



COSCO News

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Seniors alert! Your welfare is at risk!

By Sylvia MacLeay,
President,
COSCO BC

As the Autumn approaches, serious issues in the economy of BC put many Seniors in danger of dropping from the middle class into the ranks of the poor.

The losses caused by the recession may recover slowly (if ever) but many Seniors may never regain the security that they once enjoyed. Even in hard times, there are issues that are so important that Seniors must advocate with all governments for improvements essential for their welfare.

COSCO will continue to work for the issues that members tell us are essential for Seniors.

Plans for a large conference in the fall of 2010 will be postponed as the funding needed appears to be unavailable.

The Illness and Accident program will continue and expand. We have trainers available to present the power point presentations (15 of them). They have been translated into Chinese and Punjabi.

Plans are underway for five new programs this year.

A program on "assertiveness" for

Seniors is underway to assist Seniors in speaking out at meetings on issues that may affect their welfare.

COSCO will continue to advocate for the needs of Seniors with Municipal, Provincial, and Federal governments.

COSCO will also support the formation of a united pan-Canadian organization focusing on the welfare and issues of importance to Seniors across Canada.

Here are five major issues that COSCO will focus on. There are many others of importance that will be addressed as well:

1. The Harmonized Sales Tax (HST)

Next July the BC government plans to charge a flat tax of 12% on most of the things that you purchase.

This includes such things as some groceries, restaurant meals, hydro, natural gas, all non-prescription drugstore purchases, all entertainment tickets, travel costs, home heating, home repairs and renovation.

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- And much more!

Postmaster, please deliver to:

Council Of Senior Citizens' Organizations Of BC (COSCO)

Board of Directors for 2009/2010

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14372 Ridge Crescent, Surrey, V3X 1B6

sscribe@telus.net 604 594-5023

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Soren Bech

The future is in our hands too

There is a tendency – once we get to a certain age – to step back and let the younger folks take over. In some endeavours, that makes sense. By the time we hit retirement age, most of us are ready to ease up on strenuous physical work. Wrestling. Brick-laying. Mixing concrete by hand. By all means, in these and indeed every other area, we need to encourage the young to show what they can do.

But it would be a serious mistake for us to fall silent. And if we take that easy road, it could lead to a world that none of us would wish on our children and grandchildren.

Experience counts. We may be older. We may move a little more slowly and carefully than we used to. But we're a lot more fuel efficient.

Too many public policies today are driven by myths, greed, and a startling lack of knowledge and experience of what things were like when we were starting our lives.

There are hundreds of TV channels and millions of websites. We have more information at our fingertips than ever before. But information is not reality. Information is not knowledge and experience. And information does not on its own build inclusive, healthy communities.

Many of our neighbours do not remember a Canada without Medicare. Some of them have even been convinced that private, for-profit care would be an improvement. Those of us who remember what it was like, and saw families destroyed by the financial burden of caring for a loved one, must stay engaged in such debates.

In fact, it's up to us to take on those vital issues, because the perspective we bring to the table is unique. Through COSCO, and the many seniors' organizations who stand together through COSCO, we can help shape the future. We can stay engaged. We can make our voices heard. We can get the attention of governments, warn them when they're on the wrong track, and push them to take actions that will help ensure, day by day, month by month, that the world will be a little better for our children and grandchildren.

Year ahead promises to be busy and challenging for COSCO and seniors in British Columbia

Continued from Page 1

tions, visits to the doctor and dentist and much more.

The stated aim of this tax is to charge business a one time only value added tax making BC more competitive with other countries.

To pay for this the 12% tax grab on all citizens will no doubt more than offset the loss of present business taxes.

Seniors, most of whom are on fixed incomes, people with disabilities, and all low income citizens will be significantly negatively affected.

We have until July 1, 2010 to *STOP* this.

2. Pension Plans

Both federal and private plans are facing severe problems. These plans were based on a retirement age of 65, and a life expectancy of 68. Now seniors often live 30-35 years after retiring.

The plans have not been indexed properly for inflation and are not actuarially sound.

Some plans are cutting payments and benefits. Some companies have borrowed from the pension funds and have not paid any interest nor returned the money to the fund.

Worse, when bankruptcies occurs the pension fund becomes a company asset and is paid out to the major debtors, leav-

ing the employees and retirees high and dry.

Pension Reform is essential. Uniformity of regulations and transferability across Canada are needed.

In fact every working Canadian should be able to contribute to a safe, well managed, conservatively invested pension plan.

3. Health care

Public health care is already being cut due to deficits in the health authorities. Indications are that the most vulnerable will suffer the most.

Seniors must be prepared to act as watchdogs in their own areas and to oppose any reductions that put seniors and others at risk.

Illness and accident prevention are important to maintain good health.

Substantial improvements in adequate Home Care and Home Support (the new phrase is Independent Living) would reduce the need for costly emergency room visits and early placement in residential care facilities.

4. Prescription Drugs

Costs have escalated in recent years to become a major burden for Seniors. The combined costs of food, housing, and prescription drugs are often more than Seniors receive each month.

This leads to unhealthy eating, bad health, and unsuitable or no housing.

Canada needs a National Drug Plan including a formulary listing all of the safe properly tested drugs available to Canadians.

Bulk buying from pharmaceutical companies has helped many countries to reduce drug costs.

5. Affordable Housing

Governments have not invested in enough subsidized housing to meet the needs of low income Seniors.

Real estate values and rents have escalated beyond the ability of many to pay.

The result is that living arrangements are often unsatisfactory or Seniors are homeless.

A busy year ahead

The upcoming months from Autumn 2009 to Summer 2010 should be busy and challenging.

The economic situation hopefully will begin to improve although funding will be a problem.

The Olympics will showcase BC to the world so we wish them well, regardless of any reservations we may feel.

Seniors are survivors. When things get tough Seniors will rise to the occasion.

It may seem that we are being given lemons, so let us work hard and make both lemonade and lemon pie!



Seniors' Health, Housing and Income in a Global Age-Friendly Community

**Conference Report
outlines many positive
initiatives to recognize
the lasting contributions
that seniors have made
and can continue to
make after retirement**

**By Sylvia MacLeay,
President
COSCO BC**

The final report on the 2008 COSCO conference titled *Seniors Health, Housing, and Income in a Global Age-Friendly Community* is now being distributed to participants and sponsors, and is available for download from our website, www.coscobc.ca.

With this major initiative, COSCO wanted to bring seniors from all over the province together to listen to the experts in many areas important to older adults.

Over 400 people, mostly seniors, listened to 56 expert presenters.

The “best practices” from each

area are listed for each topic in the report.

Seniors need be proactive in working together to obtain these goals. Modern day decision makers listen only to groups with the power of numbers and strong advocates.

The future for seniors in BC will be directly proportional to the actions taken by seniors to ensure that their personal needs are met and that Canadian society develops in ways future generations will cherish.

Accurately predicting the future is impossible, but some things seem clear.

Increased numbers of seniors will live active lives in better health for 30 plus years in retirement. Financial Planning for retirement must be a life long priority to fund long lives.

Many of today's pension plans whether offering defined benefits or defined contributions, either private or public, are not actuarially sound. Changes must be made.

Many seniors will work either full or part time after retirement. Some will work because they need to and

others because they want to. Seniors have a good work ethic, are reliable and have years of experience. The economy of BC needs them.

Seniors will be a larger demographic group in the population. If we can unite to act on our needs and advice, politicians will listen and act.

Modern technology must be used by seniors to ensure that they are informed about their needs so that they can be proactive on their own behalf.

Ageism must be eradicated. Seniors like all adults must be involved in decisions that affect them. Those with severe disabilities should have a seniors' advocate acting for them with caregivers when they can not represent themselves.

Seniors will continue to volunteer, they like to help others but they are not cheap labour. At the very least they should not be “out of pocket” when they work hard for others.

The future for BC Seniors will be good if we work hard to promote our needs and remain firm on issues that could weaken or strengthen the very fabric of Canada.

Conference showcased the need for changes in public policies and attitudes towards seniors

By Art Kube

In the last eight years, the Council of Senior Citizens' Organizations of British Columbia (COSCO) has been the undisputed voice fighting for seniors' rights and the protection of social programs. This fight has been very challenging but it helped us to strengthen COSCO and at the same time allowed us to make common cause with a good number of kindred organizations.

In the struggle of fighting for seniors' rights and a civil society we gained a lot of anecdotal knowledge which showed us in broad terms the direction we should be going.

We recognized that: "letting the young folks do it," was no longer appropriate, nor was the attitude towards seniors of: "Dearie, don't worry, we'll do it for you." This is not an endearment but a patronizing form of ageism.

The other thing we faced in the development of public policy was the perception that seniors were an undue burden on the state and therefore a threat to universal social programs.

Nothing reflected that more than the Provincial Government's cuts to Pharmacare and other seniors' entitlement programs. The Finance Minister's mantra was, "Let the rich seniors pay."

Even well-meaning people thought they knew what was good

for seniors, and when we told them that seniors knew what's good for seniors, we were looked upon as uppity and ungrateful.

We in the leadership of the seniors' movement were determined to enact a paradigm shift from the present government view that seniors constitute an undue burden on the state, to a view which seniors and progressive voices adhere to: namely that society should celebrate our increased longevity and that we recognize seniors as the greatest under-utilized resource in society.

In COSCO we have exercised and applied this underutilized resource by developing programs of "seniors helping seniors" and by insisting "don't plan for seniors – plan with seniors".

The Conference Seniors Health, Housing and Income in a Global Age – Friendly Community was our way of showcasing the important issues for seniors, the changing attitudes of seniors and the necessary changes in attitudes towards seniors.

There is no doubt among the conference participants that we made progress on all counts, but we have a long way to go. Forces of the status quo are deeply entrenched and we see some already fighting back by giving only lip service to the prin-

ciple of "planning with seniors." My hope is that more and more seniors will promote the utilization of that under-utilized resource and join us in building that Age Friendly Community, Province, Country and the World.

As the chair of the conference organizing committee, I'd like to thank all committee members for their

We were determined to enact a paradigm shift from the present government view that seniors constitute an undue burden on the state. Instead, society should celebrate our increased longevity and recognize seniors as the greatest under-utilized resource in society.

outstanding contribution, also all the funders without whose help we could not have done it, and also all the presenters who contributed to the quality of the proceedings.

Most of all I'd like to thank the participants who have gone back to their communities and hopefully applied the knowledge they have gained in building Age-Friendly Communities.

Art Kube was President of COSCO and chaired the conference planning committee. He is now the President of the National Pensioners and Senior Citizens Federation.

UPDATE

COSCO's illness and accident prevention project

- Five more workshop topics will be added this fall as part of COSCO's strong commitment to the well-being of seniors

By Sheila Pither
Project Co-ordinator

More than 2,000 seniors have attended COSCO's wellness promotion workshops since our health literacy program began in the spring of 2007.

We began with one topic, Falls Prevention, and it still remains one of our most popular choices for groups all around the province.

But now we have added 10 more workshops. We've trained more than 50 volunteer facilitators.

We've even been featured in a scholarly publication called *Researching Transitions in Lifelong Learning*.

Our chapter in the book is rather irreverently titled: *Well, If the Government Won't Do It, We Bloody Well Will!*

Those few words pretty well sum up COSCO's commitment to the well-being of seniors, not only in British Columbia but nationally and internationally.

A wide variety of groups have chosen to make our workshops part of their programs.

In order to be able to present our sessions free of charge we have sought funding from New Horizons for Seniors, the Canadian Council on Learning, the provincial health

authorities, the provincial government and the Union of B.C. Municipalities.

COSCO gratefully acknowledges the financial help we have been given but we are equally grateful for the encouragement we have received all along the way.

Wherever we have gone to tell people about our project we have been encouraged to continue to expand the program.

Five more topics will be added to the list this fall.

The workshops are based on the conviction that individuals have the power to make real differences in their own health and safety.

People who attend are asked to make specific plans about how they will alter their surroundings and their behaviour to increase the likelihood that they will avoid many of the health and safety traps that we all face.

Nobody has to trip on a scatter rug in their own home.

People can learn to read food labels to make healthy choices.

Being prepared for emergencies isn't rocket science. In other words, the workshops try to show participants simple ways to make a significant difference in their own lives.

All of this sounds preachy, but that isn't what we do.

Our facilitators are encouragers.

We know that our audiences are capable, mature adults who can make up their own minds about how to live their lives.

We abide by the COSCO motto: "Don't plan for seniors. Plan with seniors."

It's easy to book a workshop for your senior group.

Just email me at pither470@shaw.ca or phone 604 684-9720.

I will send you a descriptive list of the available workshops or you can find them listed on the COSCO website.

Choose the one you want, decide upon when and where you want to hold the workshop and estimate the number of people who will be attending.

I'll take it from there.

More information

For more information about COSCO's expanding list of workshops for seniors, contact:

- Sheila Pither
pither470@shaw.ca
604 684-9720

Or visit:

- www.coscobc.ca

Seniors again on the front line as government cuts health care

They're at it again.
Cutting health services.
Going back on their word
to seniors.

The provincial government has ordered health authorities to cut \$360 million from their budgets. It's already clear that seniors' services will be among the first to go.

Some long-term beds are being closed, reviving memories of earlier government decisions that separated married couples and forced seniors to move far from their families.

Preventive services that help keep seniors out of institutions are also being cut.

For example, funding for the White Rock - Surrey Come Share Society's senior support services has been completely eliminated. Come Share executive director Sue Thomson said she is unsure if the society will be able to continue operations without the \$161,820 it has received annually from Fraser Health.

"It will be very tough to continue, says Sue Thomson, Executive Director of the society. "That was our core funding. Without that, we won't be able to operate like we have been. It's devastating."

Thomson says it means seniors in the community will lose:

- Outreach workers who are the 'life line' to programs and benefits for isolated seniors.

- Congregate meals offered at seven different sites providing inexpensive nutrition and social interaction.
- Information and referral to mitigate disabilities and navigate through government bureaucracy.
- Caregiver support, without which both the caregivers and those cared for become at risk.
- Volunteers, presently numbering 140, who provide vital social interaction and links to the community.

"For 17 years, with no increase in government funding, we have provided these services through effective use of grants, donations, and volunteers," says Thomson. "Without Fraser Health's core funding, we can't carry on all these vital community services."

Funding for the Langley Seniors Resource Centre's outreach program has also been cut.

The Langley program serves 650 seniors, many of whom do not have families nearby, at a cost of \$86,000 a year.

Fraser Health officials say funding will be cut to 12 different organizations that provide outreach and assistance programs to cut a total of \$450,000 from the health authority's budget.

"These are the exact programs that keep people out of acute care beds," says NDP health critic Adrian Dix. "The programs save money and they improve the quality of life for

seniors. And these are the programs they close with 30 days notice?"

All of the cuts take effect Sept. 30.

The B.C. Health Coalition, in a statement issued in mid-August, says the cuts to seniors' programs are short-sighted.

The Coalition says it is deeply concerned that cuts to seniors programs will create more financial pressures, not less, in the long run.

"Cutting services to seniors will do nothing to solve the financial challenges faced by Health Authorities across the province," says Rachel Tutte, co-chair of the BC Health Coalition.

"Programs such as those served through the Langley Seniors Resource Centre are essential to maintaining the health and wellness of seniors, keeping them out of acute care, and therefore costing the system less," she said.

"The BC Health Coalition has been calling on this government to recognize that providing programs to seniors and people with disabilities that enable them to be healthy by being active and part of a community is an essential part of our public health care system.

"Cuts to these programs often lead to more rapid deterioration of the health of seniors and in an increase in the need for more health services, increasing financial pressure on the health care system," said Tutte.

Government's HST plan called "biggest tax shift in B.C. history"

An article in the Tyee on-line news magazine (theTyee.ca) describes the provincial government's plan to harmonize sales taxes as the biggest tax shift in B.C. history. Corporations will pay less. People will pay more.

"Premier Campbell and Finance Minister Colin Hansen admit that their harmonized sales tax (HST) shifts \$1.9 billion in tax from businesses to B.C. families," writes correspondent David Schreck.

"That is what it means when they say the tax saves businesses \$1.9 billion per year while keeping the government revenue neutral; in other words, you pay more to make up for what businesses will save.

"You will do that by paying a 12% HST on almost everything that currently attracts only a 5% GST," he says.

"A shift of \$1.9 billion per year from businesses to B.C. families makes the HST the biggest tax shift in B.C. history."

As a comparison, Schreck says Campbell's radical 2001 tax cuts cost \$1.5 billion with just 8,000 people receiving 14% of the benefits.

His 50% increase in MSP premiums in 2002 is costing B.C. families about \$450 million per year.

"It is hard to find anything that comes close to the \$1.9 billion per year HST tax shift," says Schreck.

"Dividing that (amount) by B.C.'s 4.4 million population produces an average tax shift of \$428 for each

person, infant to senior; \$1,714 for a family of four.

"Of course all families are not equal. As a proportion of their income, high income families will devote less to paying the HST than middle income families, so the HST is regressive," he adds.

In other words, the tax shift will hit hardest at those who can least afford it, including seniors on fixed incomes.

B.C. NDP Leader Carole James says the New Democrats' petition to stop the Harmonized Sales Tax (HST) passed the 30,000 mark in mid-August, just two weeks into the campaign as public anger continues to grow.

"Over 30,000 people have signed the NDP petition to stop the HST," said James. "Many more have signed hard copies of the petition at rallies as people across the province join the New Democrats in fighting this tax grab by Gordon Campbell. These numbers are indicative of the level of anger being felt by British Columbians over the Premier's HST betrayal."

James says she's heard an overwhelming amount of concern about this unfair new tax.

"British Columbians from all walks of life are expressing deep concern over this regressive tax and the impact it will have on average families and businesses. And they are questioning the Premier's complete reversal on the HST just weeks after he claimed he had no plans to

implement it," said James.

Around the province, e-mail is sizzling with calls to action, and a "No BC HST" group started by 24 Hours columnist Bill Tieleman has surged well past 100,000 members.

"It is time to act before it is too late," says one e-mail forwarded to COSCO News, reflecting the common theme. "Let those MLAs know how happy we are."

"We have calculated that the impact of this will be more costly for seniors than anyone has reported," says another, tallying the cost of increased taxes on cable TV, electricity, hair cuts, heating fuel, movie tickets, will preparation, magazine and newspaper subscriptions, telephone, travel, vitamins, movie tickets, a cup of coffee at Tim Horton's and more – hundreds of dollars a year more for items and services that seniors depend on.

The Vancouver Sun reported Aug. 13 that the average cost for natural gas and electricity will jump by \$144 a year as a result of Campbell's tax shift. And that's on top of already planned Hydro rate increases.

Fred Coates, president of the BC Old Age Pensioners Organization, said members in 150 branches across B.C. are reeling under the weight of all the recent news about tax hikes and health care cuts, reported the Sun.

"I don't think you can pin it down to utilities. It's everything. This tax is hitting from the cable to the grave, you could say," Coates said.

Hold onto your wallet – you’re going to be paying more

Get ready to pay more for virtually everything you and your family need to run your household.

A long list of goods and services that were previously exempt from provincial sales tax will cost 7 per cent more if the Campbell government proceeds with its plan to “harmonize” the PST and GST on July 1, 2010.

These items were granted provincial sales tax exemptions for good reason.

Many of them are essentials that families must purchase.

Others support the public interest by encouraging the purchase of safety items and environmentally friendly products.

Starting on July 1st, according to a list published in the Victoria Times-Colonist, the following is a partial accounting of the goods and services that will cost you and your family more if the HST is adopted:

- Residential fuels and heat
- Basic cable TV
- Residential telephone service
- All food products except basic groceries
- Non-prescription medications
- Vitamins, dietary supplements
- Restaurant meals
- Bicycles
- School supplies
- Magazines and newspapers

- Work-related safety equipment of household appliances
- Safety helmets
- Life jackets
- First aid kits
- Smoke detectors
- Fire extinguishers
- Energy conservation equipment and services
- Personal services
- Dry cleaning
- Needed repair and maintenance
- Household repair and maintenance (painting, plumbing, electrical, hedge trimming, etc.)
- Real estate fees
- Membership fees
- Admission fees
- Tourism services
- Funeral services
- Professional services
- Airline fares

COSCO concerned that HST will hurt seniors who live on fixed incomes

“I’m very disappointed that Premier Campbell has decided to increase sales taxes, just three months after he promised he wouldn’t do it,” says Sylvia MacLeay, President of the Council of Senior Citizens’ Organizations of BC (COSCO).

“Many seniors who worked for years and saved for their retirement lost thousands of dollars in the market downturn. They’re stretched to the limit. They don’t have any money to spare. But with his plan to harmonize the PST and the GST, Mr. Campbell will take even more money out of their pockets,” she said following the August meeting of the COSCO BC Executive.

MacLeay said the new HST will hit seniors particularly hard.

“Mr. Campbell will be adding 7 per cent to the cost of a lot of services and products that are basic to people’s lives. It will cost us more for home heating fuel, telephone service, and the cable TV that’s often our main entertainment. It will cost us more for a hair cut, household repairs, and vitamins. It will cost us more for a plane ticket to visit our grandchildren, and more for non-prescription drugs to ease our aches and pains,” she said.

“I know Mr. Campbell says the HST will be good for big corporations. It’s a shame he doesn’t seem to realize that it’s going to hurt the elderly and their families. It doesn’t do much for his credibility either,” said MacLeay.

Here's how to form a COSCO Branch in your own community

In the next year COSCO's goal is to encourage organizations around the province to form branches in their own communities.

We have one branch at present on the Sunshine Coast. The members there have amply demonstrated the power that comes with being able to count on other groups when challenges come along that affect the lives of people in terms of health care, environmental issues or financial security.

Actions taken locally get attention that is often denied in the wider provincial picture, and COSCO can give advice and assistance to strengthen local initiatives.

Ten Guiding Principles

- Two or more affiliated organiza-

tions or 10 individuals within one affiliated organization can form a branch.

- The group agrees to abide by the bylaws, principles and policies of COSCO.
- Yearly branch membership dues are set locally.
- A delegate from the branch may attend COSCO monthly delegate meetings.
- The branch will hold regular monthly meetings.
- The branch will elect a slate of officers.
- A branch bank account will be established.
- If a branch folds, COSCO will act

as Trustee in order to provide time for the branch to re-establish itself.

- The branch agrees to liaise with others in the community to support a civil society.
- The branch may adopt policies and procedures which are consistent with provincial bylaws.

For more detail about branch formation visit coscobc.ca and choose the [Join](#) link.

During the next few months COSCO will be identifying possible branch locations and contacting the affiliates in each area. Please give some thought to the possibility of forming a branch in your community. You'll be hearing from us.

Harmonized sales tax will raise cost of care for seniors

On the very day the Liberal government defended its HST plan in the Throne Speech, a health-industry group said seniors in publicly funded health facilities may end up getting poor-quality care because of the harmonized sales tax.

In effect, some \$42 million will be siphoned out of funding for elderly care and into the provincial treasury in the form of additional tax costs over the Liberal government's current term of office, according to an analysis by the B.C. Care Providers Association, the Georgia Straight reported Aug. 27.

"What this represents is just a transfer of money back from the health budget to the finance min-

istry," said BCCPA spokesperson David Hurford. "These are public-health dollars. You're taking health dollars out of the system. It's just going back to the Ministry of Finance."

The BCCPA speaks for non-profit and private operators of facilities that account for over a third of all publicly funded long-term-care beds in the province. Its member organizations care for more than 10,000 seniors each day, and employ more than 7,000 people.

Set to take effect on July 1, 2010, the new tax will combine the seven-percent provincial sales tax and the five-percent federal goods-and-services tax and cover a broader range of goods and services.

In the case of senior-care providers represented by the BCCPA, this means a tax increase of \$10.5 million a year. This will result from additional costs for hydro, medical supplies, information-technology systems, professional fees, education, training, and building maintenance and operations.

Based on a scenario drawn up by the association, a 100-bed facility could take a \$210,290 hit—a cost equivalent to four to five full-time care staff positions. "It will mean poor quality of health and layoffs," Hurford said. "It will mean that we will not be able to care for as many people."

Proposed new eligibility rules raise concerns for HandyDart users

**By Lorraine Logan
Chair, COSCO Transportation
Committee**

Since June, COSCO and the Coalition of HandyDart Users have met with TransLink and MVT Canadian Bus on several occasions to discuss on-going concerns.

While there are many questions still unanswered – especially regarding TransLink’s plans for new eligibility requirements for HandyDart users – some progress is being made on other fronts.

Here are some highlights.

At a meeting with stakeholders on July 22, TransLink claimed that the current eligibility criteria are antiquated. There are about 50,000 persons registered, including 28,000 active users, and about 1,000 new applications annually. Aging trends will increase the demand. Virtually no one is denied under the current system.

TransLink would like to promote and encourage riders to use conventional public transit, saying the public fleet is now accessible to all.

The target date for a new eligibility process is 2010.

TransLink’s new proposals for eligibility include in-person assessments (physical and cognitive). An occupational therapist or rehab therapist would conduct the interviews.

After a three year certification, each client would have to re-apply. If denied, an appeal would be heard by another “screener”.

The process would result in unconditional eligibility and full privileges for some; conditional eligibility and restricted use for others. It’s not clear what is meant by restricted use.

Working groups of participants in the meeting expressed many concerns.

Who would do the interviewing, and what would their qualifications be?

Will persons already registered feel intimidated about being forced to re-apply and be judged?

The working groups said Translink must respect the dignity of clients, keep the process simple, and conduct interviews in environments that are familiar to the client.

It was noted that some ambulatory clients have mental or cognitive issues that stand in the way of them using public transit. These clients would probably require an advocate to assist them with re-application.

And there are even more questions:

60% of the rides booked are medical. Would this mean that the person must obtain a doctor’s verification that she or he has a medical, physical or mental issue which requires HandyDART eligibility? Most doctors now charge a fee for this service.

Persons can rapidly change from being an occasional user to a full user. Would this require another interview and assessment? How long would that take? Will there be

temporary approval until the application is authorized?

Agencies now encourage their clients to use public transit where possible – more hands on training should be provided if this is going to be preferred.

There were obviously a lot of concerns regarding this proposal. We proposed interviews be conducted in each community, that interpreters should be on hand to accommodate all languages, and that current users should be exempted from re-qualifying – that the new process should apply only to new users.

After these workshops, Jane Dyson, Executive Director, B.C. Coalition of People with Disabilities and Chair of the HandyDART Coalition, and I talked. We have very real concerns about this process. Jane has asked that she and I (COSCO) meet with Translink in the near future to further discuss this eligibility proposal. Ian Buck, another Director of COSCO, myself, Jane and a couple more advocates will be meeting with Translink again on October 7th.

On June 17th, representatives of TransLink indicated that they are working to improve the booking system (Trapeze). Booking via the internet and telephone (voice recording) are in the mix.

55 new vehicles have been purchased. 25 buses will act as an expanded fleet during the Olympics/ParaOlympics. 30 will replace older vehicles. Olympic ticket holders were asked to self-identify to indicate need for HandiDART services.

Joy Langan, tireless advocate, passes away

JOY LANGAN, a tireless advocate for working people, died in late July after a long battle with cancer. She was 66.

Joy was a life-long activist. She served as an NDP Member of Parliament, and as a staff representative for the Communications Energy and Paperworkers Union (CEP).

After her retirement, she continued her activism on behalf of retired workers as President of the B.C. Federation of Retired Union Members (BC FORUM), a COSCO affiliate.

She will be greatly missed by her family, her friends and colleagues, and by everyone who believes in social justice and a civil society.

Joy was born in Rossland in 1943. She started her career as a journalist writing about women's issues before moving on to take an even more active and direct role in the fight for women's equality.

She trained as an apprentice compositor at Pacific Press, the former publisher of The Vancouver Sun and

Province newspapers, before becoming increasingly active in the labour movement.

In many ways, she paved the way for other women. She was the first woman vice-president of the B.C. Federation of Labour, the first woman journeyman printer at Pacific Press, and president of the B.C. NDP.

In 1988, she was elected NDP MP for Mission-Coquitlam, one of a record number of women — five of them New Democrats — who won seats in the House of Commons. She served as the NDP's federal labour critic until 1993.

Joy retired from the CEP in 2008 and immediately became president of BC FORUM, tirelessly continuing her advocacy for others.

The B.C. labour movement is hosting a memorial celebration of her many achievements at 1:00 pm, Wednesday, Sept. 9, at the Operating Engineers Hall, 4333 Ledger Avenue, Burnaby.

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.