

Labour leaders pay tribute to Art Kube

By Gudrun Langolf
First Vice-President, COSCO

ON MONDAY, November 24th, opening day of the BC Federation of Labour convention, the Executive members of the BC Fed took time out to honour Art Kube, a driving force in COSCO and the labour movement. He was accompanied by Mary Kube, his wife and surrounded by family and friends. Outgoing BC Fed President, Jim Sinclair, acknowledged and paid tribute to Art's many years of advocacy and work for social justice. We found out a few things about Art that we might not have known:

In 1954 he landed in Canada as a young steel fabricator from Austria. By 1970 he was organizing for the United Steelworkers of America and negotiating collective agreements. He moved on to organize for the Canadian Labour Congress in Ontario and helped to develop successful Union education programs, the flagship being the yearly, week-long residential CLC Winter School. Since 1975 about forty thousand workers have taken part, learning about health & safety, labour law, bargaining, human rights,



Never passing up an opportunity to advance the seniors' agenda, Art Kube reminded labour leaders that unions have a responsibility to support work towards a more civil society.

basic advocacy and other aspects of civil society.

As the President of the BC Feder-

ation of Labour in 1983 he chaired "Operation Solidarity Committee". In British Columbia this epic, unprecedented period of public unrest about draconian anti-labour and anti-social legislation brought workers to the brink of a general strike. While there are various opinions about tactics, there is no doubt that much of the committees work resulted in mitigating some of the worst governmental agenda.

In subsequent assignments for the

If undeliverable, return to 207 - 1530 Mariner Walk, Vancouver, B.C. V6J 4X9

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



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About COSCO

COSCO is an umbrella organization that brings together 85 different seniors groups, representing 107,000 women and men, to work on common issues.

COSCO is affiliated with the one million member National Pensions Federation which promotes these issues at the national level.

A major focus of COSCO's work is promoting good health.

To this end, COSCO volunteers provide a series of free workshops on 42 topics ranging from falls prevention to health literacy.

More than 20,000 seniors have attended these workshops.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

As the year comes to a close, there are many issues that we must address

By Lorraine Logan
President, COSCO

I BELIEVE TIME is an older adult's enemy. It seems I was just writing an article for the COSCO News and now I have the privilege of updating you all again.

Some of our COSCO Executive have been busy attending forums, workshops and one to one meetings to advocate on issues that continue to need attention.

These include National Health Accord, affordable housing, transportation and the Compass Card, Better at Home program, B.C. Health Coalition and Dr. Brian Day, pension issues – defined pensions vs targeted pensions, Metro Vancouver taxi training for all drivers, Healthy Eating and Nutrition (ministry of health), Elder Abuse, and often, individual advocacy, when required.

I mentioned in the last issue that the Office of the Senior Advocate and COSCO would be doing more collaboration and this has now been announced publicly.

COSCO has been asked to be the organization to assist the Senior Advocates Office with appointing a first time Advisory Council.

COSCO participated in developing the Terms of Reference and Application process and will be the selection committee, along with the Advocacy Staff, to appoint an Advisory Council made up of 25 to 30 seniors 65 years and older.

All of the information can be located, if you have a computer online at: www.seniorsadvocatebc.ca or by phone at: 1-877-952-3181, (250-

“Please keep in mind that a Federal Election must be called by October, 2015 and that we must have senior issues on the minds of the politicians who want to be elected or re-elected.”

952-3181 in Victoria) or by email at: info@seniorsadvocatebc.ca or on our website: www.coscobc.ca.

The deadline for applications is December 18th, 2014. We are quite excited and humbled to be able to assist in this process.

As this year is coming to a close, we still have a large menu of issues to address.

We would welcome articles from any of our affiliate members or associate members in the more rural areas of our province, as some concerns such as transportation, family doctors and housing appear to have serious consequences.

Please keep in mind that a Federal Election must be called by October, 2015 and that we must have senior issues on the minds of the politicians who want to be elected or re-elected.

COSCO's election planning committee is meeting the first of the New Year to develop our agenda and plat-



Lorraine Logan

form to speak to and present to our B.C. politicians.

It is not too early to begin the questions to your MP – make sure we are counted.

COSCO will be putting out an election edition of the COSCO News that will address our issues at the National level.

COSCO is being contacted quite regularly by other local, regional or national like-minded organizations to collaborate on issues that affect all seniors at all levels of government. With collective voices we will be heard.

I would like to wish all of you, on behalf of COSCO, a healthy, happy and safe Christmas Season.

Take some time to call a friend, say hello to a neighbour, smile at a stranger, you never know what you get back.

SIX NEW WORKSHOPS ADDED

COSCO expands its wide offering of health and wellness workshops

By Sheila Pither

COSCO Workshop Coordinator

THE COSCO Seniors' Health & Wellness Institute has added six new workshops to the list of topics that groups of seniors can have presented for their members. That makes a total of 42 choices!

Since the program began in 2007 with the Falls Prevention workshop our dedicated facilitators have visited more than 1,100 groups province-wide.

Twenty thousand men and women have attended to learn about how they can take a more active role in their own well-being.

We believe we are contributing to the increased senior literacy that recently made headlines in the Vancouver Sun.

Visit the COSCO website and click on Workshops to find out about all the topics and how to book one or more for your group. The workshops are presented free of charge. Here are the six new topics:

Cancer Screening

This workshop, which was developed by a team of doctors, helps people to recognize the warning signs for four of the most prevalent cancers.

Hypertension

High blood pressure often isn't diagnosed until it has done a great deal of harm. The effects of untreated hypertension are explained and vigilant monitoring is stressed.

Navigating the Healthcare System

This workshop reviews many of the available medical services and what

people can expect from them.

Effective communication between patients and healthcare providers is emphasized.

Palliative Care

The focus of this workshop is on the comfort and dignity of patients as they cope with serious illness.

The nature and scope of palliative care is explained, with the goal being on living as fully as possible, managing pain and receiving appropriate care.

Parkinson's Disease

This workshop provides a clear explanation of the changes in the brain which cause the disease.

Signs and symptoms are discussed and treatment options are examined.

Skin Conditions

Four major skin problems are discussed: cancer, shingles, nail fungus and pressure sores.

Pictures help the audience to recognize potential warning signs and the crucial importance of early diagnosis is emphasized.

Donations welcome

The COSCO Institute is a charity and tax receipts are provided for donations.

Please consider contributing by sending a cheque to COSCO Seniors' Health & Wellness Institute at 207 – 1530 Mariner Walk, Vancouver, V6J 4X9.

No donation is too small (or too big for that matter). Every penny of what you contribute goes to cover workshop expenses. We have no paid staff and all the facilitators are volunteers.

New facilitators needed

Right now there is a huge demand for workshops and we are recruiting new facilitators to keep up with the work. There is no need to be an experienced public speaker but our workshop leaders are all mature adults who believe in the COSCO motto: Seniors Helping Seniors.

If you are interested just give me a call at 604-684-9720 and I will tell you more about the program.



Judy and Craig Gray

Photo by S. Kucharski, Fernie Free Press

Helping our communities

The Fernie Free Press recently recognized two of COSCO's amazing volunteers. Judy and Craig Gray delivered free workshops in five East Kootenay communities during Falls Prevention Awareness week in November.

Judy and Craig have been presenting the workshops for two years.

"If we help one or two people then we're pretty happy," Judy told the Free Press.

"We're trying to reach out to them and empower them and invigorate them and tell them they're important," added Craig.

In their presentation, the Grays note that falls cause more than half of all injuries in people 65 years of age and older, and that nearly half of all injuries to seniors occur in the home.

Co-operative housing in crisis in BC

By Barb Mikulec
COSCO Housing Chair

Co-operative Housing

CO-OPS are mixed-income communities of families, seniors, singles and people with disabilities. Some residents live in units where their housing fees are 'geared to income,' others in the co-op don't qualify for a subsidy and they pay 'market' rent.

Co-ops were formed during the 1970-90's with lease agreements funded by Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) and operating agreements that expire after 25-40 years. Some housing is directly managed by BC Housing.

Changes

When a co-op's operating agreement with government ends, the subsidy ends. The expiring funding will affect thousands of BC residents within the next 20 years.

The federal government stopped funding social housing nearly twenty years ago, but continued to provide operating subsidies for existing projects until the agreements expire. 'Market' costs would be more than many co-op households can afford, especially seniors with fixed incomes.

Community

The real sense of 'community' is felt in the shared intergenerational make-up of co-ops.

Often having a shared children's play area and common dining areas for the residents, co-ops diminish feelings of isolation and build a stronger community feeling.

Without the subsidies some residents may be at risk of being displaced, forced onto housing 'wait lists,' or potentially become homeless. Also there could be a loss of affordable

housing through demolitions, re-development, gentrification and a shift towards new tenants with higher incomes.

Caring

The Canadian Housing Renewal Association has begun a campaign Housing for All, which aims to protect low income residents who need social housing subsidies.

Already some co-ops turn away low income people in urgent need of housing due to limited subsidy availability.

In the next 20 years over 36000 units of non-profit housing in Greater Vancouver including co-op housing, social housing and senior housing may lose their funding. This issue repeats in smaller communities also, with renters facing rising rents or deteriorated rental housing.

Cost

The federal and provincial governments need to form effective housing strategies to protect and enhance affordable housing stock.

Residents need to be able to get a loan to renew the buildings. Presently banks are unsure of the future status of the buildings and have turned down loan applications for needed building repairs.

The City of Vancouver has formed a "re*Plan" committee, to plan for the impending funding, lease and aging buildings crisis. Also the City of Vancouver has a Short Term Incentives for Rental program (STIR) which has waived the development cost levies for 19 new rental projects.

Crisis

The termination of the CMHC operating agreements with the resulting loss of subsidies represents a huge crisis, affecting 160 of the 260 housing coops in BC.



"You hold the key," says the Co-op Housing Association of BC, which is campaigning for action on affordable housing.

Some co-ops have to charge existing low income members more than 30% of their income, the CMHC standard for what is affordable.

The Rental Housing Index shows that one of every two renters in BC does not have access to adequate, reasonably priced housing.

It is crucial that governments re-invest in "geared to income" housing programs to ensure affordable housing for all.

A new affordable housing policy is needed where governments, either alone or in partnerships, provide land and capital investment before the crisis hits our homes.

Rental Housing Index BC non Profit Housing Society: <http://bcnpha.ca/news/new-rental-housing-index-shows-crisis-level-spending-british-columbia/> This provides data on income, affordability and overcrowding across BC.

Co-operative Housing Federation – Fast Action on the Coop Housing Subsidy Crisis: <http://www.chf.bc.ca/pdf/s95-keyfacts-subsidy%20crisis.pdf> and You Hold the Key Campaign, 604 879-5111.

Hospitals grinding to a halt because of stranded seniors

GRIDLOCKED HOSPITALS in Canada are struggling to make room for incoming arrivals because so many older patients have no other place to go, says the president of the Canadian Medical Association.

Dr. Christopher Simpson, a cardiologist at Kingston General Hospital, said hospitals are increasingly invoking what is known in the medical world as “Code Gridlock” when a hospital reaches or exceeds capacity.

“Code Gridlock means that the hospital is so full that patients can’t move,” he said in a speech to the Canadian Club of Ottawa.

“Patients in emergency can’t go upstairs to a bed because the beds are full. Sometimes ambulances can’t offload patients into ER because it is packed – even in the hallways. Elective surgeries are cancelled. Transfers from the region are put on hold.”

Dr. Simpson said Canada needs a national seniors strategy involving all levels of government to develop investment in long-term care infrastructure and home care and community support programs.

“As a society, we need to step up investment in long-term care and invest much more in services for home and community care.”

Code Gridlock is fast becoming the new normal in Canadian hospitals as medical staffs are resorting to putting patients in “windowless nooks, crannies and broom closets —anywhere we can squeeze in a stretcher or a bed,” he added. Dr. Simpson said his own hospital is currently on its 25th consecutive day of gridlock.

“To those outside the medical world, the two words probably won’t be heard over the white noise of a busy



Dr. Christopher Simpson, President, Canadian Medical Association hospital. But to everybody else in the building they work like a dog whistle – start freeing up beds immediately.

“All physicians, nurses and other health care professionals are urged to do whatever they can to expedite discharges.”

The chronic overcapacity problem is being caused by a crisis in seniors care, he said.

Thousands of older Canadians are taking up acute care beds at \$1,000 a day even though they are well enough to be discharged because they have no place to go.

There either isn’t a long-term care bed available in their area or there aren’t the support services they need to live at home. About 15 per cent of acute care beds in Canada are taken up this way.

“We are warehousing them. We do the best we can. But it’s not anywhere near good enough.”

Making public health care a key federal election issue

By Kathleen Jamieson
Chair, COSCO Health Committee

THE B.C. Health Coalition (BCHC) decided at a mid-November strategic planning session to focus on making public health care, with a focus on seniors’ health care, a central issue in the 2015 federal election.

The BCHC and the Canadian Health Coalition plan to share information and develop joint actions around the election. COSCO is a BCHC community member and participates in the BCHC Steering Committee.

Until this summer, BCHC, in partnership with Doctors for Medicare, was fully occupied preparing to

intervene in the Dr. Day private clinic court case that was expected to start in September this year. The case has now been postponed to March 2015 while the province negotiates with Dr. Day to try to resolve the issues out of court.

BCHC has done an excellent job of explaining provincially and nationally the threat that the Dr. Day court case poses to the principles of our national health care system. However, until the court case resumes or is resolved through the negotiations, there is an opportunity for the BCHC to use the considerable knowledge and experience of its staff and members to campaign for a strengthened public health care system and for better health care for seniors.

Recognizing a leader for social justice

Continued from page 1

CLC he worked with Non-governmental Agencies, faith organizations and community groups to advance social justice

Mervyn Van Steinburg (United Way) reminisced about the beginnings of the Unemployment Action Centres that Art helped to establish and paid tribute to Art's formidable community organizing skills.

Steve Hunt (Steelworkers) admired Art's ability to move people and possessing an uncanny special talent for fundraising.

Gordy Larkin (CLC) was reminded of the Solidarity Days being the fight of our lives. He admired Art's commitment and significant examples of Art's capacity: there was no job too big, no job too small for him.

Ralph Steeves (Seniors on Guard) got to know Art in the Machinists & Aerospace Union. Ralph reminded us about Art's capacity of caring for people and being a generous mentor to many – whether in the Trade Union movement or not.

In response, Art thanked everyone for attending as well as appreciating all “the exaggerated stories”. A lesson: The initials CIO might mean Congress of Industrial Organizations to some people, to Art the letters meant Citizenship in Operation, a principle he tried to live up to because it is all of our responsibility.

He understands the power of seniors.

Since his retirement from paid work, he still feels privileged and obligated to help organize seniors. He did so as President and member of the Executive of the Council of Senior Citizens Organizations of BC (or COSCO), working tirelessly to represent voices of seniors to governments.



On one of his last days as President of the BC Federation of Labour, Jim Sinclair paid tribute to Art Kube, highlighting his inspirational role in the labour movement and in fighting for seniors.

He got an appreciative laugh when he explained why he might not make appointments for dropping into some Union offices: “At my age, I don't know if I can keep an appointment...”

“Unions should organize their retirees.” He suggests strongly, “Please continue to support the work of COSCO and help to prepare for the future, by encouraging newly retired folks on board.”

“One half of workers belong to Unions, the other half were mostly exposed to the philosophy of the bosses. One of the best teachable moments is 65! (When people retire) But 65 is not

an expiry date. Retiring union members need to be challenged to stay involved.

“Seniors are the greatest underutilized resource in our society and we need to address the progressive agenda.”

COSCO President, Lorraine Logan thanked Art for all of his work and in particular the workshops, the latest being Passing the Torch. Her warning to the group – “None of you are safe. Art taught me well” – refers to COSCO's major efforts of recruiting more seniors to join and strengthen seniors' organizations.

Continuing education for everyone

By Alice Edge
Second Vice-President COSCO

I HAVE RECENTLY completed another free online course with PovnetU. To date I have completed three courses: CPP Disability Benefits Level 1, Dealing with Debt, Seniors Residential Care Advocacy and most recently Elder Law.

PovnetU is a collection of online courses for anti-poverty advocates in BC and Canada. Courses are facilitated by experienced advocates and include reading assignments, resource guides, exercises and on-line discussion forums with other course participants.

The on-line discussions are valuable tools to learn what is happening in BC and Canada, learn from other advocates that have access or have



developed resources to use in advocacy work and the highs and lows of advocacy work. Courses have about 10 – 12 modules that the learner progresses through each week.

Participants should commit to two to three hours of work per week

and to some extent can work at their own pace, within the deadlines posted for each course.

Facilitators comment one-on-one on assignments and contribute to the discussion forums. Quizzes are true/false, multiple choice or short answers to help learners assess their understanding of the course material. A certificate of completion is received once the course has been completed.

More information and registration is available from the website: www.povnetu.org. Support for the course is provided by BCGEU, BC Centre for Elder Advocacy and Support, BC Teacher's Federation, CUPE BC, CLAS, First United, HEU, Ministry of Justice, BC Notaries, TRAC and Vancity.

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.