



# Seniors Resource Centre and Info Line (Prince George Council of Seniors)

<https://www.pgcoss.ca/>

## PROGRAM PROFILE: OVERVIEW

June 2017

<b>Type of Program</b>	Information, Referral and Advocacy
<b>Organization</b>	Prince George Council of Seniors
<b>Community Served</b>	Prince George
<b>Program Goal</b>	Provide information, empowerment, and advocacy for seniors
<b>Services Provided</b>	Information and referral, Assistance with filling out forms to apply for benefits, Income taxes
<b>Target Population</b>	Seniors 55+ and caregivers
<b>Staffing</b>	PGCOS Executive Director, 2 part-time administrative staff, 6-10 volunteers a week
<b>Program Strengths</b>	Offer both a Seniors Resource Centre and Seniors Info Line, Seniors Info Line allows many seniors in surrounding communities to access the service, Host annual Seniors Information Fair

## Program Description

The Prince George Council of Seniors (PGCOS) provides services, empowerment and advocacy for seniors in Prince George. PGCOS is a non-profit umbrella organization comprised of more than 20 member organizations such as senior centres, retiree associations, veteran organizations, and seniors housing, which together represents over 3,200 seniors. One of their central programs is operating a Seniors Resource Centre and Info Line that provides information and referral services for seniors (55+) and their caregivers. Introduced in 2002, this program is available weekdays (9am-3pm) through drop-ins at the Seniors Resource Centre or phone calls to the Info Line. Seniors get in touch with questions on a variety of topics including federal and provincial benefits, municipal services, community events, health, housing, income taxes and transportation. The Seniors Resource Centre provides specific assistance for seniors applying for government benefits and filing their income taxes. After-hours callers to the Info Line are able to leave messages and their call will be returned during open hours. As part of their outreach work, PGCOS does presentations in the community (examples of topics include transportation services and government benefits) and coordinates an annual Seniors Information Fair in August as a part of the BC Northern Exhibition. This “fair within the fair” includes displays and information from local community organizations and business on topics and services relevant to seniors.

PGCOS has a very small staff complement consisting of an executive director and 2 part-time administrative assistants, who oversee all the work of the organization, including the Resource Centre and Info Line. They also currently host a social worker practicum student who helps with the information and referral service. Over the course of a week, about 6-10 volunteers provide the information and referral services, and the staff step in to cover shifts when volunteers are unavailable. Volunteers receive training, primarily through on-the-job shadowing of other volunteers or staff members, after which they are supported by a mentor for their first few shifts. Bi-monthly sessions provide ongoing training opportunities for volunteers on related topics such as active listening and depression.

PGCOS receives most of its funding from an annual Community Gaming Grant, with other support coming from Northern Health Authority (for the Seniors Information Line) and the City of Prince George (which covers for their rent 10 months of the year). Other sources of funding include donations, fundraising and small project grants.

## **Impact**

The PGCOS Seniors Resource Centre and Seniors Info Line empower seniors by helping them to access information and navigate health authority and bureaucratic systems. Each year, approximately 3,000 people come in person to access the PGCOS Seniors Resource Centre and 3,000 people call into the Seniors Info Line. In addition, the annual Seniors Information Fair includes over 60 exhibitors and approximately 2,000 seniors attend the fair each year.

## **Strengths and Challenges**

PGCOS unique umbrella structure (comprising of member organizations) ensures they are well-connected to seniors and other organizations in the community, which is essential for a service providing information, referrals and resources to seniors.

The Resource Centre and Info Line provide services to seniors not only in Prince George, but also in many of the surrounding smaller rural communities such as Quesnel, Vanderhoof and McBride, who often lack access to services and resources.

As a small organization reliant primarily on grant funding, PGCOS has encountered challenges in regards to capacity and funding stability in recent years. Unfortunately, they have received reduced Gaming Grant funding over the past few years, meaning they have had to cut back on administrative staff and move to a smaller location. They also struggle to maintain adequate volunteer levels to staff the Info Line and Resource Centre as often as they would like. Adequate and stable funding is necessary to ensure the success of PGCOS and their information and referral program.