

COSCO Highlights

~Election Issue~

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October 2020

President's Message



Well, we can't say that COSCO is parochial. During the past few weeks we have been busy communicating with both the provincial and federal governments to influence them to include the needs of seniors in their planning.

Then along came the Speech from the Throne and lo and behold our request that there be national standards for long term care facilities was included. We had already looked at the factors which were needed to be considered for inclusion in the standards regulations so our work was well timed. It was a good opportunity to express our approval to the federal government for the proposed legislation. I wrote to the prime minister, mentioning that we were working with the National Pensions' Federation to do what we could to ensure that never again would there

be the horrifying treatment of frail and vulnerable residents which was revealed when COVID-19 struck. Getting in touch with the opposition parties was our next action, urging them to cooperate with the government to develop standards and to enforce them. The Speech included the intention of the government to punish those who neglected or harmed their clients. Teamwork between the federal government and the provinces and territories will be needed to create and enforce care that will be more costly to provide, thus cutting many of the incredible dividends that have been paid by many companies who own care homes. We hope that the party is over, but lobbying frenzy will no doubt break out. COSCO and the NPF will keep watch over what promises to be a complex situation.

Another goal that our organization has been working to achieve is the establishment of a national Pharmacare program. The Speech from the Throne mentioned that as well. Frankly I didn't reiterate all the reasons for such a plan. I just said the time has come to get on with it. We have all heard the arguments in favour and big Pharma has fought a good fight against the idea, successfully so far. Statistics show that Canadians pay very high prices for medications and we know that many seniors are forced to cut back on other necessities in order to fill their prescriptions. Surely that is a shameful state of affairs.

Then there is the election. COSCO's response was immediate. We hoped to influence the party platforms so we chose our five most urgent objectives and sent them immediately to the NDP, the Liberals and the Greens. We planned to host a Town Hall meeting with representatives from those parties and as I write this the date has been set as October 16th at 1:00 pm, Virtual of course.

The Case for National Standards in Long Term Care

One unexpected bonus of the COVID-19 NPF/COSCO restrictions on travel and attendance at meetings is that we can invite and get outstanding speakers to participate in webinars, and they can do so from the comfort of their own homes wherever that may be.

As a result, the NPF/COSCO Task Force for National Standards in Long Term Care was able to plan and deliver a national webinar on reform of Long Term Care that featured much-in-demand panelists who are national experts in the field.

The panelists for this September 28 webinar included: Dr Pat Armstrong, who recently completed a ten-year study of long term care internationally and who is recognized as Canada's pre-eminent authority on long term care; Dr Penny MacCourt of Action for Reform of Long Term Care; and Anil Naidoo of the National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE). Award -winning Globe and Mail journalist and author, Andre Picard, was the Moderator. Andre Picard has written many insightful columns on long term care reform in the Globe and Mail and a skilled moderator.

Dr Armstrong discussed her extensive research on public policy on long-term care and the quality of care from the perspective of both the residents and the front-line workers. Anil Naidoo focused on the exploitation of front-line workers in privately owned residences. Dr MacCourt focused on what contributes to the quality of life of the residents. She spoke from her own experience as a social worker in long term care and as the daughter of a resident in a facility that had to be closed down because of the lack of care of the residents.

Together they provided a balanced and in-depth analysis of what makes for high quality in long term care. Dr MacCourt joined from Nanaimo but the other participants joined us from Ontario and Quebec. The presentations were recorded and will be available shortly on the COSCO Web-site.

The President of NPF, Trish McAuliffe, welcomed the panelist and attendees. The President of COSCO BC, Sheila Pither, thanked everyone at the end.

Advertising for the Webinar was national. About 160 people attended and 220 people registered.

PovNet of BC helped COSCO Zoomer in chief, Leslie Gaudette, with the technical aspect of this larger than usual webinar.

Trish followed up with media releases and posted to media websites. Trish plans to share the links to the webinar in an e-blast to NPF affiliates. MPs will also be sent a package on long term care reform that includes the webinar information.

Kathleen Jamieson

Chairperson, Task Force on National Standards on Long term Care

COSCO Standards for Long-Term Care Facilities

In the Speech from the Throne the federal government pledged that national standards of care would be developed and that abuse and neglect of vulnerable seniors would be punished. In this document we have listed the factors that would need to be considered when the detailed Act was prepared. For instance, the width of hallways is not something we can define but the government would of course have access to expert knowledge. Our recommendations are as follows:

Staffing; qualified personnel; ratio of staff to residents; delineation of resident contact time; improved remuneration for staff; varied professional registered medical staff; on call medical staff, training of staff in a team-based approach

Physical Surroundings; accessibility; directional signage; communication devices; temperature and lighting; emergency exits; bedroom privacy; bathroom facilities; staff safety provisions

Services; food preparation (including preferences); individual nutritional planning; hygiene facilities; medication reviews and supervision; safety measures; recreation; outdoor access; visitor access; protection of money and valuables

Residents' Council; provision of a residents' council; inclusion of residents, family and staff; scheduled meetings; promotion of collective and individual interests; access to inspection reports

Inspections and Supervision; frequency; unannounced visits; itemized expectations/report preparation, report recipients, enforcement of report orders, penalties for non-compliance; posting of inspection reports

Funding; dedicated long term funding,; bilateral agreements; recipient reporting; regularized evaluations by federal authorities

Technology; standardized and integrated with current care facilities technological equipment and programs

Mixed Tenancy; safety from aggressive behaviour of other residents, particularly if there are significant age differences and/or "housing" of individuals with severe mental health issues and/or substance abuse problems

COSCO realizes that many of these provisions are obvious, but it is also evident that many long-term care facilities were not providing acceptable living conditions where dignity and respect were the norm. Nor were the authorities responsible for inspection and enforcement, doing their jobs. The lessons we are continuing to learn from COVID-19 are indeed harsh, but COSCO believes that the duty of the federal government to protect some of the most vulnerable Canadians is in line with human rights obligations and simple human decency.

Respectfully submitted,
National Pensioners' Federation
Council of Senior Citizens' Organizations of BC

SENIORS VOTE – 2020 ELECTION ADVICE FROM COSCO (To all candidates)

The Council of Senior Citizens' Organizations of British Columbia (COSCO) is non-partisan, so we are sending this request to the NDP, the Liberals and the Green parties. We are asking that you consider the needs of seniors when you are crafting your election platform. Five main objectives have been identified.

COSCO has 70 affiliate groups. We represent many thousands of seniors from all over the province. For 70 years, COSCO has watched governments come and go and always we have spoken about the needs of older citizens, not the political affiliation of any party. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, the list below probably could have been relevant in many other campaigns.

Long-term care reform -- The tragic circumstances revealed in some care homes, was a national shame. The federal government plans to work with the provinces to develop standards of care. COSCO believes that long-term care should be viewed as a health matter rather than as a need that somehow individuals and families are to handle. COSCO has developed a list of standards (refer to the previous article '**COSCO Standards for Long-Term Care Facilities**' for details)

Pharmacare -- The time has come to establish a national universal plan that would include every Canadian. This was mentioned in the Speech from the Throne.

Integrated care. The changing circumstances that many individuals experience as they age should be seamless in terms of care needs. Many are not receiving the correct placement nor is home help available so that staying at home is feasible.

Housing. The availability of safe and affordable accommodation is a need that continues to haunt people who are losing their homes. Seniors are the fastest growing group experiencing homelessness. Others are forced to accept inappropriate lodging.

Low-income subsidy -- During the last few months, low-income people receiving the seniors' subsidy have been receiving crisis income of \$300.00 per month instead of \$49.30. The higher amount should continue as a permanent subsidy.

Thank you for accepting this list in the spirit in which it is given. We all know that seniors vote and COSCO encourages them to do so with knowledge of what each party stands for.

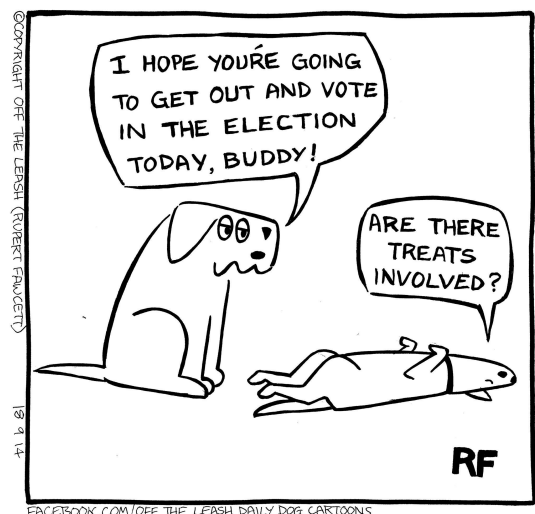
HOW TO VOTE SAFELY

We are reaching out to you to encourage you to vote — and to outline how we can all do it safely during a pandemic.

Thanks to a combination of skill, public health services and community spirit, we haven't been hit nearly as hard as many other areas. Nonetheless, nothing is without risk these days.

Elections BC has, for months, been studying how we can do it safely. The plans they've outlined give me confidence that will be the case.

However you decide to vote, please be sure to cast your ballot!



Voting by mail

The safest option, of course, is to vote by mail. *Elections BC* is already accepting requests for the packages required to vote by mail. In fact, I did so on the day the election was called. It was easy. And it only took five minutes.

If you want to do the same, you can request your package by filling out the short form on the Elections BC website at elections.bc.ca/ovr, or by phoning 1-800-661-8683.

If you made the request before Oct. 2, when nominations closed, you will receive a blank ballot. Just print the name of the candidate or party you support. The easiest way to avoid confusion, and a potential spoiled ballot, is to just print the name of the party.



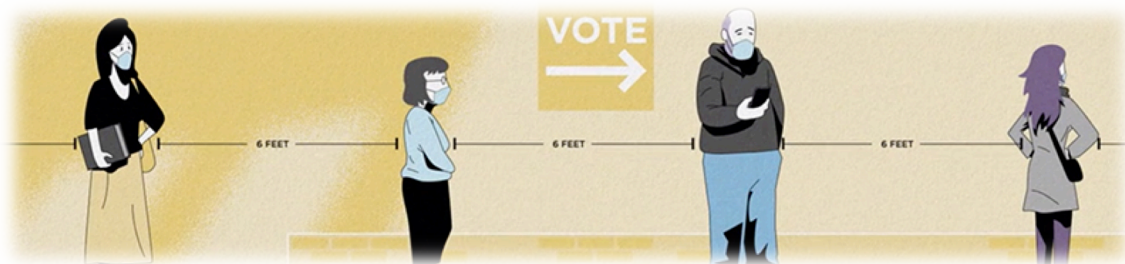
Voting in person

With the precautions being taken by Elections BC, I believe voting will be safer than buying groceries or going for a haircut.

Some familiar voting procedures will be different. For example, you'll make a verbal declaration of your eligibility to vote instead of signing a book. You can also bring your own pen or pencil to mark your ballot.

Safe voting practices are detailed at elections.bc.ca/safevoting. The measures include physical distancing, capacity limits, election officials wearing personal protective equipment, protective barriers, asking people to sanitize their hands before and after voting, and frequent cleaning of voting stations and frequently touched surfaces. Voters are also encouraged to wear masks to protect others.

In short, we'll be seeing all the safety measures we've become familiar with in other settings.



Advance voting and Election Day hours

Advance voting has been expanded to seven days to provide more options and to help reduce the number of people in voting places.

Advance voting places will be open from 8:00 am to 8:00 pm Pacific time, every day from **Thursday, Oct. 15 until Wednesday, Oct. 21.**



On **Election Day, Saturday, Oct. 24**, polls will be open from 8:00 am to 8:00 pm Pacific time.

