



## **Council of Senior Citizens' Organizations of BC**

Representing seniors in British Columbia since 1950

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### **COSCO input to BC Budget Consultation 2027 – Speaking Notes presented to the Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services in Mission BC June 18, 2026**

Good afternoon. My name is Leslie Gaudette and I am President of the Council of Senior Citizens' Organizations of BC. I am here today representing the voices of 85,000 BC seniors who are members of our 75 affiliated organizations located in all parts of the province. Thank you for this opportunity to meet with you.

COSCO aims to promote healthy ageing in older adults, in part through providing reliable, practical information such as that from your government.

We hear from our members about their struggles to locate affordable housing, home care and long-term care. Let's consider life from the perspectives of Violet, a woman in her early 80s whose husband died last year and who lives in her own home, and Albert in his early 70s who is renting and disabled with limited income.

#### **Recommendation #1:**

First COSCO recommends to ***appoint a Minister of Seniors with responsibility and funding to develop a Seniors' Strategy with targets and timelines*** to coordinate programs and policies affecting older adults across government departments. By reducing gaps and overlaps, this plan will best use limited government funding.

#### **Explanation:**

BC seniors are living longer, healthier lives. A funded Seniors Strategy aligned with Age-Friendly Communities will include community health care, and affordable, accessible housing, integrated with public transportation both within and between communities. Core sustainable funding is essential for seniors centres and neighbourhood houses. Violet finds the seniors centre in her community to be a life-line to help her find the programs and services she needs to manage her changed circumstances. The activities and social connections keep her healthier and reduce her need for costly health care.

A strategy will address the toxic 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.

**Recommendation #2:**

Our second recommendation is that Budget 2027 fund programs to *improve the economic security of low-income seniors*.

**Explanation:**

Of BC's 1.2 million seniors, 600,000 live on about \$3,000 or less per month, with 300,000 seniors living on less than \$2,000. Violet's household income has shrunk drastically – her husband's OAS, workplace pension and retiree health and dental plans are no longer available. Violet receives some CPP but her income is now \$2500 per month, just above the cutoff for GIS. What does she need to manage her life?

For homeowners such as Violet, COSCO asks that the increased interest rates for the **property tax deferral program be reversed**. Violet is now facing a property tax bill of about \$600 per month on her \$2500 monthly income. She is terrified of losing her home due to the impact of higher compounded interest.

Budget 2027 needs to increase the supply of **Seniors Subsidized Housing Units** of not-for-profit and coop housing with rents based on 30% of income. The current re-pacing of construction results in even fewer affordable housing options for Arthur whose current rental building is being demolished. With a limited income of \$2,000 per month, he is at risk of becoming homeless.

Regarding **Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters (SAFER)**, we ask that Budget 2027 increase the rent ceilings to reflect actual market rents, and adjust rents and income ceilings each year for inflation, measures that improve Arthur's chances of finding affordable housing.

The **BC Seniors Supplement** is among the lowest in Canada - we ask that Budget 2027 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 the top rate over a wider income band before claw-back.

### **Recommendation #3:**

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

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 \$10,000 per year. Violet, with an income above the GIS cutoff of about \$28,000 per year cannot afford this, leaving her little choice but to opt for subsidized long-term care, or pay private long-term care rates of \$15,000 per month when the time comes.

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

***Extended health benefits:*** Seniors who can't see, can't hear, can't move well and can't afford medications, treatment or equipment, quickly become 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.

Budget 2027 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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