seniors to check if they are eligible.

A recent survey by the seniors advocate showed just 39% of seniors knew about MSP premium assistance and 66% pay full premiums when the number should be fewer than 50%. The Province is also launching an information campaign to help raise awareness with seniors about premium assistance.

“For many of our loved ones – our parents and grandparents – MSP premium assistance can make a difference in their financial picture by reducing the amount they pay each month,” said Lake. “Through work by the province’s seniors advocate, we now know many seniors who could be receiving assistance with premiums have not applied. We want to ensure everyone who could be benefiting from this assistance does.”

Budget 2016 announced changes to MSP and premium assistance effective Jan. 1, 2017 which will help lower-income families, individuals and seniors with the cost of living. The Province is investing an additional $70 million annually to enhance premium assistance. About 335,000 people will see their premiums reduced, and an additional 45,000 people will no longer pay premiums at all in 2017.

“I welcome the opportunity to work with the government to increase awareness of the subsidy for MSP that is available for low income seniors,” said Mackenzie. “When you are struggling financially every penny counts and this subsidy will be very meaningful.”

As a result of enhancing premium assistance in 2017, a single senior earning up to $45,000 may qualify for reduced premiums. A senior couple earning up to $51,000 may qualify for reduced premiums. This translates into a savings of up to $480 per year for a senior couple and $324 per year for a single senior.

“MSP premium assistance can make a big difference for any British Columbian who is in financial need,” said Parliamentary Secretary for Seniors Darryl Plecas. “Prudent fiscal planning means we’re able to invest in priority programs like premium assistance for the families and individuals in B.C. who need it most including older British Columbians on a fixed income.”

A calculator is also available on the government website to help British Columbians estimate whether they could qualify for premium assistance now and in 2017. This can be found at: https://extranet.gov.bc.ca/forms/gov/health/msppa.html

MSP premium assistance is based on a household’s net income, adjusted for age, family size...
and disability status. Currently, a single senior can qualify for assistance with net income of $33,000 a year or less. For a single senior with income less than $25,000, the premium is waived. In 2017, a single senior could qualify for premium assistance with net income of up to $45,000 a year, and pay no premiums with net income less than $27,000. These thresholds are higher for single couples.

A one-time application must be filled out specifically for the premium assistance program. Retroactive assistance may be provided for up to the previous six years.

Once the MSP changes from Budget 2016 are implemented Jan. 1, 2017, nearly two million British Columbians will pay no premiums.

The premium assistance program is just one support for lower income seniors. The recently released 11th edition of the BC Seniors’ Guide provides information on a variety of programs and supports to help seniors in communities throughout B.C.

Learn more:

For more information on MSP premium assistance, visit: http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/health-drug-coverage/msp/bc-residents/premiums/regular-premium-assistance

For further information on provincial supports for seniors, visit: http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/family-social-supports/seniors


For more information on the seniors advocate, visit: https://www.seniorsadvocatebc.ca/

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