



COSCO News

Council of Senior Citizens' Organizations of B.C.

Number 121

www.coscobc.org

September 2022



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

As we went to press, we learned with great sadness that an inspiring leader has passed on. Thank you Sheila for a life well-lived!



COSCO Salutes October 1: International Day of Older Persons



This year's theme is Resilience and Contributions of Older Women and ensuring that women's contributions are valued. Resilience is the ability to withstand adversity and bounce back from difficult life events. Resilient people and organizations can readily adapt to change through being flexible, adaptable and persistent.

As we look around our COSCO membership we see incredible signs of resiliency in the face of our changing world due to COVID.

See also p 14 for more information.

We also continue to join forces with leading seniors groups to advocate for Human Rights of Older Persons. Over the summer COSCO has joined the Canadian Coalition against Ageism following gatherings held July 27 and 28 in Ottawa, attended by COSCO President, Leslie Gaudette and Kathleen Jamieson, Chair of the COSCO Health Committee and member of the National Pensioners' Federation Executive. COSCO also participated in a virtual UN Multi-stakeholder Meeting on the Human Rights of Older Persons.



Canadian Coalition Against Ageism Meeting in Ottawa

COSCO has co-sponsored several webinars to raise awareness of the importance of using a human rights lens to address the need for national standards to set the bar higher and ensure our health system delivers quality long-term care. Yet despite years of international lobbying to protect human rights, it is still expected to take as much as another decade to achieve the goal of the UN Convention on the Human Rights of Older Persons.



We note with admiration that Queen Elizabeth II served as monarch for 70 years and continued with her duties until just two days before her death at age 96. We support that King Charles III has taken on new and major responsibilities at the age of 73 – and despite remarks in the media - no, he is not too old!



Council Of Senior Citizens'
Organizations Of BC (COSCO)

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About COSCO

COSCO is an umbrella organization that brings together 64 different seniors groups, representing approximately 70,000 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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Summer 2022: COSCO in Action

The best laid plans for a time of respite and relaxation for over the summer simply did not happen for COSCO's passionate and dedicated Executive team.

We started in mid-June with a submission to the 2023 provincial budget consultation, which was then presented in person and then followed by a letter to then Premier Horgan on issues affecting the economic security of low-income seniors. Two of our three key recommendations were supported in the Finance Committee report released in August, firstly around the need for an immediate review of Primary Care to ensure community needs were met, and secondly around the dire need for more affordable and social housing for seniors.

We continue to advocate for the UN Convention on the Human Rights of Older Persons as documented by Kathleen Jamieson and Agnes Jackman elsewhere in this issue, and have worked together with other seniors groups at a meeting held in Ottawa in July to form the Canadian Coalition Against Ageism.



Trish McAuliffe, Kathleen Jamieson, Leslie Gaudette

On August 22 members of the COSCO Executive met with Seniors Minister **Kamal Khera** who listened carefully to our priorities. Minister Khera is committed to the UN Convention on the Human Rights of Older Persons, noting that the Minister of Foreign Affairs had ultimate responsibility. We also learned that the national standards for Long Term Care were due for release in December 2022. The Minister was concerned about accountability for Home Care Funding transferred to provincial governments. It was a very successful and productive meeting graciously hosted by MP for Cloverdale-Langley City, John Aldag.



Kamal Khera meets with COSCO

Later in August, the COSCO Executive accepted an invitation to meet with MLA David Eby to discuss seniors issues. We were impressed by his long-standing connections with COSCO and his willingness to consider ways to examine government policies with a seniors' lens, and to ensure that seniors are represented on committees examining seniors issues. This meeting was followed by a virtual meeting with David Eby where questions were posed on health care and housing issues facing seniors.



We are partners with the BC Health Coalition on their campaign *Better Care for Seniors* including postcards to be sent to Health Minister Adrian Dix and for the Accountability Assembly exploring home care and long term care to be held October 11.



Finally we took time to participate in the Labour Day event held in Holland Park, which enabled connections to be made with local politicians and inform other groups present of the work we do as COSCO and through the COSCO Health and Wellness Institute.

All in all, COSCO thrived over the summer by pivoting to take advantage of opportunities, and being resilient to changed circumstances. As just one example, we took advantage of funding from our New Horizons Grant to purchase equipment to enable hybrid meetings and then held our first in person Executive meeting in September with some members participating over Zoom. Thanks to BCGEU for providing an excellent meeting room. We hope to be able to hold Delegates' meetings in a similar fashion in the near future.

Submitted by Leslie Gaudette

Meeting and Webinar with David Eby -- August, 2022



All indications are that MLA David Eby is going to be the Premier of BC by the end of 2022. The current Premier, John Horgan, is stepping down for health reasons and the majority of the NDP caucus has backed David Eby for Premier. In the meantime, Eby has stepped down from his posts of Housing Minister and Attorney General to meet with other members of the NDP and the public in the interregnum.

Even though David Eby is familiar with COSCO's history of advocacy and was a speaker at the last COSCO Conference in 202, we wanted to ensure that he is knowledgeable about our current serious concerns about seniors' access to health care and to safe affordable housing for low-income seniors. COSCO BC Executive therefore sought an opportunity to meet him as soon as possible.

We were fortunate to be able to meet David Eby in person in late August for an hour at a Vancouver neighbourhood house. We had a focused discussion with him on seniors' health and housing concerns. We then hosted a well-attended public webinar for BC seniors on the same issues. The event was moderated by BC Minister of Jobs, Economic Recovery and Innovation, Ravi Kahlon.



The following questions asked at the webinar, were prepared by the COSCO Executive:

Housing

1. Will you commit to releasing more provincial land to build not for profit affordable rental and coop housing?
2. Do you agree that affordable rents at 30% of seniors average income of \$30,000 per year need to range from about \$500 to \$750 per month.
3. Will you commit to increasing the rent ceilings for SAFER and expanding rent banks for seniors?
4. Will you commit to eliminating renovictions?
5. Will you commit to freezing rent increases during this time of record inflation?

Health

1. Will you commit to involving representatives of organizations representing and advocating for seniors in all planning for seniors being done by the BC Ministry of Health --- at least to the extent that registered lobbyists can do so at present?
2. Will you support an immediate review of the provision of primary health care in BC to improve primary care equity and access and the quality of care in B.C. including all types of clinics, corporate virtual clinics, on- line, walk-in and urgent care clinics, community care centres, and family doctors' practices?
3. What are your views on the need for fundamental reform of long-term care?
4. Do you plan to increase funding for home care and home support and palliative care services so that most seniors can age in place and die in their own homes?
5. Do you see the need to combat ageism by supporting a UN Convention on the Human Rights of Older Persons?

David Eby's answers were thoughtful and positive to almost all our questions, but the "proof of the pudding is in the eating" as the old saying goes. We are a bit more hopeful that planning for change on policies for seniors will be done with us and not just about us.

Submitted by Kathleen Jamieson

Seniors Continue to Support Workers' Rights



Gudrun Langolf and **Ron Ritchings** join members of Unite40 in their year-long quest to get a contract from the Hilton Hotels. Shortly after this show of solidarity from the Labour Movement, a contract was signed.

Queen's Platinum Jubilee Recipients

Leslie Gaudette and **Barb Mikeluc** received the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Award for their work with Seniors. They are part of the last group to earn this prestigious award with the recent passing of Queen Elizabeth.



President Leslie Gaudette and First Vice President Barb Mikulec were recognized for their leadership and advocacy with seniors in their local communities as recipients of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee award.



Health and Wellness Institute



The Seniors Health and Wellness Institute are giving free in-person and zoom presentations of their workshops. Contact Sue at www.seniorshelpingseniors.ca for bookings.

Is it time to review your medications?



Medication use is a fine balance



Medications can help us in many different ways. But medications can also cause us harm. That's why it's important to weigh the potential benefits and harms of taking a medication over time.

What is medication overload?



Medication overload means taking more medications than we need. It also means taking too many medications that, together, cause more harm than good.

What are too many medications?



There is no strict number. When we take even one medication that can cause more harm than good at a particular time in our life, one can be too many.

Medication overload causes harm

Medication overload can cause drug interactions and harmful side effects. Harms from medication overload can be very serious. Some examples include:



falls & fractures



hospitalizations



premature loss of independence



confusion & memory problems



car crashes



death

Who is at highest risk?



People who take multiple medications, older adults, and women are at greatest risk of medication harm. The more medications we take, the greater our risk of experiencing harm.

1 in 10

hospital admissions in older adults are the result of a medication side effect¹.

What can you do? Deprescribing may be an option.



Deprescribing means working with your doctor or another health care professional to stop or reduce the dose of a medication that you feel may cause you harm or is not helping you.

Version 1.0: 2022/06/15

Flip the page for tips on preparing for a medication review. →

Preparing for a medication review with your doctor, pharmacist or nurse

1. **Book an appointment** with your doctor, pharmacist or nurse *specifically* to review your medications.

2. **Questions to ask yourself before your appointment:**

- How are my medications affecting me? Am I having any problems with them?
- If my doctor recommended that I stop taking one or more of my medications, would I be willing?

3. **Prepare your list of questions in advance!**

Here are 5 questions to ask your doctor, pharmacist or nurse when starting a new medication or reviewing one you are already taking:

1. Why am I taking this medication?
2. What are the potential benefits and harms of this medication?
3. Can it affect my memory or cause me to fall?
4. Can I stop or reduce the dose of this medication (i.e. deprescribing)?
5. Who do I follow up with and when?



Remember to write down any other questions you would like to ask about your medications, too.

4. **Bring an up-to-date medication list to your appointment.** Ask your pharmacist for a list of all your medications, or make your own ([visit DeprescribingNetwork.ca for a sample record](https://www.deprescribingnetwork.ca)). Include over-the-counter medicines and supplements.



Learn more about deprescribing and medication safety at [DeprescribingNetwork.ca](https://www.deprescribingnetwork.ca)

References

1. Parameswaran Nair, N., Chalmers, L., Connolly, M., et al. (2016). Prediction of Hospitalization due to Adverse Drug Reactions in Elderly Community-Dwelling Patients (The PADR-EC Score). PLoS One, 11(10): e0165757. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0165757>

The BCGREA Marks 75 Years!



2022 marks the 75th anniversary of one of COSCO's major affiliates; the BC Government Retired Employees' Association (BCGREA). It was January 1947 when the BC Retired Civil Servants Association began with a conversation that led them to be formally organized. They didn't waste any time and set to work advocating cost-of-living bonuses on the same basis as active civil servants. At the same time, the Association was determined to get free hospitalization and medical care for pensioners between 60 and 70 years.

Today the BCGREA is still concerned about serving its members. And to better understand what its members wanted; a province-wide survey was conducted.

Province-wide Membership Survey

The BCGREA contracted CDR Business Diagnostics to conduct the survey, and it opened in late December and closed in late January 2022. The results were seen as strongly accurate. 2,858 out of 7,668 members responded; that's 37.3%. The membership has spoken and the BCGREA learned what members value and want from their association.

In summary, the membership considers BCGREA's most important services to be:

- Representation on the Public Service Pension Plan Board of Trustees
- Newsletters
- Membership in advocacy associations
-

They want BCGREA to expand their efforts to include:

- Advocating for pension and benefits
- Negotiating for member discounts
- Cooperating with related pension associations, and
-

They would like their BCGREA Branch Offices to provide:

- Guest speakers on topics of interest
- Social connections (luncheons, goodwill)

Province-wide Membership Drive

And, as the year comes to an end, the BCGREA is launching a membership drive inviting the over 47,000 non-members to join and strengthen the association's voice in advocating on behalf of its members.

COSCO congratulates the BCGREA, and members, on 75 years of dedication and work!

Home Adaptations Update



BC Rebate for Accessible Home Adaptations (RAHA) – Funding for Accessible Homes

The **BC Rebate for Accessible Home Adaptations** (BC RAHA) is an updated version of the Home Adaptations for Independence (HAFI) program. It provides financial assistance for low-income households to carry out adaptations so that seniors can continue to live independently.

Eligible individuals: there are maximum annual household income (\$117,080) and asset (\$100,000) restrictions. Someone in the household must have a disability or “lasting ability loss” and the proposed adaptation should directly address the permanent disability or diminished ability. This provides a fair amount of flexibility to address changes in kitchens, bathrooms, electrical and plumbing systems, installation of transfer aids, rails and more. See BC Housing’s [non-exhaustive list of potentially eligible adaptations](#).

Eligible Properties: Most ownership and building forms are potentially eligible, including co-op buildings, but note the eligibility criteria-

The first is the **value of the unit(s)** being considered for upgrades. BC Housing uses a test based on assessed property value; if a property is worth more than a [certain amount](#) (dependent on geography) then the property isn’t eligible.

Funding for Co-ops: For many co-op buildings, it’s the **complex** rather than individual homes that are assessed, so the valuations can seem too high. BC Housing has indicated it will take an approach similar to what it did with the older HAFI program. It will generally look at the overall valuation for the complex and calculate the value of an individual suite by dividing the total value by the number of co-op homes in the complex.

The second concern has to do with **funding from other sources**. “Any housing owned, subsidized by or under agreement with any level of government” is ineligible. This would include co-ops receiving operating assistance through active Section 95, ILM, or Homes BC agreements. Co-ops that have seen their original Section 95 agreement expire and are in CMHC’s Rental Assistance Program (**RAP**) **would generally be eligible**. Co-ops that have paid off their ILM mortgages but still have an active rent supplement agreement *may* be considered on a case-by-case basis..

BC RAHA is open to housing co-operative members through a “**Homeowner**” application. (If your co-op has a renter looking for unit adaptations, there’s an option under the “**Landlord and Tenant**” application form.)

More information and how to apply, check:

<https://www.bchousing.org/housing-assistance/BC-RAHA>

Submitted by Barb Mikulec, housing chair

SAFER: Help with Rent



Are you a senior renter with a low to moderate income? Are you paying more than 30% of your income on rent? If so, you may be eligible for financial assistance through SAFER.

The Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters (**SAFER**) is a provincial program that helps make rents more affordable for BC seniors with low to moderate incomes. SAFER provides monthly cash payments to subsidize rents for BC residents who are age 60 or over.

To be eligible for SAFER you must meet all of the following age and citizenship/residence requirements:

- You are age 60 or older.
- You lived in BC in the 12- month period before you apply.

You, and your partner (with whom you share a home) meet one of the following Canadian citizenship requirements:

- *you are a Canadian citizen*
- *or, you are an immigrant with a private sponsorship that has broken down*
- *or, you have applied for refugee status*
- *or, you are legally in Canada as a permanent resident*

To be eligible for SAFER:

- You must pay more than 30% of your gross (before tax) monthly household income towards rent for your home.

If you live in a manufactured home, this includes pad rental.

However SAFER has income and rent ceiling limits. Not all seniors who pay more than 30% of their gross monthly income for rent are eligible for SAFER. The income limits are based on where you live. These income limits range from \$2400-\$2600 per month depending on where you live.

Applying for SAFER is free

If you think you may be eligible, complete and send in the application form. There is no penalty if you apply and it turns out you are not eligible for SAFER. SAFER is run by BC Housing. If you can use a computer, you can get a form from Shelter Aid For Elderly Renters -- <https://www.bchousing.org/> If you prefer to apply with a paper form you can phone BC Housing at 604-433-2218 or 1-800-257-7756 and they will mail you a form.

Many seniors' organizations in your community can and will assist you with your SAFER applications. COSCO has advocated that the SAFER rent ceilings need to be increased. We know that in the past couple of years rent has increased but the SAFER rent ceiling has not. SAFER needs improvements but it helps low-to-moderate income seniors in BC with their rent.

SAFER is not perfect, but it is a big help!

*Submitted by Marion Pollack
(Delegate from BC FORUM)*

From United Nations 2022 Theme: The Resilience and Contributions of Older Women

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing inequalities, with the past three years intensifying the socioeconomic, environmental, health and climate related impacts on the lives of older persons, especially older women who constitute the majority of older persons.

While older women continue to meaningfully contribute to their political, civil, economic, social and cultural lives; their contributions and experiences remain largely invisible and disregarded, limited by gendered disadvantages accumulated throughout the life course. The intersection between discrimination based on age and gender compounds new and existing inequalities, including negative stereotypes that combine ageism and sexism.

The 2022 theme of **International Day of Older Persons (UNIDOP)** serves as a hall-mark and reminder of the significant role older women play in traversing global challenges and contributing to their solutions with resilience and fortitude.

Recognizing the vital contributions of older women and promoting the inclusion of their voices, perspectives and needs are critical to creating meaningful policies to enhance a holistic response to local, national, and global challenges and catastrophes, UNIDOP 2022 is a call to action and opportunity aimed to embrace the voices of older

women and showcase their resilience and contributions in society, while promoting policy dialogues to enhance the protection of older persons human rights and recognize their contributions to sustainable development.

Objectives of #UNIDOP2022:

- To highlight the resilience of older women in the face of environmental, social, economic and lifelong inequalities
- To raise awareness of the importance of improved world-wide data collection, disaggregated by age and gender
- To call on member states, UN entities, UN Women, and civil society to include older women in the center of all policies, ensuring gender equality as described in the Secretary-General's report, Our Common Agenda

The above was taken directly from the United Nations website on the International Day of Older Persons. For further information go to:

<https://www.un.org/en/observances/older-persons-day>

Submitted by Agnes Jackman



Photo taken from UN website

Grow Old Along With Me, The Best Is Yet To Be

In the mid 1880s, when English poet Robert Browning wrote the tender lines “Grow old along with me, the best is yet to be” for his wife Elizabeth. At that time the average life expectancy in Victorian England was about 50 years. The “upper classes” might live longer, 57 years for Elizabeth and 77 years for Robert, but 50 years would be old for most. The “deserving poor,” those people too old or no longer fit to work lived out their final days in semi-penal institutions called poorhouses or workhouses grudgingly maintained as public charities. A similar philosophy and institutional model for sheltering the old and very poor was adopted in the US and Canada and was in use well into the 20th century.

Today, in Canada, in 2022, thanks to major advances in medicine, science and technology, the average life expectancy is about 82 years. However, compassionate care for the elderly is still not seen as an unmitigated “public good.” Older adults today no longer able to work and who lack independent means or family support may also find themselves living in government funded long-term care homes that can and do take away their autonomy and dignity and ignore their human rights.

It is the growing realization that advances in medicine and longer life spans have not been accompanied by a genuine recognition of the human dignity and worth of older people that has led to the multinational 20th century demand for a UN Convention that will specifically protect the human rights of older people. The proposed UN Convention will be a legally binding instrument that directs governments to enforce the human rights of

all older people, recognize and halt ongoing violations of the human rights of older people and stop government from passing any legislation into law that violates older peoples’ human rights.

The need for such a human rights convention was formally recognized by the UN at a *Multi-stakeholder meeting on the Human Rights of Older Persons*, held in Geneva on August 29-30 this year by the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

Speaking at that UN meeting, Canadian psychiatrist, Kiran Rabheru, of the *International Longevity Centre (ILC)* in Ottawa and *Global Alliance for the Human Rights of Older Persons (GAROP)* said: “The world has never seen such rapid growth of older people living unprecedently long ...lives. Sadly, older people everywhere have been deprived of enjoyment of their fundamental human rights due to age discrimination. This requires prompt action by all stakeholders at every level including the Human Rights Council ... A major driving force behind age discrimination against older persons is “ageism.” Defined as the way we think, feel, and behave towards them because of their age, ageism can be interpersonal, institutional, or self-directed, is largely unconscious, and socially accepted.”

The ILC has now embarked on a campaign to raise awareness of and combat ageism. The federal government has simultaneously initiated a survey to examine the depth and extent of ageism in Canada though it has opted out of involvement in the UN process that will result in a legally binding Convention on the Human Rights of Older Persons.

Submitted by Kathleen Jamieson

Connecting Latin American Seniors

The Metro Vancouver Cross Cultural Seniors Network Society (MVCCSNS) is proud to announce the publication of its Resource Guide in Spanish and English for Latin American seniors living in Vancouver. The Resource Guide is designed to provide Latin seniors with accessible and tested information about the many different resources in Vancouver that can be accessed. It will help to reduce their isolation during COVID-19.

The need for this Guide grew out of a survey of the impacts of COVID-19 on Chinese, Punjabi, Korean and Filipino seniors in Vancouver conducted in their languages in mid 2020 by members of the MVCCSNS. That survey indicated that almost all the seniors interviewed were experiencing food insecurity and felt isolated and lonely. The challenge that some of the MVCCSNS members then took up was finding the best ways to help.

The federal New Horizons program provided the funding for the MVCCSNS 2020 survey which also gave impetus to other initiatives operated by member organizations. New Horizons also provided funding in 2021-22 for a survey of the impacts of the pandemic on 51 Spanish-speaking seniors in Vancouver, a community consultation, and the subsequent production of the Resource Guide in Spanish and English.

Requests have now come from two groups of Spanish-speaking seniors for in-person workshops on the Guide.

Metro Vancouver Cross Cultural Seniors Network Society is the oldest cross-cultural seniors' organization in the Lower Mainland. We bring seniors and senior-serving organizations together to learn from each other and to partner and advocate for solutions to issues affecting all seniors in the Lower Mainland.

*Submitted by Kathleen Jamieson,
Board Member, MVCCSNS*



COSCO Associate Membership



In addition to my \$25 Associate Membership fee, I wish to make a donation of \$ _____ to COSCO.

Name: _____

Address: _____ Postal Code: _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____ E-mail: _____

Date: _____ Signature: _____



COSCO does not share mailing lists with third parties, unless we are required by law to do so.

Associate Membership is \$25 a year. Please make cheques payable to **COSCO** and mail your application to: **Linda Forsythe**, Membership Secretary, E-Mail: membership@coscobc.org
Box 81131 Stn S. Burnaby, Burnaby, BC V5H 4K2 Telephone: (604) 444-4300

For information about **Affiliate (organizational) Membership**, please contact the Membership Secretary.

You can now contribute on our website <http://www.coscobc.org>

