



NANAIMO FAMILY LIFE ASSOCIATION

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Nanaimo Family Life Association has launched its SHINE (Seniors Housing Information and Navigation Ease) program, a pilot project aimed at addressing the vulnerability of local seniors by providing information and advice that will help seniors in their housing search.

Canadian seniors experience multiple barriers in terms of accessing age appropriate housing. With large numbers of our aging population on a fixed income, COVID-19 has drastically intensified the need for social programming in areas of food security, mental health, and housing.

While Nanaimo is a diverse and active city, seniors continue to experience systemic barriers in accessing the means to finding safe and secure housing. Finding long term housing that is affordable, safe, and adaptive to changing physical needs is incredibly challenging.

A chaotic rental market combined with low wages/pensions, precarious employment, and limited affordable housing options have created a situation where many of Nanaimo's seniors find themselves at risk of homelessness. With one-bedroom rental units averaging \$1100 per month many seniors are paying over 70% of their monthly income just on housing alone.

Although the SHINE Program does not directly provide housing, Seniors' Housing Navigator, Kirsten Brooker, hopes to reduce systemic cracks by providing local seniors with much-needed support in navigating housing agencies like BC Housing, advising on the BC Residential Tenancy Act, and eligibility for federal and provincial government housing supports, in addition to providing referrals to other needed seniors programs.

Kirsten Brooker states, "Every senior deserves peace of mind when it comes to housing. Accessible and affordable housing is the number one priority for many of our vulnerable seniors. The SHINE program, while not a housing provider, will actively work to secure, maintain and advocate for, appropriate housing for all our clients."

The Nanaimo Family Life Association adds the SHINE to its long list of programming aimed at supporting the health and independence of local seniors using a "housing first" philosophy, prioritizing the principle of aging in-community and "aging in place", which recognizes that as seniors age, their needs and capabilities change. Appropriate housing must allow for such changes.

SHINE is being delivered in partnership with the Seniors Support Services Society, which has over fifty years of experience providing services supporting seniors independent living. To learn more about the program please visit NFLABC.org or call the NFLA office at 250-754-3331 and ask to speak to Seniors Housing Navigator, Kirsten Brooker.