



# COSCO News

Council of Senior Citizens' Organizations of B.C.

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[www.coscobc.ca](http://www.coscobc.ca)



Special Edition, May 2009

Sheila Pither, Treasurer  
Council of Senior Citizens' Organizations  
#1908 - 1330 Harwood Street  
Vancouver, BC, V6E 1S8

Dear Sheila,

On behalf of the Zion Park Manor Committee, advocating against the closure of half of the facility, I wish to thank and recognize COSCO, and namely Past President, Mr. Art Kube, for the pivotal roll your organization played in winning attrition for all but the Special Care Residents.

Without the assistance of COSCO, we would have never made the bus trip to Victoria and sat in the gallery while over 3000 signatures of family and community members were presented to the Liberal Government by Leader of the Official Opposition, Carole James. The families were angry with the high handed and insensitive manner of the Fraser Health Authority in closing a facility that not only met, but exceeded in many ways, acceptable standards. It is the Cloverdale community's only care facility. We now have only half of the funded beds as before closure and no Special Care. But if it wasn't for COSCO I doubt that we would have even won attrition for the complex care residents.

It is because of organizations like COSCO that the seniors are given a voice in a world where the frail and elderly are brushed aside. Because of this we wish to give back with an enclosed cheque \$200 so that in the future you may be able to help citizens like us who have to battle an unfeeling and uncaring Health Authority or Government.

We can't thank you enough for all your guidance and financial support. You have no idea what an uplifting experience it was to hear Mr. Kube say that COSCO could help us fund our campaign. It fueled us to continue at a very difficult and stressful time. All the families that benefited from the attrition will forever be grateful to COSCO.

Sincere Regards,

*Darlene Lasko*

Darlene Lasko

Laurie Harris,

Wendy Budzan

On behalf of the Save Zion Park Manor Committee

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# How 'bout that economy!

Lots of talk about the economy these days – it's a real roller coaster, especially here in B.C., and especially when you look at how it's affecting our sons and daughters at their workplaces.

Premier Gordon Campbell must be feeling some irony. At first, he didn't think the recession was going to affect us very much. He said we were "well positioned" to get through it.

But since January, B.C. has had the worst job losses in the country, according to Statistics Canada. Almost 80,000 men and women have been thrown out of work.

The forest industry is a disaster. Since 2007, a total of 25,000 forestry jobs have disappeared.

Experienced workers, many of whom have spent their lives working in the woods, are wondering how they will support their families when the EI runs out. For others, it already has. What's really galling for them is that while they're struggling to survive, the volume of raw log exports has doubled. They see the logs going down the highway, headed beyond our border, destined to create jobs and opportunities for someone else. And it leaves them wondering whether the Campbell government cares one way or the other about what's happening to them and their loved ones.

The record of the current government is not encouraging on the score of putting people first:

- Job losses – worst in Canada.
- Spending on residential care for seniors – worst in Canada.
- Minimum wage – frozen for eight years, now lowest in Canada (tied with New Brunswick and PEI, which are both increasing it this year).
- Assistance to students who need a good education to support themselves and our economy – worst in Canada.
- Drop in median wage of all workers – worst in Canada. Wages went down 3.4% during the good times. We're the only province to experience such a drop.
- Child poverty – worst in Canada. For five straight years. During the "good times".

# Province falls short on promise, seniors' access to home and residential care drops: study

A major study released April 15, 2009 finds that BC's home and community health care system is in serious decline — the result of reduced access to services and poorly planned restructuring.

An *Uncertain Future for Seniors: BC's Restructuring of Home and Community Health Care 2001-2008* builds on past CCPA studies. It provides detailed evidence related to concerns raised recently by the BC Auditor General, the BC Medical Association and the BC Care Providers Association about the deteriorating state of seniors' care in BC.

Key findings include:

- The provincial government fell short of its 2001 promise to build 5,000 new residential care beds for seniors. Since 2001, 3,589 net new beds have been built — a shortfall of 1,411 beds. The study also provides bed numbers by health authority and municipality.
- All the new beds are assisted living units, which provide lower levels of service than residential care and are not an adequate substitute. (There were 804 fewer residential beds in 2008 than in 2001, but 4,393 new assisted living units were added, for a net new bed total of 3,589.)
- Bed numbers reported by the

Ministry of Health Services did not match those obtained from the health authorities by Freedom of Information request. The 1,753-bed discrepancy resulted from over-counting and inaccurate reporting by the Ministry. The Ministry included ineligible beds in its totals, such as supportive housing units, short-term convalescent care, group homes, independent living units and mental health facilities.

- The original 5,000-bed target was for 2006. Using increases in the population aged 75 and older as a rough estimate of growing demand, the province should have built approximately 6,815 new beds by 2008. The number of seniors aged 85-plus grew by 43% since 2001, while the population between age 75 and 84 increased by 15%.
- Access to residential care dropped by 20.5% since 2001 (access = beds per 1,000 seniors aged 75-plus, excluding assisted living). BC has the lowest access to residential care beds in Canada, after New Brunswick.
- The number of home support clients dropped by 17% since 2001, and the rate of access (clients per

1,000 seniors aged 75+) dropped by 30%. The number of home nursing clients increased, but the rate of access dropped by 11%. Only community rehabilitation has seen an increase in access (up 24%).

- From 2001 to 2007 per capita health care spending increases were lower in BC than in any

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Eight years after Gordon Campbell promised 5,000 more residential care beds, the number of residential care beds available has gone down by 804.

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other province. While funding for home and community health care in BC increased by 37% since 2001, these increases have been inadequate given the rapidly aging population, and the increased reliance on home and community care compared to hospital services.

- The number of people dying each year in residential care increased by 60% between 2001 and 2006 — not because of negligence, but because eligibility has been restricted to seniors with more complex needs, meaning they were in

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# Government policies force seniors into expensive acute care beds

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worse health by the time they could enter residential facilities. However, most of these facilities are not funded to provide palliative services.

- Rather than maintain or increase access to residential and home-based care as the population ages, the province has restricted these services to seniors with more complex needs. The shift to high-needs clients undermines the prevention and early intervention functions of home and community health care. Seniors with lower needs are increasingly required to pay out-of-pocket, rely on family members, or go simply go without access to care.

“When seniors can’t get timely access to these services, they end up in more expensive hospital beds,” says Jeremy Tate, co-author of the study and former Director of Health Facilities Planning at the Capital Regional District in Victoria.

“Being in hospital is hard on the frail elderly, and it blocks beds that could be used by other patients. It’s also extremely expensive.”

The CCPA study offers the only publicly-available, comprehensive accounting of long-term care beds in BC.

“It’s important to set the record straight on bed numbers, but the

government’s failure to deliver on its 5,000-bed promise is just a symptom of deeper problems,” says Marcy Cohen, study co-author, CCPA re-

search associate, and Research Director at the Hospital Employees’ Union.

about \$2 billion per year on these services,” says Jennifer Baumbusch, adjunct professor of nursing at UBC and study co-author.

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**“The government’s failure to deliver on its 5,000 bed promise is just a symptom of deeper problems,” says Marcy Cohen, study co-author.**

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In 2007 the Auditor General asked the Ministry of Health Services to develop a strategic plan for home and community care by March

search associate, and Research Director at the Hospital Employees’ Union.

“We need transparency, public consultation, comprehensive strategic planning and commitment to increase access to care for seniors.”

A second study released the same day, *Innovations in Community Care: From Pilot Project to System*

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**“There is no strategic plan for the home and community care system,” says Jennifer Baumbusch, adjunct professor of nursing at UBC, study co-author.**

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of 2008. The Ministry hired the firm of Deloitte & Touche to prepare a plan, but it has still not been released to the public.

The study authors have forwarded the CCPA study to the Auditor General and expressed concern about the government’s failure to deliver effective planning and stewardship.

“There is no strategic plan for the home and community care system, despite the fact that BC spends

Change, looks at successful case studies around BC that, if scaled up, offer cost-effective solutions.

By focusing on prevention and early intervention, they would significantly enhance the sustainability of BC’s overall health system.

Both studies are available at [www.policyalternatives.ca](http://www.policyalternatives.ca). A table showing regional and municipal changes in residential care and assisted living beds is also available.

# Ron Parks finds P3 projects have higher costs, bias and secrecy

British Columbia's most respected forensic accountant, Ron Parks, along with his colleague Rosanne Terhart, has found that public private partnerships (P3s) are costly for taxpayers.

They also find a consistent pro-privatization bias in the way that the B.C. government (through Partnerships BC) compares costs when assessing major projects.

On top of this, the B.C. government is routinely denying access to critical information, which limits the public's ability to know that its interests are protected on P3 projects.

Parks and Terhart evaluated four P3 projects: the Abbotsford Regional Hospital and Cancer Centre, the Sea-to-Sky Highway Improvement, the Academic Ambulatory Care Centre (Diamond Centre) and the Canada Line.

Based on this review, they find that developing the projects as P3s is more expensive than if they were done publicly.

In the case of the Diamond Centre – they report that the actual nominal cost of a P3 was more than double that of a publicly procured project.

Barry O'Neill, president of the B.C. division of the Canadian Union of Public Employees, says that this report is clear evidence that the B.C. Liberals have stacked the deck in

favour of privatizing the services people count on.

"It's a taxpayer rip-off, plain and simple. The hundreds of millions of extra dollars we pay in what amounts to 'privatization premiums' should be used to improve roads, transit, schools and health care," says O'Neill.

O'Neill says that P3 problems around the world, including the current problems faced by the Macquarie Group to secure financing for the Port Mann Bridge, underscore the fact that privatization is plagued by instability and risk to taxpayers.

"Add to this the report's finding that private projects actually cost more and I ask why we would keep going down this road."

O'Neill says that this should give pause for major projects, like sewage treatment in Greater Victoria, where the Campbell government is advocating a P3.

Parks' report was commissioned by CUPE BC. Ron Parks and Rosanne Terhart are with the firm Blair Mackay Mynett Valuations Inc.

The full report and a background-er can be found at [www.keepitpublic.ca](http://www.keepitpublic.ca).

## BY THE NUMBERS

- Hospitals closed, downsized or downgraded in last eight years – 71.
- Acute care beds per capita – 40% below Canadian average.
- Residential care beds for seniors – down 800.
- Residential care beds per capita – second worst in Canada.
- Spending on seniors care per capita – worst in Canada.
- Which residential care beds are being closed – public and non-profit.
- Where funding is being directed – private for-profit beds operated with no province-wide standards of care.
- Number of people receiving home support – cut 24%.
- British Columbians who don't have a family doctor – up to 200,000.
- Number of years since Campbell signed a federal-provincial accord to provide wait time guarantees – 5.
- Wait time guarantees in place – 0.
- Overall health care funding – 7th in Canada, down from 2nd.

# Rafe Mair addresses COSCO meeting on key B.C. election issues

*Rafe Mair, one of Canada's best known political commentators, addressed a COSCO delegate meeting April 17th. Below is an article in which he highlights some of the points he made during his speech. You can see a video of his full presentation at <http://workingtv.com/main3.html>. — Editor*

**By Rafe Mair**

I received an email from a man saying he has a tough time bringing himself to vote NDP. He asked for my comment and here it is. I hope you find it of interest.

Please pass this on so we can provide information where the media will not.

Let me take a moment to answer your question which is one that has troubled a lot of people including myself.

When I was in government (1975-80) I was Minister, first, for Consumer and Corporate Affairs. During that time I passed more consumer legislation than anyone before or since including licensing Car dealers (with six of them in caucus setting their collective hair on fire) forced the Banks to acknowledge and obey BC laws for the first time, forced serious reporting changes to the Vancouver Stock Exchange for which they have never forgiven me, licensed Travel Agents and made them create a fund to bring home passengers stranded by bankrupt

charter companies and so on.

As Environment Minister I stopped the government killing of wolves, stopped exploration for and mining of uranium and went to Seattle and negotiated the saving of the Skagit River from a raising of the Ross Dam which Seattle was permitted to do under a 1941 deal with the BC government.

support Bill Bennett (the best premier BC ever had, in my view); in 2009 I will support Carole James.

Now as to the point that Campbell "cleaned up the mess". Perhaps, but let's be fair and observe that the NDP were struck by the "Asian 'flu" and in fact balanced the budget in their last year. It's also interesting to note that under the Liberals the

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"...there is no way in the world I could have ever done these things for the public of BC had Gordon Campbell been Premier."

As Minister of Health I brought in the Homecare program and Palliative Care.

I tell you all these things because there is no way in the world I could have ever done these things for the public of BC had Gordon Campbell been Premier.

The political ground has shifted dramatically and the present day version of the old Socreds is, I think, the party Carole James leads. I know that there are supporters of Ms James that are hard line lefties just as when I was with Bill Bennett there were supporters and indeed members of Caucus who were near fascists. That sort of thing will always happen in a two party system.

If it were 1975 all over again, I'd

Vancouver Convention Centre is over budget \$400 million, more than double the cost of the "fast ferries". For a fuller account of the Liberals financial record may I refer you to my article in [www.thetyee.ca](http://www.thetyee.ca).

Now let's look at 2009. This election, for me, boils down to a single issue - the environment and the plans by Campbell to deface and destroy the province I was born in and love and where 7 out of 8 of my grandchildren live. The energy policy, which no one but industry had a hand in formulating, will ruin an ever increasing number of rivers, not to look after BC's energy needs, but mostly, American requirements. I have nothing against Americans

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# Rafe Mair on the issues

*Continued from Page 6*

and in fact have often been accused of being too lenient with them, but I don't want to see us sacrifice our environment rivers so they can preserve theirs. This policy is government by the North America Free Trade Agreement and our experts

al price 45 years ago but which has since then given us regular power at 1/10th the cost they pay in California. Dr Marvin Shaffer at SFU calls this new business technique "buy high, sell low"!

If Campbell is returned we will be, like Bre'r Rabbit, stuck to the

cial ruination of the province?

I don't believe so for a moment. But let us assume for the sake of argument an NDP government made a balls-up of the economy. That can be repaired by a new government. However, once we have established the Campbell Energy Plan for another four years that will be the end of BC Hydro and the end of hundreds of rivers. Forever.

I cannot allow that to happen without giving it the fight of my life.

I, a former Socred minister, with the same core values I had then, am supporting and will vote for Carole James.

PS Please take the time to look at [www.saveourrivers.ca](http://www.saveourrivers.ca) and get the bigger picture.

"The political ground has shifted dramatically and the present day version of the old Socreds is, I think, the party Carole James

tell us three things-

1. Once an American company has access to our water for any reason, it can use it for any reason. Including selling bulk water exports.

2. Once an American company has tenure on Canadian water and is using it, that tenure cannot be terminated either by contract or legislation.

3. Once we are exporting energy, we cannot reduce that supply to the US without reducing our own usage by a similar amount (this is the "Proportionality Clause").

Moreover, the profits which BC Hydro now pays into our treasury will go as dividends to shareholders of Companies like General Electric, Ledcor and Axos. BC Hydro, forced by this government to pay huge amounts for energy that they can't even break even with when they sell it, will bankrupt BC Hydro for which we paid a high environment-

American Tar Baby.

There is but one other choice, vote NDP.

But will this not mean the finan-

## BY THE NUMBERS

- Value of the deal to outsource part of BC Hydro to an American firm, in which a key Campbell insider was involved – \$1.45 billion.
- Number of rivers and streams that have been sold off to private interests – approaching 200.
- Additional applications by private power producers for more power plants, transmission lines and access roads (some through protected old growth forest) – 582.
- Number of applications that the Campbell government has turned down after public protest – 1. (The company recently announced that it is re-applying.)
- Cost of power that BC Hydro, now forbidden from generating green energy itself, must instead buy from IPPs – at least 10 times as much as public power.
- Amount Hydro rates will go up this year and next – 11%.

# Special deals and secrecy are the hallmarks of this government

*"Under the Liberals the business of government is conducted amid some of the lowest standards of conduct and ethics anywhere in the country," Globe and Mail, April 18, 2009.*

**T**he secrecy, corruption trial and unanswered questions swirling around the B.C. Rail scandal have now dragged on longer than Watergate.

Day after day, month after month, Premier Campbell has been asked to provide some answers. He consistently refuses. He says it's before the courts. He says that even when the question is unrelated to the court case. He says that as though he really believes any judge would base a decision on what the premier might say.

The answers are still not forthcoming on the Kinsella connection, which was revealed in documents sought by the defense, but it otherwise not related to the court case.

The documents show that Patrick Kinsella, the premier's two-time campaign manager, was under contract to B.C. Rail during the time when Gordon Campbell was going about breaking his promise and selling the railroad.

Kinsella collected almost \$300,000 from the public purse. What did he do to earn it? No-one will say.

The documents also suggest that Kinsella was simultaneously under contract to CN Rail – in other words, that he was working for both the buyer and the seller.

These have been suggestions in the media that the whole sale was "rigged". These are questions that should be answered. We deserve answers. Instead, there's a dark cloud of secrecy over the whole affair, consistent stonewalling by the government.

After the last four years, this attitude should be no surprise.

Gordon Campbell has set a high-water mark for secrecy. He is behaving as though he is determined to completely shatter his ringing promise to run "the most open, democratic and accountable government in Canada."

Many government decisions that affect us are made by a small inner circle. These highly paid unelected advisors meet behind closed doors, handing out billions of public dollars in contracts.

Just think of the new and completely unaccountable, unelected structure imposed on Translink. A handful of highly paid bureaucrats now has the power to impose new taxes on people in Metro Vancouver. It is truly taxation without representation.

Far from promoting openness and accountability, the Campbell

government has passed amendment after amendment to restrict and limit access to public information. He's done that a total of 16 times, suggesting there's a lot he doesn't want us to know.

Despite the billions of public dollars involved, he has clamped a veil of secrecy on the operations of the Vancouver Olympic Organizing Committee and B.C. Ferries. He's even made it tougher to get information about the Medical Services Plan.

Here's another example. The ultimate tool to get at the truth is the public inquiry. Public inquiries are not appointed often. Usually it takes something pretty serious. But Gordon Campbell has changed the law so he and the cabinet can edit public inquiry reports before the rest of us even see them. In other words, he can now remove anything he doesn't want us to know.

And of course, there is the infamous gag law. That was an attempt to silence groups and individuals who want to speak out before or during an election. The law was thrown out by the B.C. Supreme Court, but that took time, and for weeks legitimately public voices were silenced.

Finally, here's something you don't see every day. The culture of secrecy is so pervasive in the Campbell government that they have commissioned a special rubber stamp. It says, "Shred after meeting."



# While ordinary people fall behind, huge pay increases for a select few

In July, 2006, Gordon Campbell increased salaries for his top bureaucrats and closest insiders. He promised he would not review their salaries again for another four years.

In direct violation of that promise, his government announced more massive pay increases on Aug. 8, 2008. They withheld the announcement for a week in the arrogant belief no one would notice it on Friday afternoon during the opening ceremonies of the Summer Olympics.

Mr. Campbell increased the wage range for most deputy ministers by 35 percent to a maximum of \$299,215. He increased his own deputy's wage range by 43 percent to \$348,600.

Within these ranges, he awarded raises that will cost you \$3.15 million a year. It is the third time he has spent millions to give large increases to those who are already at the top, while keeping the minimum wage frozen for seven straight years. B.C. is the only province that has not increased its minimum wage in 2008. The B.C. Liberals still say they have no intention of doing so.

"In a stunningly ill-timed gesture, the premier has chosen this, of all moments, to fatten the mandarins' paycheques," editorialized the Victoria Times-Colonist, Aug. 12, 2008, adding that the huge raises contrast starkly with the experience of ordinary families.

The "obscene pay hikes for senior bureaucrats show Campbell is out of touch," said The Province, Sept. 4, 2008.

"This is about a lot more than money," added the Nanaimo Daily

## Wage trends in B.C.

|                                   |   |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| <b>Gordon Campbell.....</b>       | <b>54%</b>                                      |
| <b>Campbell's advisors .....</b>  | <b>43%</b>                                      |
| <b>Translink directors .....</b>  | <b>500%</b>                                     |
| <b>CEOs of Crown Corps. ....</b>  | <b>166%</b>                                     |
| <b>B.C. Ferries directors....</b> | <b>60%</b>                                      |
| <b>Median wage.....</b>           | <b>down 3.4%</b>                                |
| <b>Minimum wage.....</b>          | <i>frozen for eight years, lowest in Canada</i> |

News, Sept. 23, 2008. "It's about a government that really does seem to be arrogant and out of touch with B.C."

It is arrogant. It is disrespectful. But it is perfectly in character. Mr. Campbell has always favoured the well-off, the connected, the corporate elite. When he talks about increasing prosperity, he's not talking about working families. His version of increased prosperity is targeted at those who are already in the highest income bracket.

The 2006 census, the most recent conducted, shows that the median earnings of full-time workers in B.C. dropped 3.4 percent between 2000 and 2005. As a result of Mr. Campbell's determination that nothing is

too good for those at the top, ordinary B.C. workers are the only ones in Canada who have experienced such a drop in earnings during times of economic growth.

The growing income inequality and stagnant wages are the inevitable result of deliberate actions taken by the Campbell government. Tear up contracts, despite promises it would never happen. Impose wage cuts on working people. Weaken employment standards so they're almost meaningless. (The government doesn't even enforce the watered-down laws; workers who have been mistreated by an unscrupulous employer must download a "self-help" kit from the internet.) Freeze the minimum wage. Make it harder for workers to join a union, and easier for an employer to interfere. Bring in temporary foreign workers to build public projects like the RAV line at \$5 an hour under working conditions the B.C. Human Rights Tribunal describes as tainted with coercion and intimidation.

Under Mr. Campbell, a privileged few can count on huge pay increases and tax breaks. For everyone else, there's a growing wage gap, more low-wage and temporary jobs, more insecurity, and more of our money going to those who already have the most.

- From *The Advocate*, newsletter of B.C. FORUM, a COSCO affiliate representing retired workers.

## BY THE NUMBERS

- Schools closed – 177.
- Classrooms that violate class size and compositions limits – 14,000 plus.
- Tuition – double.
- Student debt – grown from lowest to second worst in Canada.
- Assistance to students – plunged from best to worst (cancelled student grants, forced more reliance on loans).
- Amount that more private power projects could add to electricity costs – \$400 million a year (Brian Wallace, spokesman for BC Hydro's large industrial customers, Sun, Mar. 18, 2009)
- Applications to take scarce farmland out of the Agricultural Land Reserve approved since the Campbell government weakened the Agricultural Land Commission – over 70%.
- Number of years B.C. has had worst child poverty rate in Canada – 5.
- Number of years the government has frozen B.C.'s minimum wage – 8.
- Amount of increase in ferry rates since B.C. Ferries was privatized – almost double.

# Membership Application

**Please mail to the address below**

- I wish to join COSCO as an Associate Member. I enclose my \$25 membership fee.
- I wish to make a donation to COSCO. Please find enclosed a cheque for \$\_\_\_\_\_.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
(PLEASE PRINT)

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

- Please make cheques payable to COSCO.
- Mail your application to Ernie Bayer, Membership Secretary, 6079 - 184 A Street, Surrey, BC V3S 7P7 604 576-9734.
- Seniors groups or organizations wishing information about joining COSCO should write or phone Ernie Bayer and request a membership package.