



COSCO News

Council of Senior Citizens' Organizations of B.C.

Election Edition



www.coscobc.org

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<https://www.facebook.com/COSCOBC/>

COSCO BC is the voice of BC Seniors. We represent approximately 80,000 seniors and 70 affiliated seniors' groups in all parts of British Columbia.

Here is what seniors want to see in 2025 election platforms:

1. Develop and implement a National Seniors Strategy to ensure older adults can age in place in age-friendly communities

Establish a Minister for Seniors to develop a Seniors Strategy that addresses the continuum of community health care services, including home care, along with housing, transportation and income security needs of older adults so they may live in age-friendly and dementia-friendly communities. Affordable and accessible transportation, together with seniors' centres that provide access to information, programs and social connections all work together to alleviate the social isolation. Social isolation leads to poor health and increased demands on our health care system. Just as we invest in schools or roads for all, we must invest in environments that recognize and enable the contributions and autonomy of older persons.

COSCO BC asks all parties to support the establishment of a Minister of Seniors and the development and implementation of a National Seniors Strategy.

2. Implement an increase to the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS)

Low-income seniors face impossible challenges in making ends meet. These increases of about \$40 per month for single seniors offer modest budget relief. Providing benefit increases through the OAS/GIS program ensures predictable coordination with other benefit programs that are stacked onto the GIS.

COSCO BC asks all parties to commit to a long overdue increase to the Guaranteed Income Supplement annually of at least \$500 for single seniors and \$750 for couples starting at age 65.

3. Increase the Canada Pension Plan (CPP) and Quebec Pension Plan (QPP) Survivor benefit by 25%

Support for this increase would provide more than 1.3 million widows and widowers with up to about \$2,200 per year. The majority of those benefiting will be older single women whose incomes usually decline substantially following the death of their spouse.

COSCO BC asks all parties to commit to working with the provinces and territories to increase the Survivor Benefit.

4. Build more social housing

Affordable, accessible housing must be a key part of a seniors strategy. Rents are generally the largest part of a senior renter's budget. Affordable housing defined as rents geared to 30% of gross income contributes to overall economic security. It reduces demands on the health and social services sector and averts the tragic increase in homelessness among older adults.

COSCO BC asks all parties to commit to provide funds to provinces, territories and municipalities to build affordable social housing.

5. Provide a funding model for public transit

An integrated transportation network is essential to provide reliable, safe, environmentally responsible, accessible transportation to support ageing-in-place. There is also a need for increased public funding to build and operate these crucial services. Climate-friendly public transit is needed to enable older adults to shop, attend medical and other appointments and participate in community activities whether they live in urban or rural areas.

COSCO BC asks all parties to commit to a national commission including provinces, territories and transit agencies to develop a resilient and equitable funding model for public transit.

COSCO BC and its affiliated members are grateful to live, work, and be in relation with people from traditional and unceded territories, across all regions of British Columbia. We are committed to reconciliation, decolonization, and building relationships in our communities

6. Develop the Safe Long Term Care Act for Canada and support the implementation of the 2023 National Long Term Care standards

Standards are a necessary first step to improve health outcomes for older adults in Long Term Care, and funding is needed to fully implement them. Funding must be contingent upon effective monitoring of service delivery and health outcomes, together with requirements for regular inspections and enforcement. Continued collaboration with, and funding for, provincial and territorial governments to develop and enact the Safe Long Term Care Act is needed to provide a sustainable framework for these initiatives.

***COSCO BC asks** all parties to commit to fund the full implementation of National Long Term Care standards through legislation.*

7. Continue to implement and expand a universal, public, single-payer, national Pharmacare program

Negotiate funded agreements for pharmacare with all provinces, territories and coordinate implementation with the Canada Drug Agency. Expanded funding is required to cover the costs of medications needed to manage other chronic conditions and enable seniors with limited incomes to pay for them. Inappropriate medication use is also a concern to seniors. Undermedication due to the inability to pay may result in inadequately treated illness and ultimately increased costs to the health care system.

***COSCO BC asks** all parties to commit to fully implement and expand the universal, public, single-payer national Pharmacare program to improve the health of Canadians.*

8. Expand the Canada Dental Care Plan as a medically necessary service and include those with inadequate coverage

Older adults with good teeth are generally healthier, require fewer health care services, are more socially connected and enjoy a higher quality of life. While COSCO applauds the implementation of the Canadian Dental Care Plan, a crucial gap has emerged. Many seniors who have access to limited or unaffordable coverage through their existing plans are unable to access the new benefits.

***COSCO BC asks** all parties to commit to give older adults the choice of program that works best for their situation and to include Dental Care within the public universal health care system as a medically necessary service.*

9. Fund health care supplies for seniors including eye care, hearing aids and mobility aids

Similarly to the rationale for pharmacare and dental care, social isolation and adverse health outcomes increase when older adults can't see, can't hear and can't get around. Funding a program for extended health benefits to ensure seniors may access these critical aids would empower seniors to stay connected with their communities and thereby reduce costs in other parts of the health care system.

COSCO BC asks all parties to commit to covering expenses for health care needs and supplies, including eye care, hearing aids and mobility aids.

10. Support the UN Convention on the Rights of Older Persons

Canada has a long history of supporting international human rights initiatives. Support for a United Nations Convention on the Rights of Older Person is crucial to protect seniors' rights. Many issues facing older adults in our country and elsewhere stem from insufficient protection in areas ranging from health care to housing to financial abuse to pension protection.

COSCO BC asks all parties to support the development and implementation of a UN Convention on the Rights of Older Persons.

Here is some key information:

Your riding boundaries will likely have changed since the last federal election.



1. Vote anytime at an Elections Canada office.
2. Problems with voting card information (or lack of one), go online to Voter Registration and check. Or call 1-800-463-6868 or 1-800-361-8935 (for TTY).
3. April 13-16: vote at public colleges and universities.
4. April 14: Receive by mail your Guide to Federal elections. Keep it with you.
5. April 14-19: Armed forces can vote at their base or unit.
6. April 16: Incarcerated people can vote at the place where they serve their sentence.
7. April 18-21: Advanced Polling stations open from 9 AM to 9 PM. You must go to the polling station noted on your Voter Information Card.
8. April 20-22: Acute care facilities (Hospitals).
9. April 22: Last day to request sign language interpreter. Check number above.
10. April 28: Election Day: Go to polling station. Bring government-issued photo ID.
Mobile polls will serve Long Term Care Facilities & Seniors Residences.

Visit www.elections.ca to check out all information on voting. Beware of misinformation from other sources.