



COSCO Joins Health and Hope Lobby of Ottawa's MPs

More than 100 health care workers and public health care advocates lobbied 60 parliamentarians as part of the Canadian Health Coalition's 2023 Health and Hope Lobby on March 28, including COSCO President Leslie Gaudette.

The goal of our Health and Hope 2025 campaign is to achieve the full delivery of health care commitments made in the 2022 Liberal-NDP Confidence and Supply Agreement before its conclusion in 2025, including:

- Public dental care
- Universal pharmacare
- Frontline health care investments
- Safe long-term care

The Canadian Health Coalition met with senior policy staff in two ministers' offices: Health Minister Jean Yves Duclos and Seniors Minister Kamal Khara. Minister Duclos's staff relayed the office is still working on pharmacare legislation and evaluating options. They explained the approach requires cooperation from the provinces and territories to be ultimately successful.

Minister Khara's staff explained their office was currently working on delivering the government's commitment to increase the wages of Personal Support Workers (PSWs) to \$25 per hour, announced on March 1, 2023.

Several Liberal MPs told lobby participants they support the idea of universal pharmacare, but they are not sure how and when it will be achieved.

NDP MPs conveyed to lobby participants their strong support for universal public pharmacare and their opposition to the privatization of health care. They worry about the interference of big pharma and

private insurance companies in passing universal public pharmacare.

Conservative MPs largely voiced their concerns about the costs of having a universal pharmacare program. They felt government can't be trusted to manage the program.



L-R: Richard Ziemianski, Long Term Care worker; COSCO Pres. Leslie Gaudette; MP Tako van Popta; Karen Ranalletta, Pres. CUPE BC; and Charmaine Fines, community health care worker.

Clifford Small, Conservative MP for Coast of Bays-Central-Notre Dame, Newfoundland, and Labrador, was an outlier. He understood pharmacare would mean long-term savings with bulk buying and preventative downstream costs.

The lobby represents intensive effort from the staff of the Canadian Health Coalition, with expert speakers informing lobbyists of the key issues on March 27, and then a full morning to debrief on March 29. Thanks to MP Don Davies (NDP Health Critic) and others for hosting a reception at the end of the day!

To read the full report go to the Canadian Health Coalition website (healthcoalition.ca) and look under News.

Council of Senior Citizens' Organizations of BC (COSCO)

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

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About COSCO

COSCO is an umbrella organization that brings together over 70 different seniors groups, representing approximately 80,000 women and men to work on common issues.

COSCO is affiliated with the 1,000,000-member National Pensioners Federation (NPF) which promotes these issues at the national level.

COSCO is a registered non-profit organization.

Send your letters to the editor or other contributions to:

cosconews.editor@coscobc.org

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Seniors Are Hurting: Report from COSCO President

by Leslie Gaudette

As we emerge from the worst of Covid restrictions and resume our regular lives, it can be a bumpy road. Not everything is the way it was. In a few short months, we may need to make several years of cumulative adjustments, on a step-by-step basis, to get our lives running smoothly again. Judging by my email inbox, organizations and seniors are looking around and seeing that changes are needed to ensure the safety and well-being of our older adult population.

We hear that seniors are hurting. Most seniors have incomes less than minimum wage. Rents are out of control and the lack of truly affordable housing options is leading to older adults becoming homeless. The sole reason for that is they can't find a place to live that they can afford. COSCO has now rejoined the Poverty Reduction Coalition to enable coordination of efforts to reduce poverty in seniors.

COSCO's advocacy has long addressed key social determinants of health to ensure seniors have adequate housing, health care, income security and transportation. Last year we put a spotlight on seniors' centres as they combat social isolation – a key risk factor for ill health – and provide essential services for older adults. The goal is for seniors to enjoy a long and healthy life.

Since March, COSCO has partnered with others in several campaigns, reported elsewhere in this issue. We started with the Health and Hope lobby in Ottawa at the end of March, where I met with key people from the Canadian Health Coalition as well as activists from British Columbia. We've joined with the Action for Reform of Residential Care to advocate for an advisory forum to develop an action plan for change in BC's LTC system. Information on the ongoing campaign is on the COSCO website as: <https://coscobc.org/campaigns/>

Following an approach by the Vancouver District Labour Council, we've worked together with COSCO members Mark Beeching of ATU 1724 and Sam Wiese of BC FORUM among others to advocate to Mayors and Translink for public management of HandyDART services as reported by Jerry Gosling.

Responding to invitations from the provincial government, I attended a Town Hall with Premier Eby

together with Barbara Golder, President of the Victoria Branch of the BCGREA, and Stephane Lapierre of Carrefour 50+. I reminded Premier Eby of his commitment to us last August to apply a seniors lens to government initiatives.



COSCO President Leslie Gaudette with Premier David Eby

Another opportunity arose to join with Health Minister Adrian Dix and others to announce the expanded role for pharmacists, who as of June 1 can prescribe medications for 21 common ailments, which will take pressure off family doctors and emergency rooms.

We've reached out to the other members of Provincial government as well. COSCO members representing seniors' centres and programs met with Parliamentary Secretary for Community Development and Non-profits, Megan Dykeman on the need to provide stable core funding for these centres and the programs they provide. The meeting produced several follow-up actions. We've also provided input into the 2024 Budget Consultation with a written brief and in-person presentation to the Standing Committee on Finance.

We've gained further insights into healthy ageing at the annual Friesen conference sponsored by the

SFU Department of Gerontology. The keynote speaker, Prof. Judith Phillips reported on the UK Healthy Aging Challenge, noting that life expectancy is as much as 10 years lower for those least well off. A key goal of her program is to promote improvements to healthy life expectancy. This theme was further explored in a panel discussion where I participated together with Kahir Lalji of United Way and Isobel Mackenzie BC Seniors Advocate on how to translate knowledge gained into Public Policy. For seniors the focus is on 'Aging in Place' through being supported by Age-Friendly Communities where the community is set up to help seniors live safely, enjoy good health and stay involved.

We also learned from Dr. Kiran Rabheru and Margaret Gillis, Co-Chairs of the Canadian Coalition Against Ageism, of the toxic impact of ageism. Like all 'isms', ageism permeates and destroys, it belittles and patronizes, and it results in the loss of autonomy, and dignity. It creates barriers to health, financial



Panel Discussion at SFU's Friesen Conference: Knowledge Translation and Public Policy Developments: Isobel Mackenzie, BC Seniors Advocate; Kahir Lalji, Provincial Director, United Way; Leslie Gaudette, COSCO BC President

resources, education, employment, and social and economic justice. The negative attitudes induced in people, both young and old, by ageism produce toxic effects on health outcomes including mental health and depression, which have massive economic impacts of \$63 billion per year in the USA alone.

All of this is possible through the contributions of the many volunteers and members of COSCO. Your support and ability to make connections to keep seniors' issues first and foremost in the minds of decision makers benefits us all. Thank you!



Leslie Gaudette & Kate Ludlum, Exec. Director, Langley Seniors Resources Society at a Town Hall with John Aldag during Seniors Week

Housing Changes Needed



The National Pensioners Federation (NPF) has submitted a comprehensive brief to the federal government which will be considered by the House of Commons Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of People with Disabilities (HUMA) regarding the present housing crisis. The HUMA Committee is undertaking this study following a motion sponsored by MP Bonita Zarillo (Port Moody-Coquitlam). The Federation speaks squarely to the ‘financialization’ of housing, which treats housing as a profit-making investment and not as a home. The NPF draws on the 2019 National Housing Strategy Act and globally, on the United Nations International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Everyone has the right to adequate housing.

The NPF calls for the federal government to take steps to end the harm created by financialization of housing and uphold housing human rights. Predatory financialization of seniors housing puts pressure on older persons to pay rent beyond their means or live in homes that are not appropriate or affordable. It can lead to homelessness. Rent increases of 20-25% year after year is far above the landlords’ expenses and often lead to evictions and/or renovations. This is taking place when the majority (78%) of Canadians want to age in place while only 26% anticipate they will be able to do so.

Our housing wasn’t always ‘financialized’. It is the result of policies of the federal government in the 1990s that allowed the ‘market’ to provide Canada’s housing needs (take the lack of interest and funding for co-op housing, for example). It’s also the result of provincial governments rolling back renter protections. We see this in BC where the government has instituted annual rent increases on the renter, but not on the units. So, when a renter moves out the landlords can (and do) increase rents to anything they want.

The NPF lists a series of demands/recommendations for the federal government (24 in all) to address Canada’s housing crisis. We list some of them in this article as they relate to seniors.

1. Summon the housing industry corporations to appear with their data before the House of Commons HUMA Committee to account for their practices that undermine housing affordability, security of tenure and habitability. The 5 largest real estate Investment trusts (REIT) in Canada are Canadian Apartment Properties REIT (CAPREIT), Boardwalk REIT, InterRent REIT, Killam REIT and Minto REIT). There are many more that may be operating in other parts of the country.

2. STOP landlords from treating housing as a profit-making investment.

Purpose-built rental housing has expanded dramatically in Canada with an estimated 340,000 units in multi-rental buildings now owned by large financial companies. An estimated 20-30% of purpose-built rental housing is now owned by institutional owners. As of 2020, companies owned 33% of seniors’ housing in Canada, including 42% of retirement units and 22% of Long-Term Care beds.

3. Strengthen tenant protections so seniors can ‘age in place’. The UN has recommended rent caps, renter protections, subsidies for renters and small landlords, house the homeless and put constraints on private equity companies.

4. Place a moratorium on purchases by large companies of multi-family and single-family housing, including seniors’ retirement homes and long-term care facilities. Canada is losing affordable housing faster than it can be built.

5. Ensure the National Housing Strategy (NHS) has action plans and timelines attached to it. Ensure the NHS has programs to fund non-profit, co-operative, and social housing that

protects existing supply of affordable, adequate and accessible housing. Create an acquisition fund for non-profits, co-operative and social housing to buy housing on a 'First Right of Purchase' basis.

6. Ensure that affordable housing means 'housing based on income'. Market rents are not affordable. Some notable statistics follow. 230,000 Canadians were homeless at last count. This does not include the hidden homeless, like those couch-surfing. In 2018 10% of seniors lived in households in core housing

need (Randle et al, 2021). For senior renters themselves 25% were in core housing need. Assessments show 1.7 million Canadians in core housing need. The majority are households needing shelter of \$881 per month or less.

7. Design homes for people to age in place, including provision for family members and other caregivers to live-in. Incorporate Universal Design that allows housing to be adapted as accessibility needs change for seniors.

Produced by Nation Pensioners Federation, Trish McAuliffe, President. Edited by L. Forsythe COSCO. Read the full report on the NPF website: www.nationalpensionersfederation.ca



COSCO Executive members Patrick Harkness, Jean Sickman and Jerry Gosling staff our table for the ConnecTra Abilities Expo, May 18

<https://connectra.org/abilitiesexpo/>

Addressing Funding Needs for Seniors' Centres

In early June, a delegation of seven COSCO members, including three from local seniors' centres, met with MLA Megan Dykeman, the Parliamentary Secretary for Community Development and Non-Profits (and MLA for Langley East). We met to express our concerns about the lack of sustained core funding for community seniors' centres.

We believe that seniors centres provide massive resources for seniors and promote our well-being. By addressing the social aspects of health, the centres help keep us out of the hospital. They are a safe place where seniors can go for help with issues and problems, perhaps share a meal, participate in activities, educational workshops, and find companionship. The centres have their ear to the ground and know very well what problems seniors face as they try to navigate their older years and often in poverty. We asked what approach the government is taking around building capacity for seniors' centres. Here is what we heard:

Ms. Dykeman talked about some of the issues she sees facing seniors. One is food insecurity. Food costs have risen by 18% in the past year. Another is the funding model where every year seniors centre staff must research, apply for grants and report back to funders, to keep their centres operating. She acknowledged that constant grant writing does not work in relation to keeping the services and programs going. Staff time is better spent working with seniors themselves. COSCO representatives pointed out that reliance on gaming money is a problem, especially considering the cutbacks in those grants. Ms. Dykeman also said she is working to find ways to provide 2–3-year funding. She is aware that seniors have paid taxes all their lives and now when they need it most that money is not being used for services for them. It's unacceptable.

Ms. Dykeman also pointed out that COVID created a compression (or shrinking) of social services that has resulted in a lack of social spaces. She thinks that social spaces offer an element of safety, where seniors can get information to protect themselves and reduce the current trends towards the polarization of society.

She will see that COSCO is put on the email list for the Non-profit Newsletter that her office puts together to enable us to keep up with information from the government. We asked if we could post information and stories on that Newsletter, and we will hear about that later.

She also mentioned that the plan to organize lobby days for non-profits that would enable groups such as COSCO to meet with MLAs and others in government involved in seniors' issues. These meetings would be an effective way to bring forward our main concerns, including opportunities for seniors' centres.

It's a first step and we look forward to working with Megan Dykeman and her staff as we follow up on several actions we discussed.

Leslie Gaudette and Linda Forsythe



L- R: Marion Pollack, Loretta Solomon, Bonnie Quam, Leslie Gaudette, Terri Van Steinburg, Parliamentary Secretary Megan Dykeman, Joe Humphries and Linda Forsythe

HandyDART/TransLink

An alliance of Unions, disability advocates and other groups concerned about the worsening crisis transpiring at Metro Vancouver's HandyDART system reached out to COSCO to partner in the campaign. Jerry Gosling, Chair of COSCO Transportation Committee was designated as the COSCO liaison to the group. In recent weeks Jerry, together with Mark Beeching, COSCO Delegate and President of Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1724 and others have been very active in meeting with Mayors across the Lower Mainland, including Langley City, Burnaby, Abbotsford, Mission, and Chilliwack, as well as a presentation to the Mayors' Council which met on June 1. The mayors show clear support for the Access for Everyone

campaign, want a reduction in taxi service replacement and that the whole disability service be brought under TransLink.

Please check the link below and join in any actions to make this become a reality. The complete report can be found at <https://ecoplanning.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Access-for-Everyone-Final-2023-03-20.pdf>

Media release can be found at <https://ecoplanning.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Access-for-Everyone-media-release-2023-05-02.pdf>

Jerry Gosling, Chair, COSCO Transportation Committee



COSCO endorsed an Open letter to Rob Fleming, Minister of Transportation, and Infrastructure; Dan Coulter, Minister

of State for Infrastructure and Transit; and George Heyman, Minister Responsible for TransLink. The letter was in support of HandyDART being rolled in to Translink services.

Highlights of the letter include the following.

HandyDART is crucial infrastructure for some of Metro Vancouver's most vulnerable populations, but for years it has been unable to provide adequate

service levels that meet demand. Eric Doherty of EcoPath Planning found that last year, TransLink provided just half the service per senior as it had in 2008.

The primary reason why TransLink is unable to provide adequate HandyDART service is not budget shortfall, but because the various private contractors that have operated HandyDART over the last several years have all been unable to attract and retain enough staff to do the work properly. This has resulted in HandyDART increasing the number of trips by taxi service (22% last year). This is unacceptable as HandyDart provides door-to-door service while taxis provide curb-to-curb.

The open letter stated:

We call on you to take your role as senior partner seriously, and immediately direct the TransLink Board to:

1. Fulfill TransLink's original pledge to limit the percentage of taxi trips to 7% or lower of total HandyDART trips.
2. Provide accessible, affordable, and increased HandyDART transportation as part of the government's commitment to implement the *Accessible BC Act*.

3. Develop and conduct an unbiased Public Sector Comparator (PSC), with the full participation of HandyDART riders and workers, to compare the costs and benefits of insourcing to continued outsourcing, as TransLink promised in 2016.

4. Develop and implement a plan to bring HandyDART in-house as a subsidiary of TransLink, including providing provincial and federal funds for permanent facilities for an expanded and electric HandyDART fleet.

To read the full text of the letter, go to the website (coscobc.org) and look under campaigns.

Leslie Gaudette

Meeting with BC's Honourable Sheila Malcolmson

COSCO representatives met with Sheila Malcolmson, Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction in Vancouver together with ministry officials and her Chief of Staff joining virtually. We asked to increase, index, and allow more income before clawback of the BC Seniors Supplement. Minister Malcolmson is tasked with developing the next Poverty Reduction Strategy and she and her staff were keenly interested in learning from COSCO about the dire situation facing many seniors in BC and what strategies could be used to alleviate poverty among seniors. We really appreciated learning about the challenges in integrating federal and provincial benefit programs and focusing on the needs of seniors in BC for both enhancing income and reducing expenses through improvements to SAFER, dental care, transportation and several other topics covered elsewhere in this issue of the COSCO News.

Leslie Gaudette, President COSCO



L-R: Terri Van Steinberg, Hon. Sheila Malcolmson, Leslie Gaudette

Province Adds More Funding to Long Term Care

The province is injecting another \$14 million to enhance health, safety and quality improvements in publicly funded long-term care and assisted-living residences for seniors.

The funding is being placed with the BC Care Providers Association for EquipCare BC to purchase items to promote safety and enhance quality of life. Items like additional lifts, bathtubs and bathing equipment, dining furniture, specialized of transport wheelchairs,

sensory equipment, urgent-response systems, medical bed mattresses, nurse call systems, environmental cleaning equipment, air conditioning and other temperature control equipment.

Oversight for EquipCare is provided by a group of industry (private) partners and government.



Your Pharmacy Has a New Role



Hon. Adrian Dix and COSCO President

As of June 1, 2023, most of BC pharmacists can prescribe treatments for minor ailments and contraceptives. This move by the BC government makes it easier and faster for patients to get medications for minor health issues and takes

sprains and strains, dermatitis (skin rash), threadworms or pinworms, uncomplicated urinary tract infections, vaginal candidiasis (yeast infection).

How it works:

1. Do a self-assessment
2. Call or visit a pharmacy (or book online). If you have any questions, call 1-833-882-0022 where translation is also available.

Information taken from the BC Government website:

news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2023/HLTH0074



Guest speakers at media event announcing changes to pharmacists' scope of practice on May 31: Health Minister Adrian Dix with representatives L to R Jessie Nii-koi, Leslie Gaudette, Chris Chiew, Vince Yeung, Suzanne Solven and Gabby Sarnoah

the pressure off primary care providers. New regulations and standards of practice are now in place.

You can book an appointment online (as of June 29th) at your favourite pharmacy. You will need only your Personal Health Number (PHN).

The pharmacist will do an initial assessment and recommend appropriate treatment which may include self-care advice, over-the-counter medications, or prescription medications. They may also advise you to see a doctor if they think your condition is not minor.

Minor ailments include allergies, cold sores, fungal infections, acid reflux (heartburn), hemorrhoids, headaches, impetigo, indigestion, itching (including bug bites), menstrual pain, mild acne, nicotine dependence, oral fungal infections (thrush), oral ulcers (canker sores), pink eye (conjunctivitis), shingles,



COSCO President Leslie Gaudette together with Delegates Kay Noonan and other SOAR members saying good-bye to long time COSCO Delegate Fred Girling as he leaves for England to live with his daughter and son-in-law.

Old Age Pensioners of BC (OAPOBC)

The following is a report of a meeting the OAPO held recently.

Arlene Feke and Don Bayne of Branch 4 OAPO (Old Age Pensioners Organization) were fortunate enough to have a meeting with Jagmeet Singh, leader of the NDP and Lisa Marie Barron, MP for Nanaimo-Ladysmith. We were representing the BCOAPO. Others at the table were Royal Canadian Legion Br. 256, and Nanaimo Family Life Association.

The topic was a "roundtable for seniors on affordability and the cost of living."

There were several items discussed:

1. Handicapped people receive very little financial help if they are less than 65 years old.
2. 85% of evictions are by landlords, most of whom wish to rent to tenants who can pay higher prices.
3. Jagmeet Singh was asked about the Patented Medicine Prices Review Board (PMPRB) which was set up to review drug prices in Canada. He responded with the following:

This board (PMPRB) came up with 10 recommendations to reduce prices for medicines. These

recommendations would have saved an estimated \$13 billion over 10 years.

Two successive Health Ministers rejected these recommendations and 3 PMPRB directors quit, believing their work was pointless. The current Health Minister appointed a new Chairman, a lawyer who had been acting for a pharmaceutical company for many years! In the past, all chairs of the PMPRB were either doctors or pharmacists.

At the time there were 140 lobbyists for big Pharma and only 30 lobbyists acting for the Canadian people.

There was clearly a lack of will on the part of the Liberal Government to act on these recommendations to assist Canadians to help lower drug prices.

Bayne will be submitting a resolution at the OAPO conference in September and then will send it to the Federal Health Minister and opposition critics as well as our local MLAs. In the meantime, he is pleased that Jagmeet Singh was interested enough to include us in their round table. At least someone in Ottawa is paying attention to seniors' issues.

Don Bayne OAPO Branch 4 President



Jagmeet Singh meets with representatives OAPO, Nanaimo Family Life and Legion Branch 256.

Dental Care



For the past 20 years COSCO has been calling for a National Dental Care Program. One that is rolled into and delivered by our National Medicare program.

The Canadian Doctors for Medicare (CDM) held a recent webinar to discuss the issue. Here is part of their workshop.

Dental care is a problem for many Canadians. Hospital emergency rooms are seeing patients in a lot of pain with tooth and gum disease. What these patients need is a dentist. It is a waste of time and resources for people to deal with dental pain by going to the hospital.

Let's look at people in Long-term Care. Many people in those settings do not have dental care. Speakers gave the example of people in long term care, where many don't have dental care. Many seniors have difficulty getting out to a dental appointment. Transportation is a problem, especially if they are wheelchair-bound. Also, the time needed to transport a senior back and forth, and to wait for them during the appointment, can be problematic. Some people in wheelchairs cannot get out of them

easily, so transferring them into a dental chair is difficult. It may be possible to do dental work as a person sits in their own wheelchair. And of course, dental work is very expensive, and many people do not have the money to pay for such services. Dentists can only charge for the procedure, even though it takes twice as long to see a patient who has special needs.

There is an alternative to this problem. Dental services can be provided in the community, even in Long-term care homes. Much like medical services that take doctors, nurses, and other health care workers into the care homes and into the community, dental services could be brought to the patient.

What we need is a fully integrated dental service provided under Canada's Medicare program. It could be provided within our federal/provincial agreements. We need to continue this conversation now as the piecemeal program gets implemented at that end of this year. A huge number of people in this country are reaching old age and need these health services.

CDM webinar summarized by L Forsythe

From the Office of the Minister of Seniors



The federal Minister of Seniors, Kamal Khera, responded to a letter from COSCO thanking her for her support of the Canadian Coalition Against Ageism through taking a prominent role

for Canada at the 13th Session of the United Nations Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing (OEWGA). She noted that she is the first Minister of Seniors to represent Canada at this UN Working Group.

Discussions took place on two priority issues: social inclusion and the right to health and access to health care. She also noted that the Working Group proposed recommendations regarding the possible gaps in protecting human rights of older persons and options about how best to address them.

In closing she mentioned the federal government's priorities of long-term care standards and strengthening the approach to elder abuse. She congratulated COSCO on our accreditation to the UN working group and our commitment to serving on the steering committee of the Canadian Coalition Against Ageism.

Frauds and Scams



A Friendly Reminder from the BCRTA

Fraud based on phone calls, emails and texts keep getting better and more difficult to detect. You can protect yourself with careful diligence with common modes of communication.

What to do:

Phone Calls

- Make sure you have caller ID. All cell phones do, and it is always an option on land lines.
- If contacted by phone from a number that you don't recognize you should send it to or let it go to voice mail.
- Scammers and fraudsters rarely leave voice mail. If it is someone you really need to contact, they will leave a voicemail that you can call back if needed.
- If you answer do not say anything except hello. If you don't recognize the caller - HANG UP!
- We always try to be polite, but in this case, someone is trying to rob you, you don't have to be polite.
- If you answer and the caller says they represent an organization - Hang Up!! Wait 10 mins, then look up the organizations phone number and call the organization yourself.

E-Mail

- Be very wary of emails from strangers or emails from people you know but were not expecting an email from them.
- NEVER EVER click on anything in a suspicious email. Never click on an email attachment (link, file, photo, or video).
- Just clicking on a link that contains malware may infect your system with software that will seek out valuable information about you. This so called phishing software can rob you blind before you even know you are being held up.
- Delete 'suspicious' Email.
- If the email is from a "friend", but appears suspicious, do not reply to the email, but create a new email to that friend to ask if they actually sent you something. Very often they will have no knowledge that their email has been "hacked" and is being used for nefarious purposes.

Text Messages

- Same rules as for emails. Best route here is to delete suspicious texts.

Essential Reading. Do a web search for:

Government of Canada: Frauds and Scams
and

RCMP Top Frauds Affecting Seniors

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COSCO Input to BC Budget Consultation 2024



President Leslie Gaudette presented to the Standing Committee on Finance for the BC Government the following recommendations.

Here are the key excerpts:

Recommendation #1:

Fund and develop a Seniors' Strategy to harmonize programs and policies affecting older adults. The strategy must incorporate social determinants of health and provide sustained core funding to support the critical role seniors centres play to connect seniors with services and to ensure seniors remain healthy and able to contribute to their communities.

Our seniors population is increasing: seniors live longer, with increasingly diverse backgrounds and needs. Baby boomers are reaching age 75. The TIME IS NOW to plan. Many seniors live on very limited incomes, food insecurity is increasing and we are disproportionately affected by climate change events. Seniors' centres keep seniors out of hospital. They combat social isolation through recreational and educational programs, and help older adults navigate a myriad of programs and services. Publicly funded transportation is key in all parts of the province – both urban and rural. As one example, HandyDART funding must be increased, and its management brought back into the public system.

Funding is also needed for team-based community care including for community health centres to enable seniors to manage multiple chronic conditions. Finally, funding is needed for continued improvements to long-term care, including working with the federal government to plan for and implement the new Long-Term Care Standards.

Recommendation #2:

Budget 2024 needs to allocate funds to programs that improve the economic security of low-income seniors, by increasing the BC Seniors' Supplement, revamping the Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters program (SAFER) and increasing the supply of subsidized housing units.

Of the one million seniors in BC, half live on \$31,000 or less per year or between \$1,700 to \$2,500 per month. This is less than minimum wage. The current rate for the BC Seniors Supplement of \$99.30 per month leaves BC with one the lowest rates in Canada. COSCO asks that Budget 2024 fund increases to this Supplement to bring it up to among the top three in Canada and that it be indexed to the rate of inflation.

Rent is the main budget item for many low-income seniors and we hear from our members that Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters (SAFER) is not working. We ask that Budget 2024 provide funds so that rent ceilings for SAFER be increased to reflect actual market rents, and that income ceilings be adjusted each year for inflation. Budget 2024 needs to fund Seniors Subsidized Housing Units-to increase the supply of truly affordable housing with rents based on 30% of income.

Recommendation #3:

A seniors' strategy must address ongoing improvements to publicly funded health care and keep seniors out of expensive acute care and long-term care facilities.

Budget 2024 needs to increase funding for **home support** to eliminate the daily rate for publicly funded home support services. ONE hour of home support per day is close to \$9,000 per year. And once a senior's income rises above \$28,000 per year, they may be pushed into expensive long-term care.

BC Rural Health Network



The BC Rural Health Network (BCRHN) consists of healthcare advocacy organizations working in cooperation with healthcare policymakers. The purpose of the Network is to promote and support a health

services system that improves and sustains the health and well-being of residents of rural communities across British Columbia.

Our goals include the following:

- Share successful strategies in an effort to address rural healthcare concerns.
 - Advocate for policy changes that provide all rural residents with attachment to a health care practitioner.
 - Identify areas of research aimed at improving access to healthcare in rural communities and to provide fertile ground for research to take place.
- Inform the BC Ministry of Health of rural healthcare concerns.
 - Recommend solutions for the improvement of services to rural BC residents.
 - Work in partnership with other provincial organizations to influence policy changes that improve access to healthcare services.
 - Recognize the healthcare concerns of indigenous communities and include their issues and concerns as part of our work.
 - Improve access to mental health services.
 - Promote patient-centered, community-based primary healthcare reform.

*Information taken directly from the Website:
bcruralhealth.org*



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Contact our coordinator workshops@seniorshelpingseniors.ca for further information and bookings.



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Linda Forsythe, Membership Secretary, Box 81131 Stn S. Burnaby, Burnaby, BC V5H 4K2
Telephone: (604) 444-4300

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