



Council of Senior Citizens' Organizations of BC

Representing seniors in British Columbia since 1950

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COSCO input to BC Budget Consultation 2026 – Speaking Notes

My name is Leslie Gaudette and I am President of the Council of Senior Citizens' Organizations of BC or COSCO without the T. Thank you for this opportunity to meet with you today.

COSCO represents over 80,000 members of 65 affiliated organizations located in all parts of the province. We promote healthy ageing in older adults and keep our members informed of programs (including from your government) to ensure BC seniors remain active. This week is seniors week, a time for older adults in BC to celebrate the contributions we make for the well-being of our families and communities.

Recommendation #1:

Our first recommendation is to ***fund and develop a Seniors' Strategy*** to coordinate programs and policies affecting older adults and eliminate ageism. We ask that the strategy be developed with input from seniors, incorporate social determinants of health, and provide sustained core funding to support seniors programs in community. Having a plan will ensure limited government funding can be used most effectively.

Explanation:

BC seniors are living longer, and often with very limited incomes. Baby boomers are now in their 70s. A strategy will address the insidious ageism in our society which is why COSCO strongly supports the work of the United Nations Human Rights Council to draft a UN Convention of the Rights of Older Persons.

A Seniors Strategy aligned with Age-Friendly Communities will plan for and fund affordable, accessible housing, integrated with public transportation both within and between communities. HandyDART funding must be increased and its management be made part of the public system in all communities.

Core sustainable funding is needed for seniors programs often managed by seniors centres. These programs combat social isolation, help older adults navigate myriad programs and services and keep seniors out of hospital.

Recommendation #2:

Our second recommendation is that Budget 2026 fund programs to ***improve the economic security of low-income seniors.***

Explanation:

Of the estimated 1.2 million seniors in BC, half live on \$35,000 or less per year or under \$3,000 per month, with 300,000 seniors living on under \$2,000.

The ***BC Seniors Supplement*** is currently \$99.30 per month, among the lowest rates in Canada. We ask Budget 2026 to fund increases to bring the Supplement up to among the top three in Canada, to index it to the rate of inflation, and to extend without claw-back at the top rate, a wider income band.

Recent increases to the ***Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters (SAFER)***, remain below market rents. We ask Budget 2026 to increase to the rent ceilings to reflect actual market rents, and adjust rents and income ceilings each year for inflation.

Budget 2026 needs to fund ***Seniors Subsidized Housing Units*** to increase the supply of not-for-profit and coop housing with rents based on 30% of income. ***Temporary modular housing*** is needed to keep seniors from becoming homeless.

By working to house more seniors safely, these programs will reduce those who are homeless and reduce costs to the justice and health care systems.

Recommendation #3:

Our third recommendation is to ***fund improvements to publicly-funded community health care***, to enable seniors to live independently, and keep seniors out of costly acute care and long term care facilities.

We ask for increased funding for ***community health centres*** along with expanded Primary Care Networks, which will leverage support from community non-profits and seniors programs.

Extended health benefits: Seniors who can't see, can't hear, can't move well and can't afford medications, treatment or equipment, are at high risk of becoming socially isolated which leads to poor health outcomes. Funding is needed to provide eye care, vision care, hearing care, medical devices, medications, and mobility aids.

We ask for increased funding for **home support** to eliminate the daily rate for publicly funded home support services. One hour of home support per day costs \$9,000 per year. For incomes above \$28,000 per year, this cost must be borne by the senior, leaving little choice but to opt for subsidized long-term care.

Budget 2026 needs to fund **long-term care services** operated publicly or by non-profits and plan with the federal government to implement the 2023 long-term care standards. Seniors need a comprehensive plan for holistic, systemic reform of long-term care where we receive quality care and enjoy a better quality of life.

Thank you for considering these proposals.

Presented to the BC Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services

Leslie Gaudette

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