

NATIONAL PENSIONERS' FEDERATION 2018 CONVENTION

Five COSCO delegates and a number of our BC affiliates went to the NPF Convention held in Regina, September 25-27.

As part of the agenda for this year's Convention, the meeting delegates participated in a demonstration to raise awareness of "The UN's International Day of the Older Person" observed on October 1 every year and heard speakers at the Saskatchewan Legislature.

Photos and copies of the following presentations from the convention are posted on the National Pensioners Federation website.

Pharmacare – A Prescription for Equity: A National Public Drug Plan Pauline Worsfold, RN, – Chairperson Canadian Health Coalition

Pension Protection Michael Powell – President Canadian Federation of Pensioners

Social Isolation, Social Engagement, and Cognitive Well-being Rebecca Genoe,

PhD Faculty of Kinesiology and Health Studies University of Regina

NPF Housing Committee Report Barb Mikulec – Committee Chairperson National Pensioners Federation

NPF Health Committee Report Kathleen Jamieson – Committee Chairperson National Pensioners Federation

Election Results: President Trish McAuliffe (Ontario) 1st Vice President Mike Kaminski (Saskatchewan) 2nd Vice President Bernie LaRusic (Nova Scotia) 3rd Vice President Pat Brady (B.C.) Treasurer Mary Forbes (Ontario) Secretary Carol Rogers (Nova Scotia) Member-at-Large Kathleen Jamieson (B.C.)

COSCO submitted a number of resolutions that passed. One was referred back to us: Our resolution about seniors' health and safety in subsidized seniors' housing. It triggered a lively debate among the attendees.



International Day of Older Persons

Following are COSCO resolutions to the Convention:

RENT BANKS – That the National Pensioners Federation urge the Federal government to work with provincial and municipal governments to set up "Rent Banks" for renters in crisis.

ANNUAL RENTERS' REBATE PROGRAM – That the National Pensioners Federation urge the Federal government to ensure the speedy implementation of the National Housing Strategy portable annual renters' rebate program.

COOP HOUSING SUPPORT – That the National

Council Of Senior Citizens' Organizations Of BC (COSCO)

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

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Larry Dea (BCITRA)
Leslie Gaudette
Navin Goburdhun (BCGREA)
Mohinder Grewal (VCCSNS)
Alex Hui (CN Pensioners Association)
Agnes Jackman (BC FORUM)
Kathleen Jamieson
Jean Sickman (BCGREA)

Disclaimer: Unless otherwise noted, opinions, viewpoints, accuracy of facts submitted by the member is the sole responsibility of the writer, and not necessarily the opinion of the Editor, Executive, or Membership of COSCO.

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About COSCO

COSCO is an umbrella organization that brings together 85 different seniors groups, representing approximately 100,000 women and men to work on common issues.

COSCO is affiliated with the 1,000,000 member National Pensioners Federation (NPF) which promotes these issues at the national level.

Much of COSCO's work is promoting good health. Our COSCO Health & Wellness Institute trained volunteers provide free workshops on 43 topics. More than 40,000 seniors have now attended these workshops! We update the information in the 90-minute workshops as information changes.

Send your letters to the editor or other contributions to:
cosconews.editor@coscobc.org **and** pres@coscobc.org

Pensioners Federation encourage the federal government to offer land trust or lease extensions to help co-ops invest in rehabilitation and maintenance of aging structures and construction of new ones.

BILL C-27 INCOME SECURITY – That the National Pensioners Federation call on the Government of Canada to withdraw Bill C-27, and Act to amend the Pension Benefit Standards Act, 1985.

OLD AGE SECURITY (OAS) – That the National Pensioners Federation call on the federal government to increase the Old Age Security to \$2,000 a month.

TEMPORARY HOUSING PROGRAMS – That the National Pensioners Federation urge the federal/provincial/territorial governments to conduct research and share findings on successful models for addressing home-

lessness among seniors, including Temporary Housing Programs in the transition back to permanent housing.

EXPENSE DEFERRAL ACCOUNT – That the National Pensioners Federation urge the federal government to set aside funds to create a Homeowners Expense Deferral Account program to allow senior homeowners with low or moderate income to use their home equity to offset unexpected costs, such as repairs to a roof or furnace, and that the deferred amount becomes due upon the sale of the property, death, or voluntary repayment, and that total deferments be allowed up to 75% of the equity of their home and be charged simple interest.

Joined with BC Forum resolution: **BANKRUPTCY PROTECTION** –

That the National Pensioners Federation call on the Government of Canada to fix

bankruptcy laws so our employee's pension and health benefits are given the same priority as secured creditors to stop employers from putting shareholders, banks, and creditors ahead of their employees when they file for bankruptcy protection.

Referred back to **COSCO: IMPACT ON SENIORS OF MIXED TENANCY HOUSING** – That the National Pensioners Federation urge the Federal/Provincial/Territorial Governments to provide rent-geared-to-income housing dedicated for seniors as part of affordable housing strategies and not allocate suites in the same building for tenants who may have serious behavioral issues.

You can find images and report of the convention on the National Pensioners' Federation website.

[by Gudrun Langolf](#)

SENIORS' REPAIR SERVICE

The Senior Citizens' Repair Service provides low-cost minor house repairs, renovations and maintenance services for seniors 55 years and over and for people with disabilities in Metro Vancouver. Services include **plumbing, carpentry, electrical work, gas fitting, painting, yard work and general handyman services**. All services are guaranteed for 30 days, and are performed by experienced trades people who are retired or semi-retired.

Sponsored by the Plumbers and Pipefitters Union Local 170.
Office hours are 9 AM to 12 Noon, Monday to Friday.
Phone: 604 529-1100

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

In the last issue of the COSCO News, I wrote a short piece about seniors and disabilities. It is wonderful to be able to report that the legislation is working its way through the parliamentary process: Bill C-81 Proposed Accessible Canada Act. The bill has moved onto a House of Commons committee, it then will come back to the House for third reading before going to the Senate for final approval. It may be law in spring 2019 if the process stays flawless. It is well on the way of being the most significant law on disability rights since the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

The principles of the Act are rooted in the understanding that barriers to accessibility are at the heart of inequalities between Canadians with and without disabilities. The principles are consistent with Canadian and international law and communicate the goals of the bill. The main principles are:

- inherent dignity
- equal opportunity
- barrier-free government
- autonomy
- inclusive design
- meaningful involvement

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The Act would apply broadly to organizations under federal responsibility (“regulated entities”).

Benefiting all Canadians by removing and preventing barriers to accessibility

The purpose of the bill is to make Canada barrier-free in areas under federal jurisdiction.

The bill outlines how to identify and remove accessibility barriers and prevent new barriers, under federal rule, including in:

- built environments (buildings and public spaces);
- employment (job opportunities and employment policies and practices);
- information and communication technologies (digital content and technologies used to access it);
- procurement of goods and services;
- delivering programs and services; and
- transportation (by air as well as by rail, ferry and bus carriers that operate across a provincial or international border).

COSCO’s delegates and executive are planning our focused work for 2019. COSCO is non-partisan but **our** focus must include preparing for the small ‘P’

political work to ensure that our legitimate interests are addressed in our upcoming federal election campaigns. We must pace ourselves! The work is far from done - ever!

by Gudrun Langolf

SAIL

SAIL is the Seniors Abuse and Information Line: 604-437-1940 for Metro Vancouver or 1-866-437-1940 toll free, daily except holidays. They offer a free legal consultation service for seniors. Appointment times are available in New Westminster, Surrey, Burnaby, North Vancouver offices. Call 604-336-5653 to book an appointment or see the website for locations www.SeniorsFirstBC.ca.

All calls to SAIL are confidential. SAIL is a safe place for older adults and those who care about them to talk to someone about situations where they feel they are being abused or mistreated, or to receive information about elder abuse prevention. Legal consultations are provided to people aged 55 or older on legal issues including: housing, debt, abuse/neglect, guardianship capacity, government benefits, financial exploitation or discrimination.

COSCO'S SUBMISSION TO THE PROVINCIAL BUDGET

The Council of Senior Citizens' Organizations of BC (COSCO/BC) represents thousands of seniors throughout the province. We are a volunteer, non-profit organization and work to secure fair and equal treatment for all seniors in the province. Specifically we work in the areas of health care (including home support and PharmaCare), housing, transportation and income security. We are happy for the opportunity to express our position on Budget 2019 for British Columbia.

Seniors account for more than 20% of the population

in BC, the majority being women. Women are twice as likely as men to live alone. Poverty is a serious problem for many seniors, both men and women, and as the BC Seniors Advocate points out many are faced with untenable choices: pay rent or buy food; buy food or buy medications; buy food or pay heat and hydro. We propose the following to be included in Budget 2019:

1. Increase the Seniors Supplement that is currently \$49.30 a month and has not increased since 1989.
2. Adjust provincial social

program criteria upward to take into account indexes to federal pensions. Presently seniors have these increased amounts clawed back from provincial programs.

3. Provide more subsidized housing where renters pay no more than 30% of their gross income as rent.
4. Attach rent increases to the unit, not the renter.
5. Match SAFER grants to the amount of rent increases (2.5% in the coming year).

HOW TO BOOK A FREE WORKSHOP FOR YOUR SENIORS' GROUP

So far, more than 40,000 seniors throughout BC have participated in the COSCO Seniors' Health and Wellness Institutes free health promotion workshops. We now offer workshops on 43 different issues and topics of particular interest to seniors.

Each 60 to 90 minute workshop is available free of charge to any seniors' group of 10 or more. A trained senior volunteer presents practical and usable information. These workshops are not intended to provide any specific legal, medical or financial advice, just a better understanding and practical suggestions.

To book a workshop for your group, please email:
ws_coord@coscoworkshops.org



6. Create a plan for home owners facing catastrophic repairs (furnaces, roofs, windows). The plan could be modeled after the Property tax deferral plan, whereby low-income seniors could borrow money for their home repairs and pay it back upon sale of the house. Fund this plan.
7. Ensure that people being evicted from Manufactured homes receive fair and equitable compensation for their units.
8. Roll the cost of the medical examination of drivers in their 80s into the MSP. To be forced to pay for these checkups is discriminatory.
9. Expand the low-income bus pass to include any senior earning less than \$25,000 per year.
10. Expand the Pharmacare program to include eyewear, hearing aids, mobility devices and dental care.
11. Make home support and home care free of charge to seniors earning less than \$25,000.
12. Enhance nutritional support programs for seniors.
13. Support 'rent banks' for those who need to borrow to pay their rent. Include the speed of access in this request as many seniors have immediate needs.
14. Regulate and fund adequate staff to implement and enforce new and existing regulations around housing.
15. Provide core funding for independent community-based senior centres that offer multicultural programs. And provide subsidies for a regular meal program at these centres.
16. Provide seniors centres with the infrastructure and resources for Information and Referral programs so that seniors get help navigating the requirements for access to programs.

by [Linda Forsythe](#)

COSCO 1ST VICE PRESIDENT HONORED BY THE JEWISH SENIORS' ALLIANCE

COSCO First Vice President, Sheila Pither, was honored by the Jewish Seniors' Alliance for her contribution and service to seniors in BC.

Sheila was honored at the Annual General Meeting of

the JSA when members and guests celebrated another successful and remarkable year of service to seniors.

For sure, all who know her admire Sheila Pither for her tireless advocacy for seniors. She was instrumental and

the driving force behind the growth our Health Literacy Program from a single workshop for Falls Prevention in 2007 to our current offering of more than 40 workshops on topics of interest to seniors.

Since March of this year, Sheila and a small number of specifically trained facilitators delivered the “Stay on the Road” workshop to more than 600 individuals in 20 communities around British Columbia. Participants are practically unanimous in their appreciation of factual and useful information about the new regime Enhanced Road Assessment (ERA). ERA is part of the process of making a driver’s medical fitness. “Stay on the Road” continues to attract requests. Seniors want to know what to expect as they near the age of 80 and may face driver

assessment.

With Annette O’Connor, COSCO Secretary, Sheila developed the workshop and coordinated the activities. With the assistance of the Superintendent of Motor Vehicles we partnered with ICBC driver examiners. Local seniors’ organizations also played an important role in the delivery of each workshop presentation, including securing venues, refreshments/lunches, travel and accommodation. A huge undertaking – Sheila is careful to give credit to all of those whom she inspired to pitch in.

Around the province more than 12 communities have invited COSCO to present this workshop to their seniors. Now all we need is funding to allow us to continue to present the workshop in the many communities where we have been invited to continue the program. We applied for a federal New Horizons grant and requested funding from the BC government. If money comes in we will continue the program. If it doesn’t we can’t – it’s just that simple...

[by Gudrun Langolf](#)

COSCO Associate Membership

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

Name: _____

Address: _____

Postal Code: _____ Phone: _____ Fax: _____

E-mail: _____

Date: _____ Signature: _____

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

Associate Membership is \$25 a year. Please make cheques payable to COSCO and mail your application to:

Linda Forsythe, Membership Secretary,

702 – 4221 Mayberry Street, Burnaby, BC V5H 4E8

E-Mail: membership@coscobc.org

Telephone: (604) 444-4300

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

[You can now contribute on our website www.coscobc.org](http://www.coscobc.org)

COSCO IN THE COMMUNITY

Fraser Health Event (below)



Royal Columbian Hospital new wing dedication: Jim Sinclair of the Fraser Health Authority & Navin Goburdhun of COSCO



Affordable housing campaign Kari Michaels and Rodrigo Samayoa

National Pensioners' Federation 2018 Convention (below)



Annette O'Connor was one of the volunteer registrars



Interim President Trish McAuliffe



Mike O'Donnell, Regina Councilor



Resolutions & Political Action committees

COSCO IN THE COMMUNITY

National Pensioners' Federation 2018 Convention (below)



COSCO Representatives Mohinder Grewal, Barb Mikulec and Sheila Pither are among those pictured above



Our host affiliate SSAI, (Saskatchewan Seniors Association Inc.) President Pat Trask



Jean Simpson gave the credentials report.

EXPERTS CALL ON WORLD BANK TO END AGGRESSIVE PROMOTION OF P3S FOR PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC SERVICE - AS TRUDEAU STEPS UP GLOBAL PRIVATIZATION PUSH



eurodad european network on debt and development

As the Canadian government steps up the push for privatization in developing countries, a new report “raises serious red flags” [<https://eurodad.org/history-repeated-press>] about Private, Public, Partnerships or **P3s**.

In a recent speech at the United Nations, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau promoted private sector investment in infrastructure to meet UN goals to end poverty, address climate change and tackle inequality in the developing world by 2030.

Trudeau also announced Canada will pay \$20 million

to set up a Toronto office for the Global Infrastructure Hub. This G20-sponsored organization promotes the private sector (including pension funds) profiting from owning and operating public facilities like schools, roads, utilities, hospitals and water systems.

But experience from around the world highlights common problems that raise “serious red flags about the capacity of PPPs to deliver results in the public interest.” The problems are documented in a new report from the European Network on Debt and Development (**Eurodad**).

History RePPeated

[<https://eurodad.org/history-repeated-press>] highlights the growing pressure from donor governments and international financial institutions like the World Bank to deliver vital infrastructure and services through P3s (referred to in Europe as PPPs).

The report uses 10 case studies from the developing and developed world to show why P3s are bad public policy.

The privatized projects shared many problems, including inflated costs, secrecy, excessively complex contract negotiations and governments, not

corporations, taking on high risks. Half of the projects did not reduce poverty, instead widening the gap between rich and poor. Several projects had harmful environmental and social impacts. Three projects failed and were canceled.

The UN Sustainable Development Goals focus on areas that are basic human rights, including access to water, health care and education. Canada

must listen to the evidence-based advice in **History RePPeated** [<https://eurodad.org/history-reppeated-press>] There's no room for profit, or private sector involvement, in delivering these vital services.

The report calls for an end to "the aggressive promotion and incentivizing of PPPs for social and economic infrastructure financing."

Eurodad is launching the

report at the annual meetings of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, two institutions which have a long track record of aggressively promoting privatization of public services in the global South.

See also:

<https://eurodad.org/history-reppeated-press>

<https://cupe.ca/report-calls-end-p3s-trudeau-steps-global-privatization-push>



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Make sure you get your voting package.

Visit www.elections.bc.ca/ovr to make sure your voter information is up to date.

Or phone the toll-free number: 1-800-661-8683
British Columbians will vote by mail
from October 22 to November 30, 2018.

The referendum is being held to decide what voting system we should use for provincial elections.

If you have never registered to vote in BC, or if you moved or changed your address recently, phone the toll-free number to make sure your voter information is complete.

Learn more about how to vote and the voting systems on the ballot on this website: www.elections.bc.ca/referendum

"Proportional Representation Referendum"

www.elections.bc.ca Toll free # 1-800-661-8683

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ELECTIONS BC
A non-partisan Office of the Legislature

POVERTY REDUCTION LEGISLATION INCLUDES TARGETS & TIMELINES BUT NOT FOR PEOPLE FAR BELOW THE POVERTY LINE

Media Release

Posted: October 2, 2018

(British Columbia)

The BC Poverty Reduction Coalition (BCPRC) congratulates the government for introducing poverty reduction legislation for BC. After years of waiting, the Poverty Reduction Strategy Act (Bill 39) could, if passed, ensure the foundation for the first ever poverty reduction plan for BC.

“The legislation is the foundation of a poverty reduction strategy. While this Act hits many accountability measures, there are gaps. We hope these gaps can be filled through a bold and comprehensive poverty reduction plan, and we encourage the general public to continue to advocate to the government as they develop the plan to be launched next year,” says Trish Garner,

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Community Organizer of the BC Poverty Reduction Coalition.

The Act includes targets to decrease the overall poverty rate by 25% and the child poverty rate by 50% in 5 years using the Market Basket Measure, now “Canada’s official poverty line.” If these targets are achieved, this would lift almost 140,000 British Columbians out of poverty, including 49,500 children. As well as reducing poverty, the plan must also include initiatives to prevent poverty in BC.

However, there are no targets and timelines for tackling the depth of poverty or ensuring those most marginalized are included in the reduction targets.

“It is good to see that the Act references consideration of the breadth and depth of poverty and includes a list of many of the groups most impacted by poverty,” says

Garner. “But not tying these considerations to targets could let the government off the hook. For example, the Act does not ensure action on increasing income and disability assistance rates, leaving people struggling far below the poverty line.”

The Act would legislate government’s commitment to reconciliation, the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

“While many groups are listed as targeted demographics, reference to the unique conditions of women’s poverty in BC, particularly in relation to single mothers and our child poverty rates, is a glaring omission,” highlights Viveca Ellis of the Community Action Network (and co-founder of the Single Mothers’ Alliance of BC).



“Given the appointment of Mitzi Dean as Parliamentary Secretary for Gender Equity, I would have expected a legislated focus on gender inequality.”

Strong accountability measures include mandatory annual reports on actions, effects and progress made towards the targets to be tabled before the Legislative Assembly and made available to the public. An Advisory committee will also be established, including people living in poverty.

“The commitments to reducing barriers to participation for people in poverty in the advisory committee and future

consultations are critical,” says Garner. “This is a significant foundation of a human rights framework. Unfortunately, there are no legislated commitments to any other human rights covenants apart from UNDRIP.”

The Act also does not include a “poverty/equity lens” (called an “impact clause” in Quebec’s legislation), which would embed a whole-of-government approach through ensuring that no Ministry could make decisions that hurt people in poverty; although it does include consideration of the “accessibility and coordination” of initiatives

and supports provided by government, and federal, municipal, and indigenous governments.

For more information, see ABCplan.ca

For interviews, contact:

Trish Garner, BC Poverty Reduction Coalition (BCPRC)

trish@bcpovertyreduction.ca / 604-417-8885

Christine Mettler, BCPRC Okanagan Regional Coordinator, Kelowna

christine@bcpovertyreduction.ca / 1-778-821-0766

The **BC Poverty Reduction Coalition** aims to see the introduction of an accountable, bold and comprehensive poverty reduction plan from the government of British Columbia that would include legislated targets and timelines to significantly reduce poverty, inequality and homelessness.



MEDOC® Travel Travel Insurance, Flexible Health & Dental Coverage, Home Owners Insurance, etc. are available to COSCO Members.

Check out all the available options and comparison shop! <http://cosco.johnson.ca/> toll free: 888.412.8822

NOVEMBER 11 - REMEMBRANCE DAY COMMEMORATING THOSE WHO DIED IN WORLD WAR I & SUBSEQUENT WARS

1. In 1915, John McCrae, a doctor serving in the Canadian Artillery, wrote the famous poem In Flanders Fields.
2. Remembrance Day was first observed throughout the British Commonwealth in 1919.
3. Non-Commonwealth nations that observe Remembrance Day include France, Belgium and Poland.
4. Canada adopted the poppy as the symbol for Remembrance Day in 1921.
5. Poppies were the first flowers to bloom on the battlefields in Belgium and France during the First World War.
6. Poppies flourish near battlefields because the lime from rubble and debris makes for fertile soil.
7. Approximately 21 million poppies are distributed across Canada every year.
8. Replica poppies are sold by the Royal Canadian Legion to provide assistance to veterans.
9. White poppies are worn as a symbol of peace and the wish for an end to all wars.
10. Purple poppies are worn to remember the animal victims of the First World War.

THE "RAGING GRANNIES"

Quoting from: <https://raginggrannies.org/herstory> *The Original Raging Grannies: Using Creative and Humorous Protests for Political Education*

The Raging Grannies are a Canadian phenomenon since their 1986 origin in Victoria, BC. Grannies offer a new approach to political protests. There are now more than

60 groups across Canada, an achievement in a land of diverse geography and cultures, and growing regionalization. A cause for curiosity is the distinctive form of protest they developed. The Raging Grannies use creativity and humour in protests as a way to raise issues and educate on social and political issues one song at a time. The lyrics are usually orig-

inal and are 'zippered' into popular melodies,

Vancouver Grannies donned their shawls and hats in 1987. They joined in protest against war and the role of multinationals. Social justice and peace, along with



the environment and climate change were/are also topics of their satirical and wickedly humorous song lyrics. There are now also American chapters or gaggles as they call themselves...

The current members of the Vancouver Raging Grannies are “aging out”, experiencing

the decline in membership numbers and energy much like many of our own seniors affiliates. Grannies are eager to **pass on the torch** to new Grannies of like mind. Grandchildren and singing ability is not essential but being gutsy is a plus! **Contact Robyn Smith at 604-922-**

4714 for more info or how to join a Raging Grannies gaggle.

Everyone you meet is fighting a battle you know nothing about. Be kind. Always

RENT CONTROL UNITS ARE CRITICAL

*|Originally published in Transitions Magazine Fall 2018
When rent control is based on the renter not the unit, when tenants move out, landlords can increase the rent as much as they like.*

According to the Rental Housing Index, 40% of renters in Canada are living in housing insecurity, spending more than 30 per cent of their income on rent; and 1 in 5 renters are spending more than half their income on rent, leaving them with little left over to support themselves and their families. It is not news that the cost of housing is already too high for far too many people in Canada and, with no rent control, there’s nothing to stop that increasing. Currently, British Columbia, Manitoba, Ontario and Prince Edward Island have some form of

rent control in relation to rent increases. In these provinces, the provincial government determines the maximum allowed increase in the rent, which goes some way to alleviate huge rent increases.

However, another critical aspect of rent control is tying rent increases to the unit not the tenant. Both measures are necessary to maintain the affordability of existing rental housing. PEI is a good example of this set of rent regulations.

When rent control is based on the renter not the unit, when tenants move out, landlords can increase the rent as much as they like.

This gives landlords an incentive to force tenants to move through harassment, neglect or any other means when they see an opportunity

to charge higher rent. This leaves all the power in the landlord’s hands at the expense of the renter’s long-term security in their home. Rent control attached to the unit has the potential to re-balance the power and protect renters from unscrupulous landlords.

In British Columbia, the situation is especially critical. So-called “renovictions” have been taking place in Vancouver and Victoria over the last decade, and are now an issue throughout the province, from Prince Rupert to Kelowna. This is leaving evicted families scrambling to find other affordable, adequate accommodation in a shrinking rental market.

Renovations are sometimes

necessary, especially when new affordable housing is scarce and the rental landscape is overrun with aging buildings built between the 1970s and 1990s. “Renovictions,” however, refers to the shady practice of using renovation as an excuse to evict in order to raise the rent not, in fact, to make substantial changes to the building. Strong rent control would help to reduce this problem.

There are concerns that rent control decreases housing supply as rent caps might dissuade some from fixing up their basement suite to rent or building rental property. Landlords may also have little incentive to repair or renovate when needed, as competition to attract higher paying tenants is limited. But that is easily fixed by the provincial government reinvesting in building and maintaining more affordable social housing to ensure a healthy supply.

Without rent control tied to the unit, many of the government’s policy changes will not have the beneficial impact expected or hoped for. Last September, income and disability assistance

rates were increased by \$100, but the average rent of a Single-Room-Occupancy (SRO) unit in the Downtown Eastside went up by \$139; and the living wage also went up despite decreases to childcare and MSP costs because rents increased so much. The living wage calculation is based on a two-parent family with two children—the most common family unit in BC—and each parent working full-time. The current living wage rate for Metro Vancouver is \$20.91/hour.

Rent control has the potential to maintain the diversity of our neighbourhoods, rather than making a growing number only available to those that can afford them, squeezing everyone else out and leaving our communities lacking. In a housing economy where increasing numbers of people are renters, now is the time for stronger protection for tenants.

As we wait for the government’s **poverty reduction plan** to be launched in February 2019, let’s tell the government that we need an **Accountable, Bold and Comprehensive**

poverty reduction plan that includes rent control tied to the unit as a central measure to tackle the depth and breadth of poverty in BC.

To email the Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction, please visit <http://www.abcpplan.ca/>.

For more information about the BC Poverty Reduction Coalition, visit <http://bcpovertyreduction.ca> or contact Trish Garner at trish@bcpovertyreduction.ca or 604-877-4553.

Trish Garner is the Community Organizer with the BC Poverty Reduction Coalition. She recommends reading the Vancouver Tenants’ Union submission to the Rental Housing Task Force (<https://tinyurl.com/ychx6k9j>) for more information on tenant rights and protections.

[Rent control has the potential to maintain the diversity of our neighbourhoods, rather than making a growing number only available to those that can afford them, squeezing everyone else out and leaving our communities lacking.](#)

by Trish Garner