

COSCO announces details of major national conference

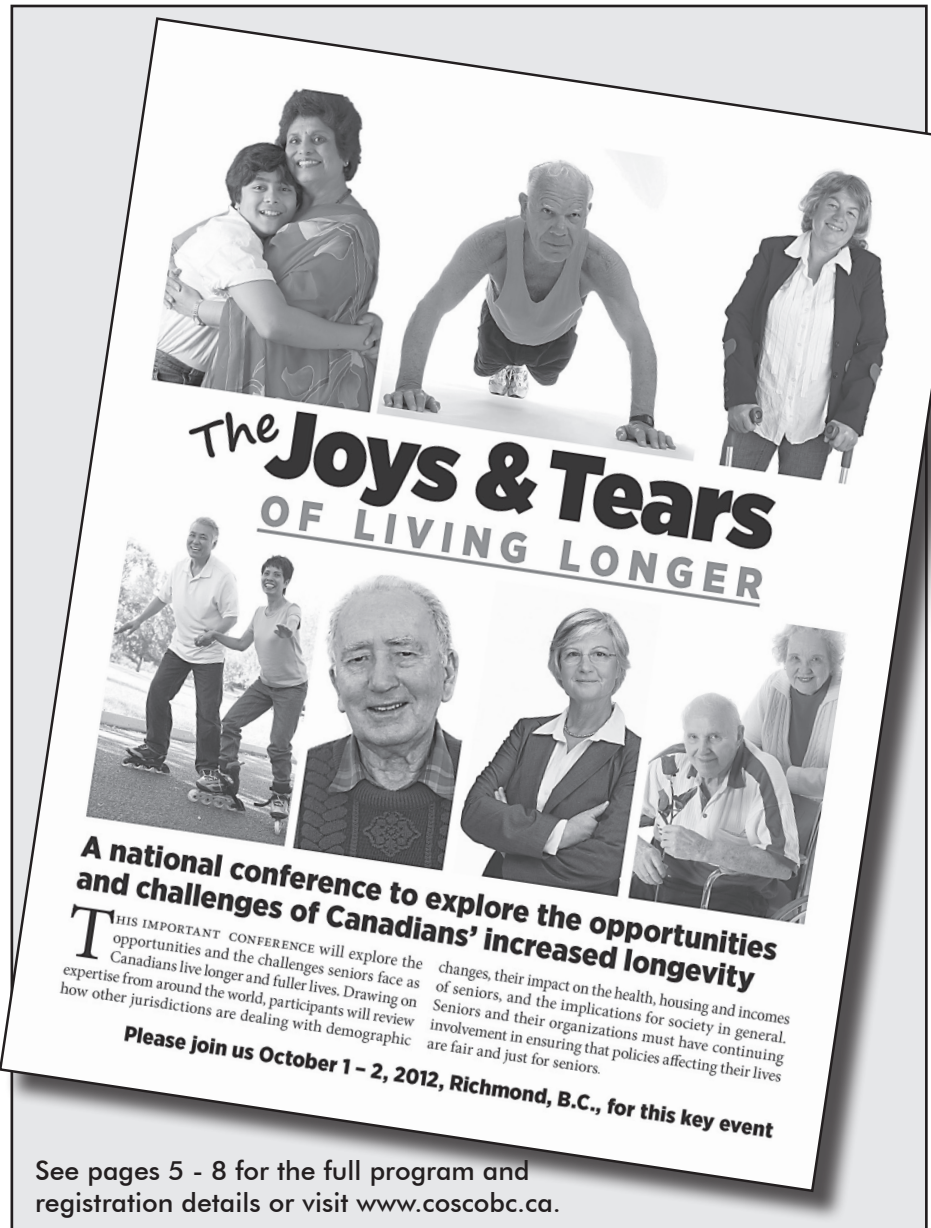
October event will feature renowned experts from around the world

A major national conference, almost two years in the planning, will be held Oct. 1 - 2 to explore the opportunities and challenges of Canadians' increased longevity. This timely and important conference is being organized by COSCO. It will bring together seniors, front-line workers, politicians and leading world experts on the issues faced by individuals and nations as populations grow older.

The demographic shift facing Canada and British Columbia is not unique. We can learn from the experience of other nations in planning for the well-being, independence, social engagement and health of seniors.

This conference will be a step towards policies that are designed to allow us to continue to contribute our energy and experience to society.

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The Joys & Tears OF LIVING LONGER

A national conference to explore the opportunities and challenges of Canadians' increased longevity

THIS IMPORTANT CONFERENCE will explore the opportunities and challenges seniors face as Canadians live longer and fuller lives. Drawing on expertise from around the world, participants will review how other jurisdictions are dealing with demographic changes, their impact on the health, housing and incomes of seniors, and the implications for society in general. Seniors and their organizations must have continuing involvement in ensuring that policies affecting their lives are fair and just for seniors.

Please join us October 1 - 2, 2012, Richmond, B.C., for this key event

See pages 5 - 8 for the full program and registration details or visit www.coscobc.ca.

If undeliverable, return to 1908 - 1330 Harwood St. Vancouver, B.C. V6E 1S8

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Council Of Senior Citizens' Organizations Of BC (COSCO)

www.coscobc.ca

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COSCO News welcomes your letters and contributions. Send your letters and comments to soren.bech@shaw.ca, or to COSCO News editor, 2102 Porter Rd. Roberts Creek, B.C. V0N 2W5.

Plan with seniors, not for seniors

By Art Kube

President

Council of Senior Citizens' Organizations of B.C.

IT'S NICE TO BE remembered. And it's for a whole week, not just 15 minutes. The provincial government has proclaimed June 3 – 9 as Seniors' Week. Political leaders will issue statements about the contributions seniors have made to our province's economy and society as a whole.

A few of us old folks were talking about it the other day.

We're honoured to have a whole week. Someone noted that mothers and fathers only get a day, and we qualify for those days as well. It's always welcome when people say nice things about you – especially when they do so before you're dead.

But we also came to the conclusion that something is missing in the discussion of seniors' issues. The key point is that we're still alive, still as active as we can be, still anxious to help build a better province.

There's a large demographic shift underway. The people of B.C. and Canada are getting older. It creates both opportunities and challenges. It also creates a real need for political leadership.

We have a hodge podge of approaches to aging. Responsibility is divided among a host of federal and provincial government ministries. Local governments also have a role in creating age-friendly communities.

There's no doubt it's easier said than done, but what we really need is a comprehensive, coordinated approach to this demographic change.

The driving force should be to help seniors stay active, healthy and independent.

Too often, government programs treat symptoms rather than reach for the real goal. They put a cast on the broken leg, rather than working to prevent the fall. They provide inadequate home care and home support services, forcing many seniors into residential care homes, or even acute care beds. It doesn't make sense economically or socially.

Other countries have faced demographic shifts. We're not the first. Their solutions are quite different from what we see here today. They focus on independence. Home care. Home support. Independent living arrangements. Opportunities for social contact. And public pensions sufficient to lift seniors out of poverty.

We don't claim that age gives you wisdom, but it does give you experience.

Seniors are an asset, not a liability, to society. We have no desire to be put into expensive facilities where we can vegetate and wait to die. We want to fully participate, advocate on public issues, fulfill our responsibilities as citizens, and help to create a more civil society for our children and grandchildren.

And we must be involved in planning our own futures.

COSCO makes progress on DriveABLE

Discussions continue to make cognitive test more accountable and respectful of seniors

By Lorraine Logan
Transportation Committee Chair

DRIVEABLE ASSESSES the cognitive functions essential for driving – memory, attention span, spatial judgement and decision-making. Part one is done on a computer screen and consists of six modules. It is administered by a medical professional such as an Occupational Therapist. The second assessment, if necessary, is a road test developed to test cognitive abilities. There is no book or driving school that can prepare you for these assessments.

DriveABLE has nothing to do with ICBC or the regular method of obtaining a driver's licence. The assessments are administered by a private company, Insight Driving Solutions, under contract to the Office of Superintendent of Motor Vehicles. One of COSCO's major concerns is that this method of testing does not meet standards of public accountability.

You are required to take a medical exam at age 80, or earlier if you have certain medical conditions. A doctor may administer a memory test in her/his office. The outcome could send you to DriveABLE. If your doctor asks you to repeat words, take this very seriously and inquire as to the reason for the memory test.

Since COSCO raised issues with DriveABLE in the March, 2012 COSCO News, there have been some positive changes. In response to pressure by individual seniors, senior's organizations, MLAs and COSCO, Minister Bond stated that "persons who were not successful with the on screen testing would then be afforded the opportunity to take a road assessment."

Sheila Pither and I, as your COSCO representatives, met with OSMV March 27. Steve Martin, Superintendent, Stephanie Melvin, Deputy Superintendent, and Frances Sasvari, Drivers Education and Safety, were cooperative and understand-

ing of our concerns. We have met three times (twice by telephone conference) and have been able to resolve several issues.

The following are the changes that we have been able to negotiate and are in progress:

- Persons who were not successful with the on-screen assessment in the last six months have been sent an "invitation" to take the on-road assessment. They can apply for a temporary licence from any ICBC office. The OSMV will cover the cost. Whether you keep your driver's licence will then be determined by the medical report, the on-screen test and the on-road assessment.
- When taking the on-screen assessment, you will be able to bring two companions. They will be able to enter the screening room with you, meet the person administering the test, observe the practice time and ask questions if required. The companions will be asked to leave the room when the actual test is in progress. This is in respect for the person taking the test and the person who is administering the test.
- There will now be a 90 minute window for the assessments. We expressed that the one hour window sometimes was creating anxiety and stress.
- The letter asking you to take the on-screen assessment will no longer say you should bring someone to drive you home if you fail. The company does not have the right to take your license.
- A new information service with "real people" to discuss DriveABLE is being set up at 1-855-387-7747. We have been assured that the people answering this line will be of assistance and will, if you need to leave a message, get back to you within 24 hours. This is still a work in progress.
- If you were unsuccessful, and your medical condition has since changed, OSMV is open to reviewing your file.
- We have hired two researchers, Robert and Michael, who are both gerontology students in PHD programs. They will begin to analyse the validity of cognitive assessments for driving skills

and abilities.

The following subjects are still under discussion and on the agenda for future meetings:

- An appeal process available to anyone who feels that the results of these assessments are not to their satisfaction. OSMV has consulted with the Ombudsperson concerning the process and will then consult with their legal department. We were very strong on this request as there should be a right to appeal a decision.
- Education and partnership with OSMV to develop a workshop about DriveABLE, not to practice, but to educate about driving privileges and cognitive abilities.
- OSMV is attempting to arrange a meeting with the B.C. Medical Association, along with COSCO, to discuss their role as medical practitioners. The assessment of your family doctor plays a huge role.
- After the DriveABLE assessments, licences are currently renewed for two years. We are trying to change this back to five years like all other renewals. OSMV is in discussion with ICBC concerning this.
- Interpreters are now going to be factored in when a person needs to be assessed in their own language. More education and understanding about the role of the interpreter is under review.

Sheila and I are in continued discussions with the Office of Superintendent of Motor Vehicles. One of our goals is to have DriveABLE screening be accountable, respectful, and approachable. This process should not be a mystery to the public. Hopefully with the cooperation of OSMV, we can arrive at a place where adequate education about cognitive abilities and driving responsibilities are an open dialogue in families, in seniors' centres, in doctors' offices and social encounters. The last aim is to have DriveABLE moved back under public control with ICBC where all other licencing assessments take place.

Register early to ensure you are part of shaping the policies that affect seniors in BC and Canada

Conference is a key step forward on key seniors' issues. You should be there!

AFTER MONTHS OF WORK by a volunteer committee, chaired by COSCO director Pat Brady, the meeting rooms are booked, the meals are planned, and the program is finalized for the unique national conference being organized by COSCO for the first two days of October in Richmond, B.C.

Even as Secretary-Treasurer Sheila Pither and President Art Kube spent their evenings preparing and sending out dozens of invitations to participants, registrations from seniors' groups and individuals had already begun to pour in.

"It's important for people to register early," said Pither. "The conference facility is only able to accommodate 400 people, and some of our previous conferences have been oversubscribed."

"This conference will really tackle the key issues facing seniors in British Columbia and Canada. It's both important and timely, because Canadians are getting older. With the program we've developed, I'm confident participants will be both interested and inspired. We'll be exploring the wonderful opportunities, and the challenges, faced by seniors and civil society as Canadians live longer and fuller lives," she said.

Brady said the conference will bring together expertise from around the world.

"Other jurisdictions are well ahead of Canada, both in terms of the demographic shifts that are happening, and in coming up with appropriate policies to deal with them. We're living longer, and that should be a good thing, not something that's considered a problem," said Brady.

"At the conference, we'll review how other countries, states and province are dealing with demographic changes. We'll explore their impact on the health, housing and incomes of seniors, and the implications for society as a whole," he said.

The impressive roster of speakers includes:

- Tine Rostgaard, Aalborg University, Denmark, an internationally recognized expert on home care policies that allow people to age in place.
- Victor Marshall, senior scientist at North Carolina Institute on Aging, who conducts leading-edge research on work, retirement, and enhancing well-being in later life.

These and other national and international experts will address plenary sessions. The organizing committee has also assembled high level panels to present and debate varying points of view on key issues.

Workshops will give every participant the opportunity to discuss and share their first-hand experience, and to delve even more deeply into the impact of changing demographics on public resources and private life-styles.

It's not all work! Arthur Black, award-winning author and humorist, and long time host of CBC's Basic Black, will be the dinner speaker on Oct. 1.

This conference will be of interest to everyone who cares about civil society, and of particular interest to:

- Individual seniors and seniors' representatives from across B.C. and Canada.
- Municipal councillors and planners, social planning representatives, parks and recreation and health authority representatives.
- MLAs, Members of Parliament and First Nations.
- Federal and provincial departments dealing with seniors.
- Non-governmental organizations such as social planning councils, senior and community centre representatives, agencies working with seniors, unions, and advocacy groups.

"We are urging municipal councils to sponsor representatives from seniors' advisory committees to attend. We hope

that every municipality in the province will send at least one representative," said Kube. "We are also asking ministries to sponsor delegates from provincial seniors' coordinating bodies."

The registration fee for the conference – \$150 for seniors and \$200 for non-seniors – includes several meals, and the organizing committee has negotiated a good hotel package for participants who are coming from outside the Lower Mainland.

"There's a key reason why we are organizing this conference," said Kube. "We believe seniors and their organizations must have continuing involvement in ensuring that policies affecting their lives are fair and just. We were very pleased with the rave reviews we received for the 2008 COSCO conference on Age-Friendly Communities, and the blueprint for action laid out in the follow-up report on best practise. We are confident this conference will have an even greater impact."

"If you're thinking of attending, I urge you to register early. Don't wait. Make sure today that you will have the opportunity to participate in this dynamic examination of the impact of longevity as a factor in how society evolves," he said.

The Council of Senior Citizens' Organizations of B.C. gratefully acknowledges financial and staff support from BCGEU, and the contribution of the B.C. Division of CUPE.

We also thank the conference planning and organizing team: Pat Brady, Art Kube, Sheila Pither, Sylvia MacLeay, Tom Brunner, Jean Sickman, Alice Edge, Gudrun Langolf, Soren Bech, Garnet Grosjean, Charmaine Spencer, Lauren Syverson, Irv Rootman, Marcy Cohen, Gloria Levi, and Doni Eve.

The conference is being organized by the Council of Senior Citizens' Organizations of B.C.

It is co-sponsored by the National Pensioners and Senior Citizens' Federation and the COSCO Seniors' Health and Wellness Institute.



The Joys & Tears

OF LIVING LONGER



A national conference to explore the opportunities and challenges of Canadians' increased longevity

THIS IMPORTANT CONFERENCE will explore the opportunities and the challenges seniors face as Canadians live longer and fuller lives. Drawing on expertise from around the world, participants will review how other jurisdictions are dealing with

demographic changes, their impact on the health, housing and incomes of seniors, and the implications for society in general. Seniors and their organizations must have continuing involvement to ensure that policies affecting their lives are fair and just for seniors.

Please join us October 1 – 2, 2012, Richmond, B.C., for this key event

Conference program

Day One: October 1st, 2012

- 7:30 am **Registration.** *Foyer outside Grand Ballroom*
Early arrivals can also register the evening before between 7:00 pm and 9:00 pm.
- 8:30 am **Welcome and greetings.** *Grand Ballroom*
- 8:45 am Conference Facilitator, **George Heyman**, Executive Director, Sierra Club B.C.
- 8:50 am Keynote Speaker, Prof. **Victor W. Marshall**, University of North Carolina. *Opportunities and Challenges of increased longevity: An agenda for ageing, issues, insights, implications and opportunities.*
- 9:30 am Prof. **Tine Rostgaard**, Aalborg University, Denmark. *Living long, Ageing well: Social and individual approaches to aging well.*
- 10:00 am **Panel discussion** on Aging, touching on the social determinants of income, housing, connectedness and the economics of senior's health care.
- Prof. **Kim McGrail**, Associate Director, Centre for Health Services and Policy Research, UBC.
 - **Lorraine Copas**, Executive Director of Social Planning and Research Council of B.C.
 - **Andrew Jackson**, Research Director, CLC.
 - Prof. **Victor Marshall**, University of North Carolina.
- 10:50 am **Coffee Break.** *Foyer outside the Grand Ballroom*
- 11:05 am **Workshops**
- #1 *Social determinant / Income.* A discussion of G.I.S., CPP, private pensions, intergenerational transfers of resources and more.
Andrew Jackson. *Grand Ballroom "A"*
- #2 *Social determinant / Housing.* Home is where the heart is: home care and home support accessibility, options, downsizing, living arrangements, aging in place.
Lorraine Copas. *Grand Ballroom "B"*
- #3 *Social Connectedness.* Count us in! Social Inclusion and recognition of people aging, participation, barriers to participation, moving from consultation to engagement.
Prof. **Victor Marshall.** *Grand Ballroom "C"*
- #4 *The economics of seniors' health care.* Is the aging population a threat to universal health care? Options, other models.
Prof. **Kim McGrail.** *Westminster Ballroom*
- 12:30 pm **Lunch** *Foyer at front and back of the Grand Ballroom*
- 1:30 pm **Marcy Cohen**, Researcher. *Seniors Care in Canada: coverage, costs and outcomes.* *Grand Ballroom*
- 2:00 pm Dr. **Michael Rachlis**, National Healthcare Advocate. *Is there a right prescription for seniors' health care in Canada?* Health promotion, illness and accident prevention, community care, home care and home support, switch from dying to living.

- 2:30 pm **Panel discussion** on health care. When residential care? Seniors' rights to medical care.
- Dr. **Michael Rachlis**
 - **Sheila Pither**, Treasurer COSCO
 - Dr. **Martha Donnelly**
 - Dr. **Malcolm MacLure**, (invited) Director of Research, B.C. Pharmacare.
- 3:00 pm **Coffee Break.** *Foyer outside the Grand Ballroom*
- 3:15 pm **Workshops**
- #5 *Seniors rights to medical care.*
Dr. **Martha Donnelly**, Director of the Division of Community Geriatrics, Vancouver General Hospital. *Grand Ballroom "A"*
- #6 *Health Promotion/Illness and Accident Prevention.* Health literacy for seniors, when, where and by whom.
Sheila Pither and Dr. **Irv Rootman**, Simon Fraser University. *Grand Ballroom "B"*
- #7 *Residential Care. Assisted living, complex care, acute care and end of life care.*
Dr. **Michael Rachlis.** *Grand Ballroom "C"*
- #8 *PharmaCare.* Accessibility, affordability, is it appropriate and safe for seniors, information from whom?
Dr. **Malcolm MacLure**, (invited) *Westminster Ballroom*
- 4:30 pm **Recess**
- ### Evening events
- 5:00 pm **No Host Bar**, Musical Interlude. *Tivoli's Room*
- 6:30 pm **Dinner.** *Grand Ballroom*
- 7:30 pm Dinner Speaker. **Arthur Black**, award-winning author and humorist, long time host of CBC's *Basic Black*.

Who should attend:

- Individual seniors and seniors' representatives from across B.C. and Canada.
- Municipal councillors and planners, social planning representatives, parks and recreation and health authority representatives.
- MLAs and Members of Parliament.
- Federal and provincial departments dealing with seniors.
- Non-governmental organizations such as social planning councils, senior and community centre representatives, agencies working with seniors, unions, and advocacy groups.

We urge municipal councils to sponsor representatives from seniors' advisory committees, and also ask **ministries** to sponsor delegates from provincial seniors' coordinating bodies.

Conference program

Day Two: October 2nd, 2012

- 8:30 am **Opening** by conference facilitator. Grand Ballroom
- 8:35 am Dr. **Garnet Grosjean**, University of British Columbia. *Towards a Seniors Agenda*. What services are necessary for aging seniors. What programs are missing or need improvement? Can we put together a workable national, provincial and civic seniors' agenda to deal humanely with an aging population?
- 9:05 am Dr. **Kendall Ho**, (invited) UBC School of Medicine. *Maintaining the dignity and autonomy of diverse seniors in later life*.
- 9:35 am **Panel Discussion: The role of seniors' organizations in advocating for public policy**
- **Art Kube**, President of COSCO.
 - **Len Harrison**, Chair of the CAW Retirees Council.
 - **Barry Thorsteinson**, President, National Pensioners and Senior Citizens Federation.
- 10:20 am **Coffee Break**. *Foyer in front of the Ballroom*
- 10:35 am **Workshops**
- #9 Seniors Abuse and Neglect*. The hidden issues of elder abuse, innovations on how to prevent abuse, the law and abuse.
- Prof. **Charmaine Spencer**, Simon Fraser University. *Grand Ballroom "A"*
- #10 Seniors helping seniors*. When and when not to use volunteers.
- Jo Ann Lauber**, Canadian Association of Retired Teachers. *Grand Ballroom "B"*
- #11 The B.C. Ombudsperson's Report*. Next steps on seniors' care.
- Marcy Cohen**, Researcher. *Grand Ballroom "C"*
- #12 Building seniors' organizations*. Membership models, financing and structures.
- Len Harrison**. *Westminster Ballroom*
- 12:00 pm **Lunch**. *Foyer at front and back of the Grand Ballroom*
- 1:00 pm **Panel discussion**. The role of municipalities, provinces and the federal government in creating age-friendly communities. *Grand Ballroom*
- **Cathy Bennett**, (invited) Public Health Agency of Canada.
 - **Derek Corrigan**, (invited) Mayor of Burnaby.
 - **Rosemary Lawrence**, Coordinator, B.C. Seniors Healthy Living Secretariat .
- 2:10 pm **Round Table: An Integrated Approach to Long-term care, Primary care and community care**.
- **Gloria Levi**, Gerontologist
 - **Shannon Berg**, Executive Director, Home and Community Care, Vancouver Coastal Health

- Dr. **Jay Slater**, Home VIVE and Home Hospice, Vancouver Coastal Health
 - **Michele Jessop**, (invited) Manager, CHOICE / Day Programs, Alberta Health, Edmonton
 - **Anne Chisholm**, Director, Community and Residential Services, Northern Health Authority
- 3:25 pm **Coffee Break**. *Foyer in front of the Grand Ballroom*
- 3:40 pm Dr. **Irving Rootman**: Summing up. Comments from participants.
- 4:30 pm **Adjournment**

Register early!

This timely and important national conference will take place Monday October 1st and Tuesday October 2nd 2012 at the Executive Airport Plaza Hotel and Conference Centre, 7311 Westminster Highway in Richmond B.C.

The registration fee is \$150 for seniors and \$200 for non-seniors. The fee includes two lunches, one dinner, four coffee breaks and all conference materials.

The maximum number of participants the conference facility can hold is 400. Previous COSCO conferences were always fully booked, so please register early.

Send your registration form, together with the conference fee, to: Sheila Pither, COSCO Secretary-Treasurer, #1908-1330 Harwood Street, Vancouver, B.C., V6E 1S8.

Deadline for registration is September 15th.

For additional information contact:

- Sheila at (604) 684-9720 or pither470@shaw.ca
- Art at (604) 576-8000 or aakube@telus.net

Accommodation and parking

The Executive Airport Plaza Hotel's conference room rate is \$109 per night, plus taxes. Each additional person in the room is \$15. Parking is included for guests.

If you're not staying at the hotel, parking is \$11 a day.

Room reservations can be made by calling 1-800-663-2878 or 604-278-5555, or visiting www.executivehotels.net.

The deadline for reservations at the hotel's conference rate is Friday, September 14, 2012.

To receive the special rate, you must identify yourself as a participant in the conference. There is a complimentary shuttle service from and to the Vancouver Airport.

Room reservations are your responsibility. There will be limited financial assistance to needy delegated seniors to attend.



About COSCO

The Council of Senior Citizens' Organizations of British Columbia is a democratic, non-partisan umbrella organization with 80 affiliated organizations representing approximately 85,000 seniors. COSCO is recognized as a leader for social change affecting seniors. Our motto is seniors helping seniors.

COSCO was founded over 50 years ago by retired railroad workers to provide an effective voice for seniors in British Columbia. The purpose of COSCO is "to assemble, coordinate and advance proposals and resolutions related to the health, social and economic well-being of elder citizens in the province."

Our organization is governed by a monthly delegates meeting

Acknowledgements

The Council of Senior Citizens' Organizations of B.C. gratefully acknowledges financial and staff support from BCGEU, and the contribution of the B.C. Division of CUPE.

We also thank the conference planning and organizing team: Pat Brady, Art Kube, Sheila Pither, Sylvia MacLeay, Tom Bruncker, Jean Sickman, Alice Edge, Gudrun Langolf, Soren Bech, Garnet

and a 22 member Executive Board. All the work is done by volunteers. COSCO runs a seniors' advocacy program throughout B.C. which is staffed by over 100 volunteers. In addition, we offer over 30 health literacy programs.

COSCO delivers additional programs on seniors' leadership. We've held a number of successful conferences which have attracted seniors with considerable talent from different walks of life and different professional backgrounds.

COSCO is a proud member of the over one million member National Pensioners and Senior Citizens' Federation, the co-sponsor of the conference.

Grosjean, Charmaine Spencer, Lauren Syverson, Irv Rootman, Marcy Cohen, Gloria Levi, Doni Eve.

This conference is organized by the Council of Senior Citizens' Organizations of B.C. (COSCO). It is co-sponsored by the National Pensioners and Senior Citizens' Federation and the COSCO Seniors' Health and Wellness Institute.

Harper budget undermines civil society

By Art Kube
President, COSCO

THE FEDERAL BUDGET is supposed to address the desires, needs and wants of the majority of Canadians. Unfortunately, the recent Harper budget serves only the greed and neo-liberal policies of the corporate elite.

What we see is Harper's drive for income distribution in reverse. No increase in the minimum wage, no increase in the Old Age Security (OAS), but cuts to departmental budgets that will result in some program cuts. Budget cuts trump spending increases by a seven to one ratio.

At the same time, corporate pockets are bulging with \$500 billion in cash. This is money they spend to either buy up their own shares or take over other companies, in either case not creating a single job. So Harper is giving corporations further tax breaks, paid for with borrowed money.

Since Harper came to power the corporate tax rate has decreased from 20% to 15%, robbing the federal treasury of \$10 billion each year. That amount of money could have increased the OAS above the poverty line, stopped all the cuts, and balanced the budget.

Even without these cuts, our corporate tax still would be among the lowest in the industrialized world.

Back in 1956 government received 45% of its revenues from corporations. Today it's less than 9%. This latest budget further widens the social deficit in our already stressed civil society.

In addition, Harper is trying to hide some of his intentions from Canadians in 400 page budget document. Instead of transparency and debate what we see in Parliament is breach of parliamentary traditions and limitation of debate. The budget bill eliminated many institutions of importance to Canadians including the Katimavik program, the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy, and the Board of Referees of Employment Insurance to name just a few.

With the lack of any kind of economic stimulus, and the elimination of 19,000 public sector jobs, unemployment will in-

crease.

The other hidden issue is the weakening of environmental standards so as to appease his buddies in the oil industry. The specific projects which will benefit from the budget are the Kitimat Pipeline and the pipeline taking Canadian bitumen to refineries in Texas. Both of these projects are harmful to Canada's economic interests. Both will lead to a continued overvalued dollar, affecting negatively our manufacturing industries. In addition they will put upward pressure on our energy prices. Worst of all they export good paying jobs to the US and Asia.

Yes, this Harper budget operates on the perverse assumption that "the poor have too much and the rich not enough".

This Harper budget is damaging to seniors and the vast majority of Canadians and deserves to be strongly opposed. Just think back when we were young. We

fought to establish the Old Age Security, Medicare, full employment, good labour standards, the right to appeal to a lay persons board issues of unemployment and workers compensation, to maintain tax fairness and above all for a civil society that cares for its people. All these instruments of a civil society are being slowly eroded.

We can say I'm O.K. Jack, or we can reflect on what our parents said: "My kids are going to have it better." We can recognize our responsibility to our sons, daughters and grandchildren and to the people who will come after us. Don't they have the right to a clean environment, a good job, good health care, education and a retirement with dignity and security?

If you say "YES" to the latter, then call your Member of Parliament and express your opposition to the Harper budget.

Canada's pensions are too meager, not too generous

THE B.C. COUNCIL OF Senior Citizens' Organizations has expressed profound disappointment in the Harper government's plan to raise the retirement age and thereby undermine the financial security of thousands of Canadians.

"Canada's public pension system is already among the stingiest in the developed nations of the world," said Gudrun Langolf, first vice president of COSCO.

"Thousands of retired Canadians live in poverty, including many women. Old Age Security is our most fundamental safety net. It needs to be improved, because Canada's public pensions are already too meager.

"And I fear, if they are raising the age, that it won't be long before we see further cuts in these inadequate pensions."

Langolf pointed out that Canada spends far less than the OECD average on pensions. She noted that a study by Canada's parliamentary budget officer found

that OAS is sustainable with a retirement age of 65 – indeed, he found there was room to improve the program by 0.4 percent of GDP each year.

Langolf added that expert advice, commissioned by the Harper government itself, found there is no financial need to raise the retirement age. The report by Edward Whitehouse, a pension policy expert with the World Bank and the OECD, concluded, "There is no pressing financial or fiscal need to increase pension ages in the foreseeable future."

"I call on all Members of Parliament, in every party, to work to improve pensions, and to lift pensioners out of poverty, not to condemn future retirees to more financial insecurity. People are already being squeezed by record household debt, low interest on savings, risky markets, and the rising cost of living. It is profoundly disappointing that our federal government would make things even worse for them," said Langolf.

LETTERS TO COSCO

HandyDART workers offer great service, question the DriveABLE test

WE, THE WORKERS AT HandyDART, support seniors' rights to be mobile and active in all aspects of life. Transportation is a large part of who we are, and what we do. Limiting the ability, or the availability for seniors to get around is detrimental to health and happiness.

Though we look after public transportation dedicated to seniors and those with special needs, we support the ability for seniors to use their vehicles while having proper testing through the Motor Vehicle Department. To rely only on computer testing in making a judgement call, which has no bearing to someone's community, is an ill thought out form of testing. Testing needs to be fair.

When I was a kid in the mid seventies, Mr. Thorn, an 80 year veteran who lived alone, took his car out every day and drove the same road just to get out and see the countryside that he loved. He would often stop and chat with us when we were working by the road. I always remembered that he loved to see what was going on in his neighbourhood and his smile as he chatted with us, which was a happy part of his day. He went on to drive for many more years. This DriveABLE test would have eroded Mr. Thorn's ability to do that.

Seniors need to have fair testing in their communities. We do understand that as we age we do lose some abilities, but who better than a live person, in a ride along, to assist in making that call or suggesting retraining.

When seniors can't drive anymore, that is where HandyDART (Paratransit) comes to the rescue. We would like to see HandyDART in all communities across British Columbia. HandyDART has been serving the Lower Mainland for over 30 years. Translink funds this service to the



Tim Johnston, President of the union representing Lower Mainland HandyDART workers, would like to see the service provided to seniors and people with disabilities in all B.C. communities.

tune of \$37 million dollars a year. Your tax dollars, your public transportation service.

We do encourage all COSCO members to be educated about the HandyDART service. We are there for you! In a time when we have a growing seniors population, we need more seniors' services, not less. This is your service, own it!

**Tim Johnston
President,
ATU 1724**

Tim Johnston has been a driver for the HandyDART service for 20 years.

Terrace seniors support care recommendations

THE GREATER TERRACE Seniors Advisory Committee wishes to add our support for the BC Ombudsperson's Public Report. Seniors' care is an area that is being neglected by our government and warrants the attention this report provides.

We support each of the 176 recommendations made in the report and encourage the government to implement

these as soon as possible.

Our organization addresses areas of concern for seniors' well-being regularly and we are frustrated by the system and the lack of concern for this demographic's concerns and issues. We would be very interested in participating in any discussions about how to better meet the needs of seniors in this province. We acknowledge the importance of a seniors' advocacy role and encourage the implementation of such a position in each community in B.C. This is a request that we have brought to our MP and MLA over the past two years and have heard nothing indicating any government support for.

Medical issues, safety, and long-term care, poverty, abuse and health concerns are all regularly discussed at our meetings but continue to be ignored by our government. (Seniors are) tired of being ignored and look forward to becoming involved in finding solutions to these real-time issues. It is vital that any consultation processes be open, transparent and action oriented.

**Sincerely,
Diana Penner
Chair,
Greater Terrace
Seniors Advisory Committee**

Climate change activists arrested in White Rock

CARBON DIOXIDE EMISSIONS caused by burning fossil fuels reached an all-time high in 2011, raising new doubts about whether the world can find the political leadership needed to stop runaway climate change. The International Energy Agency (IEA) reported that 45 percent of the emissions were from burning coal, the dirtiest of fossil fuels.

With governments shirking their responsibility to act, hundreds of women and men gathered in White Rock May 5 to call attention to the fact that more coal is now exported through B.C. ports than anywhere else in North America. Fourteen were arrested for blocking a Burlington Northern Santa Fe train carrying U.S. coal to Westshore Terminals in Delta. There's no carbon tax on the exports.

"I was busted," said Ray Haynes, an active member of COSCO and a former secretary-treasurer of the B.C. Federation of Labour.

Also among those arrested were retired BCGEU researcher Cliff Stainsby, Dogwood Initiative executive director Will Horter, scientist Peter Nix, ecologist Alejandro Frid, and Mark Jaccard, a leading member of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

"Human-caused climate change is real, and dangerous," said Stainsby.

"What kind of future are we leaving for



Sunshine Coast COSCO member Ray Haynes (fourth from left, wearing sunglasses) was arrested along with Nobel Prize winning climate scientist Mark Jaccard (fifth from left) and 12 others for blocking a coal train May 5.

our children if we keep putting more carbon into the atmosphere?" said Nix, who used to work for the oil industry in the tar sands.

"The window of opportunity for avoiding a high risk of runaway, irreversible climate change is closing quickly. Within this decade we will either have steered away from disaster, or have locked ourselves onto a dangerous course," said Jaccard.

The protesters who were arrested could have faced criminal charges, but were in-

stead fined \$115 for trespassing.

The IEA says carbon dioxide emissions from fossil fuels reached a record 31.6 billion tons in 2011, an increase of one billion tons from 2010. The agency says fast action is needed to keep the global average temperature from rising by more than 2 degrees Celsius, and thereby profound damage to life on earth, including water and food scarcity, rising sea levels, and greater incidence and severity of disease. In the last 150 years, the blink of an eye in geological time, it's already up 1 degree.

After long battle, seniors win reopening of Deni House

IT IS DIFFICULT to explain the frustration the community at large and the committed staff endured when the government of the day announced in 2004 that they would be closing publicly operated senior care facilities in Williams Lake and introduce "Private for Profit" seniors care in Williams Lake.

All of the publicly operated senior care facilities in Williams Lake were closed. They were:

- Deni House which provided complex care and had been in operation for 17 years.
- Cariboo Lodge, which provided intermediate care and had been in operation for 37 years.

- Heritage House which was constructed specifically to provide care for Dementia patients and had been in operation for 12 years.

Due to the ongoing shortage of extended care beds, Deni House re-opened in May 2006 with 25 beds and remained open until April 2007 when it was closed once again. By this time the community was truly outraged at the chronic bed shortage.

Presentations and petitions were given to our MLAs, Health Minister, Interior Health Authority, and Cariboo Regional Hospital Board. In November 2010 a decision to reopen Deni House was reached.

Over the past seven years, building

codes have changed and it therefore required a year of renovation to bring Deni House up to the current building standards.

Deni House now houses 28 beds with a mix of Complex Care, Palliative Care, Respite Care and Short Stay care beds plus the Adult Day Centre which operates from Monday to Friday with ten clients. The experienced staff has worked well together to make this plan work and because of their spirit of co-operation our beloved Deni House has once again become "A House for Our People".

**Audrey MacLise, Chair
Williams Lake
Seniors Advisory Council**

Harper government cuts food inspection

Will B.C. meat packing plants and slaughter houses soon be 'inspected' by video conference?

By Fred Coates,
President, BC OAPO
General Vice-President, COSCO

THE FOOD SAFETY picture is not getting any better – particularly so for seniors, a demographic group who the Public Health Agency of Canada states is at greater risk of contracting listeriosis and other food-borne diseases due to suppressed or compromised immune systems.

Forty meat inspectors received surplus notices in April, says the union which represents the inspectors. Bob Kingston, president of the Agriculture Union (PSAC), says it's the beginning of cuts which will result in up to 100 food safety

inspectors losing their jobs.

The recent federal budget cuts the Canadian Food Inspection Agency by \$56.1 million over the next three years. CFIA management says the cuts will clearly affect the level of front-line inspection, and may reduce examination of imported meats to less than 2%. The government says the 10% cut won't make any difference.

In addition, the government is down-loading inspection in some provinces, starting in January 2014. Last December, the B.C. Ministry of Health released a report which suggested it could be done with video cameras.

Kingston calls it a "no inspection" option, but federal agriculture minister Gerry Ritz has no problem with it. "This might mean the use of video cameras to replace inspectors on the kill floor, but there would still be someone monitoring the video," says Ritz.

I really don't believe that this is the kind of reassurance B.C. consumers were

looking for!

Earlier this year the federal government quietly announced plans to cancel important food safety initiatives put in place to shore up a weak inspection system and to address a chronic shortage of inspectors after the Maple Leaf Foods listeriosis outbreak killed 23 Canadians in 2008. Instead, CFIA is reviewing its regulations to make them more friendly to industry – read powerful lobby!

"It scares me quite honestly, to see the federal government's attitude," says Karen Clark whose mother died in 2008 after eating tainted cold cuts. "It looks like they think Canadians have forgotten about the listeriosis outbreak and all the people it affected. That they can reduce these inspectors and safety programs and no one will notice. Something terrible happened to me and my family. We're not special. If the federal government does not maintain adequate safety oversight and inspection it could happen again to anyone's family."

Amen and consumers beware!

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 and organizations wishing more information about joining COSCO should write or phone Ernie Bayer and request a membership package.