



Financial Benefits

British Columbia

October 2011

Important Information

This document has been prepared by Seniors Benefits Program from publicly available sources. It is intended to give you a summary of benefits that may be available to you for information purposes only. Please be cautioned that it may not be complete or accurate. Always check for available benefits and your eligibility by contacting the government sources.



Federal Benefits

Old Age Security, Guaranteed Income
Supplement, Spouse's Allowance,
Widow's Allowance

Canada Pension Benefits – Retirement,
Disability, Survivor's and Death Benefits



Old Age Security (OAS)

- Eligibility
 - Canadian citizens or legal residents currently living in Canada, who are 65 or older, and have lived in Canada for at least 10 years as an adult.
 - Canadian citizens or legal residents currently living outside Canada, who are 65 or older, and have lived in Canada for at least 20 years as an adult.
- Benefit
 - Maximum monthly benefit \$537.97



Old Age Security (OAS)

- Application
 - Complete application form at least 6 months before you turn 65.
 - Human Resource Centre (1 800 277 9914)
 - Once approved, a partial OAS pension will not be increased following additional years of residence in Canada.
- Documentation
 - Birth certificate
 - Citizenship or immigration documents
- May need to be paid back as other annual net income exceeds \$67,668 ("claw back").



Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS)

- Eligibility
 - Low income seniors living in Canada who are receiving the OAS pension (maximum annual net income threshold of \$16,320 for a single person).
- Benefit
 - Maximum monthly benefit of \$729.44 for a pensioner and \$483.68 for spouse.
- Application
 - Same as OAS form – indicate you are applying for supplement as well.
- Documentation
 - Need to renew every year.
 - Automatic renewal if income tax form is filed on a timely basis.



Spouse's Allowance

- Eligibility
 - Low income seniors
 - Your spouse receives OAS and GIS
 - You are 60 to 64 years old
 - You are a Canadian citizen or a legal resident at the time your Allowance is approved or when you last lived here
 - You have lived in Canada for at least 10 years as an adult
- Benefit
 - Maximum monthly benefit \$1,021.65, with maximum annual net income threshold of \$30,192



OAS Allowance

- Application
 - Human Resource Centre (1 800 277 9914)
- Documentation
 - Birth certificate
 - Marriage certificate
 - Citizenship or immigration documents
 - Need to renew every year
 - Automatic renewal if income tax form is filed on a timely basis



Allowance for the Survivor

- Eligibility
 - Low income seniors
 - You are 60 to 64 years old
 - You are a Canadian citizen or a legal resident at the time your Allowance is approved or when you last lived here
 - Your spouse or common law partner has died
 - You have lived in Canada for at least 10 years as an adult
- Benefit
 - Maximum monthly benefit \$1,143.78 with maximum annual net income threshold of \$21,984



Allowance for the Survivors

- Application
 - Human Resource Centre (1 800 277 9914)
- Documentation
 - Birth certificate
 - Marriage certificate
 - Citizenship or immigration documents
 - Death certificate
 - Need to renew every year
 - Automatic renewal if income tax form is filed on a timely basis



Canada Pension Plan (CPP)

- Eligibility - Retirement
 - People who have made at least one valid contribution to the Plan, and
 - You are at least 65 years old, or
 - You are between 60 and 64 years old and have substantially or completely stopped working (Flexible Retirement)
- Benefit
 - Maximum monthly benefit \$960.00



Canada Pension Plan (CPP)

- Application must be complete at least 6 months before you want your pension to begin
 - Human Resource Centre (1 800 277 9914)
- Documentation
 - Birth certificate or
 - Two of Citizenship, Immigration documents, Employment record or Medical record



Canada Pension Plan (CPP)

- Disability (maximum \$1,153.37 monthly)
 - Disabled contributors and their dependent children
 - Subject to minimum contribution requirements
 - Must have worked at least 4 out of last 6 years
- Survivors
 - Spouse must have contributed at least 6 years for the surviving spouse to receive the benefits
 - (maximum \$576.00 monthly; \$ 529.09 if under 65)
 - Surviving children (maximum \$214.85 monthly)
 - Death benefit (lump sum \$2,500)
- Other features
 - Pension sharing scheme
 - Child rearing drop-out provisions
 - Credit splitting



Changes

- An employee who contributes to the CPP, whether you are just starting your career or you are planning to retire soon;
- A self-employed person who contributes to the CPP; or
- Between the ages of 60 and 70 and you work while receiving your CPP retirement pension (or if you work outside of Quebec while receiving a QPP retirement pension).
- Will not be affected by changes if CPP retirement pension commenced before December 31, 2010, and remain out of the work force.



Pension Increase After 65

- **Before the changes**, CPP retirement pension increased by 0.5% for each month after age 65 (and up to age 70) that was delayed receiving it. This meant that, if you started receiving your CPP pension at 70, your pension amount was 30% more than it would have been if you had taken it at 65.
- **From 2011 to 2013**, the Government of Canada will gradually increase this percentage from 0.5% per month (6% per year) to 0.7% per month (8.4% per year).
- This means that, by **2013**, if you start receiving your CPP pension at the age of 70, your pension amount will be 42% more than it would have been if you had taken it at 65



Pension Decrease if Taken Prior to Age 65

- **Before the changes**, CPP retirement pension was reduced by 0.5% for each month before age 65 that you began receiving it. This meant that, if you started receiving your CPP pension at 60, your pension amount was 30% less than it would have been if you had waited to take it at 65.
- **From 2012 to 2016**, the Government will gradually change this early pension reduction from 0.5% to 0.6% per month.
- This means that, **by 2016**, if you start receiving your CPP pension at the age of 60, your pension amount will be 36% less than it would have been if you had taken it at 65.



CPP Contributions - Changes

- **Before the change**, if you were receiving a CPP retirement pension and working, regardless of your age, you did not pay CPP contributions.
- **Starting in 2012**, if you are under age 65 and you work while receiving your CPP retirement pension, you and your employer will have to make mandatory CPP contributions.
 - These contributions go towards the new Post-Retirement Benefit (PRB), which is effective January 1 of the year following your PRB contribution. This additional benefit will be added to your current retirement benefit, gradually increasing your retirement income.
- If you are age 65 to 70 and you work while receiving your CPP retirement pension, you can choose to make CPP contributions.
 - These contributions will increase your CPP retirement benefits.



Receive Pension Without Any Work Interruption

- **Before the change**, if you decided to take your CPP retirement pension before age 65, you had to either stop working or significantly reduce your earnings for at least two months. This requirement was called the “work cessation test.” After this two-month period, you could return to work or start earning more.
- **Starting in 2012**, the work cessation test will no longer apply. This means that you will be able to take your CPP retirement pension as early as age 60 without having to stop working or reduce your earnings.



Planning for Your Retirement

- Changes to the CPP affect you will depend on your age, your work history, and when you plan to retire.
- CPP is designed to replace about 25% of your average pre-retirement employment earnings up to a maximum amount, is one part of your retirement plan.
- The other components of retirement income include the Government of Canada's Old Age Security (OAS) pension, employer pension plans, and personal savings and investments.



Information

Service Canada has online resources, including the Canadian Retirement

Income Calculator, to help you plan your future.

- Click servicecanada.gc.ca
- Call Toll-free in Canada and the United States: 1-800-277-9914
- If you have a hearing or speech impairment and use a teletypewriter (TTY): 1-800-255-4786
- From outside Canada and the United States (collect calls accepted): 613-990-2244
- Visit a Service Canada Centre



Housing Programs (CMHC)

- Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RRAP)
 - Forgivable home repair loans of up to \$24,000 for certain home repairs, home modifications for disabled residents (wheelchair accessibility, allergy related modifications, age related disabilities, and hearing or sight impairments), and creation of secondary suites for a senior citizen or a person with disability
 - Loan does not have to be repaid if property is occupied for periods of 1 to 5 years after modification
- Emergency Repair Program (ERP)
 - Helps low income homeowners in rural areas with emergency repairs to keep their homes safe
 - Grants of up to \$6,000 for repairs such as heating systems, chimneys, doors, windows, etc.



Housing Programs (CMHC)

- Home Adaptation for Seniors Independence (HASI)
 - Forgivable loans of up to \$3,500 for low income seniors for minor home adaptations for age-related difficulties
 - Handrails, grab bars, deadbolts, lowering kitchen cupboards, adding shelving at a convenient height, additional light fixtures, additional electrical outlets, etc.
 - Loan does not have to be repaid if property is occupied for six months after modification

CMHC Contact: 1 877 499 7245 toll free



Tax Benefits

- Tax return preparation
- Age amount
- Pension income amount
- Disability amount
- Caregivers amount
- Medical expenses
- Attendant or full-time care in a nursing home
- Amounts transferred from spouse
 - Age amount, pension income amount, disability amount
- GST and Property and Sales tax credits
- Automatic renewal of GIS income

Provincially Administered Programs

- Financial
 - Senior's Supplement
 - Sales Tax Credit
 - Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance
- Health
- Housing
- Transportation

Financial

- Senior's Supplement
 - If the income level of an eligible senior's total income falls below the level guaranteed by the province, the supplement is provided to make up the difference. The maximum monthly supplement will be \$49.30 for single seniors and \$120.50 for senior couples and is paid automatically to eligible recipients. Seniors do not have to apply.

- Sales Tax Credit
 - Paid yearly to low income senior who has completed income tax return and income have income meet the threshold income level

Financial

Ministry of Social Development

- Seniors who are not receiving OAS/GIS
- Based on income, assets and shelter costs
 - A federal-provincial agreement allows the Provincial government to recover income assistance payments from sponsors who have defaulted on sponsorship agreements they signed in support of their immigrant family members

Health

Medical Services Plan

- Medical care provided by both
 - Medical Services Plan (MSP)
 - PharmaCare programs
- Medical Services Only (MSO)
 - Program may pay for some expenses which are not covered by MSP or PharmaCare for former recipients of income or disability assistance who leave assistance at age 65 for federal supports.

Health

Medical Services Plan

- Medical Services Plan
 - Subsidized premiums or premium waiver for low income seniors
 - Gold Care Card
 - Fair PharmaCare Plan
 - Homecare at Home
 - Travel discounts

Health

Medical Services Plan

- Medical Services Plan
 - Entire cost of most doctors' and surgeons' services
 - Dental surgery done in a hospital
 - Partial cost of other services
 - Usually pay a monthly fee for MSP insurance
 - May get assistance with the fee if one has low income and is Canadian citizen or have been a permanent resident for at least a year.

Gold CareCard

- Will receive it if 65 or older and covered by MSP insurance
- Medical treatment or have prescriptions filled
- Proof of identification for being a senior and resident of BC

PharmaCare

- Assist with the cost of prescription medicines. (It is also called Fair PharmaCare)
- The program does not pay for non-prescription drugs or vitamins
- The portion of the cost that one has to pay for prescriptions depends on income
- The lower your income, the more the government will pay towards the cost

Application for PharmaCare

- Must have a CareCard, prove income, and apply
- Tax returns will be reviewed for eligibility purposes



Healthcare at Home

- Nursing care in home
- Physical therapy (also called physiotherapy)
- Home support workers (help with baths, meals, and housework)
- Care from adult day centres (places where seniors who need supervision can go during the day)
- Respite care (sending a worker to home to give caregivers some time off)

Homecare at Home

- Residential care (a place to live when one can no longer take care of himself/herself at home)
- Palliative care (help and medical care for someone who prefers to die at home)
- May have to pay a fee for some of these services.
- Depend on income and circumstances

HOUSING

- Seniors with low incomes who are able to live without any support services or who can continue to live independently with assistance of home care can apply.

Shelter Aid For Elderly Renters (SAFER)

- 60 or older
- Pay rent for your home
- More than 30% of total income is used towards rent
- Not receiving income assistance
- Canadian or Landed Immigrant with residency of 10 years in Canada and at least last 12 months in B.C.

Provincial Home Owner Grant

- Senior living in own home and paying property taxes on the home, are eligible for the grant
- The grant reduces the amount of property taxes one pays and the amount of the reduction is larger for seniors.

Home and Community Care

- Home and community care services provide a range of health care and support services for eligible residents who have acute, chronic, palliative or rehabilitative health care needs.
- In-home services, for eligible clients, include home care nursing, rehabilitation, home support and palliative care. Community-based services include adult day programs, meal programs, as well as assisted living, residential care services and hospice care

Transportation

- Transit fare discount (Gold CareCard)
- Bus pass program
- Handy Dart Custom Transit
- Taxi Saver Program
- Free and subsidized ferries
- Automobile insurance discounts
- Reduced fees for driver's license renewals and BC identification cards

Benefits Information

- BC Seniors Line
1 800 465 4911 toll free
1 250 952 1742 in Victoria
- BC Seniors Website
www.gov.bc.ca/seniors

Reference Document: BC Seniors' Guide – 9th edition



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