

COSCO Highlights

May 2021



One of COSCO's purposes, enshrined in our Constitution, is "*to advance the social and physical welfare of all elder citizens in the province of British Columbia*". As always, we have been very busy doing just that in the last few weeks. Our focus has been to contact both provincial and federal government officials to present the most essential goals of older adults and to ask questions about government policies.

For many months, we have asked to virtually meet the federal Minister of Seniors, **Deb Schulte**. We managed to do that on April 21st. Honourable **Hedy Fry** moderated that meeting and it was a lively question and answer session, based on the budget that had been presented just the day before. The Minister was certainly well briefed and Dr. Fry, with her enormous experience in the House of Commons, was a fine addition to the event. Probably the biggest disappointment in the budget was that *national Pharmacare* was once again shelved, though Minister Schulte assured us that a committee was working on it. I think that this meeting was important in helping us to introduce this Ministry to COSCO.

On April 20th, **Leslie Gaudette**, who chairs our *Strategic Planning and Policies Committee*, and I, attended the provincial government budget lock-up. We were there for six hours. It wasn't nearly as dynamic as usual, but nonetheless, we were able to speak with some of the Ministry representatives. The Minister of Finance is **Selina Robinson**, who is well acquainted with COSCO. I was quite dazzled by the amount of money that the government was planning to spend on various programs. There was some money for *Senior Supplement grants*, moving from \$49.30 to \$99.30. We had been pushing for a larger amount, but it didn't happen. There is always next year and, as I remarked, COSCO is non-partisan, but we are persistent.

COSCO sponsored two webinars, both focused on linking the horrible long term care scandal with human rights violations. We partnered with the *National Pensioners' Federation* in the second of these. Both of the webinars were very well received. Many of the people reading this will have attended one or both of these events. Our panelists were superb and, after hearing them, I was glad to find that their views of the COVID-19 situation is the same as COSCO has predicted. To be honest, I think that the way things are shaping up doesn't bode well for the stern measures we need to have in place to ensure that there will be proper treatment of the vulnerable residents of care homes. Now that we know what is budgeted, we need to regroup and plan how to influence the decisions of both governments.

Our Executive Committee had a meeting with the provincial Parliamentary Secretary for Seniors, **Mable Elmore**. We had prepared questions for her and she was forthcoming and open in her replies. Ms. Elmore is a very important link for us because we don't have a Seniors' Ministry, something we have been working toward for a long time. **Dr. Penny Ballem** attended this meeting too. She is the person responsible for the vaccine program in the province. She added greatly to this occasion. Nothing is easy in the work that is being done.

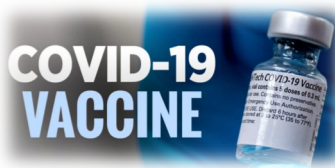
It is COSCO's duty to express the needs of seniors and to work towards their achievement. It is a comfort to know that we have 62 senior groups affiliated with us, plus many associate members. We are trying to keep you informed and involved. A strategy meeting is in the works and you'll be hearing from us.

Sheila Pither, COSCO President

Crisis Support & Suicide Prevention

- Vancouver Coastal Regional Distress Line: 604-872-3311
- Anywhere in BC 1-800-SUICIDE: 1-800-784-2433
- Mental Health Support Line: 310-6789
- Online Chat Service for **Youth**: www.YouthInBC.com (Noon to 1 AM)

Online Chat Service for **Adults**: www.CrisisCentreChat.ca (Noon to 1 AM)



Book your vaccine

The schedule for vaccines is changing on a regular basis, so phone to check.

Number to call:

Following are the phone numbers for each health authority. You should call the health authority where you live. Phone lines will be open daily from 7 AM to 7 PM, starting March 8.

Fraser Health: 1.855.755.2455
Interior Health: 1.877.740.7747
Island Health: 1.833.348.4787
Northern Health: 1.844.255.7555
Vancouver Coastal Health: 1.877.587.5767

Breaking News...





What To Do If You're a Victim of Fraud

1. Collect your thoughts

Stay calm. Gather all information about the fraud, including:

- documents
- receipts
- copies of emails and/or text messages

2. Contact your financial institutions

Report the incident to the financial institution that transferred the money.

If you're a victim of identity fraud:

- place flags on all of your accounts
- change all of your passwords
- report the fraud to both credit bureaus:
 - **Equifax:** <https://www.consumer.equifax.ca/personal/>
 - **TransUnion** -- <https://www.transunion.ca/>

3. Contact the police

Report the incident to your local police and get a file number for future reference. If you find suspicious activity on your credit report, update your file with the police.

4. Report the incident

Contact the **Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre** toll free at 1-888-495-8501 or through the **Fraud Reporting System**.

<https://www.services.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/chooser-eng.html?ipeReferer=CAFCFRS>

Depending on the type of fraud, or how it occurred, you'll also want to report it to other organizations.

5. Fraud that took place online through a website

Report the incident directly to the administrators of the website. You can do so through a link such as "Report Abuse" or "Report an Ad".

6. Redirected mail

If you suspect that someone had your mail re-directed, contact **Canada Post** <https://www.canadapost.ca/cpc/en/home.page>

You should also notify your service provider (telephone, cell phone, electricity, water, gas, etc.) of the identity fraud.

7. Lost, stolen, or misused immigration documents

Please contact **Citizenship and Immigration Canada** -- <https://www.cic.gc.ca/> -- if:

- your immigration documents have been lost or stolen
- you suspect someone is fraudulently using them

8. Lost or stolen passport

If your passport is lost or stolen, report the incident to **Passport Canada** <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/canadian-passports.html> and to your local police.

If you are outside of Canada, you must report the loss or theft to the nearest **Canadian government office abroad**. <https://travel.gc.ca/assistance/embassies-consulates>

9. Stolen Social Insurance Number

Learn what to do **if you suspect someone is using your Social Insurance Number (SIN)**. <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/sin/protect.html> – a6

10. Lost or stolen provincial or territorial identity documents

These documents include:

- your birth certificate
- your driver's license
- your health card
- other documents issued by a province or territory

Please contact the province or territory that issued the document if:

- the document has been lost or stolen
- you believe someone is fraudulently using this information

You can find contact information on provincial and territorial government websites.

Protect yourself from future fraud

Scammers often target victims of fraud a second or third time with the promise of recovering money. Always do your due diligence and never send recovery money.

Share any updates with the Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre, your financial institutions and police. Tell family, friends, neighbours and co-workers about your experience. You may prevent someone else from becoming a victim.

So we're into our 13th month of this pandemic...



These various quotes made me laugh!

1. So let me get this straight, there's no cure for a virus that can be killed by sanitizer and hand soap?
2. *Is it too early to put up the Christmas tree yet? I have run out of things to do.*
3. When this virus thing is over with, I still want some of you to stay away from me.
4. *If these last months have taught us anything, it's that stupidity travels faster than any virus on the planet, particularly among politicians and bureaucrats.*
5. Just wait a second – so what you're telling me is that my chance of surviving all this is directly linked to the common sense of others? You're kidding, right?
6. *People are scared of getting fined or arrested for congregating in crowds, as if catching a deadly disease and dying a horrible death wasn't enough of a deterrent.*
7. If you believe all this will end and we will get back to normal just because we reopen everything, raise your hand. Now slap yourself with it.
8. *Another Saturday night in the house and I just realized the trash goes out more than me.*
9. Whoever decided a liquor store is more essential than a hair salon is obviously a bald-headed alcoholic.
10. *Remember when you were little and all your underwear had the days of the week on them. Those would be helpful right now.*
11. Remember all those times when you wished the weekend would last forever? Well, wish granted. Happy now?
12. *It may take a village to raise a child, but I swear it's going to take a whole vineyard to home school one.*
13. Did a big load of pajamas so I would have enough clean work clothes for this week.
14. *Anyone who thinks children will socially distance at school has never met children.*

Ageism as a Human Rights Issue



Lately, there has been a lot of discussion on ageism, likely because of the recent pandemic and the fact that the **United Nations** (UN) has declared 2021-2030 as *the decade of Healthy Aging*. In March 2021, the UN produced '*the Global Report on Ageism*'.

The **long-term care disaster** in Canada may have caught our nation by surprise, but for those living in these homes, and their families and friends, it is not particularly astonishing. Why is it that most people didn't know about the conditions in long-term care homes? And if they did, how have these conditions been allowed to continue? The answer lies partly in the idea of ageism, defined by the UN as "*...the stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination directed towards people on the basis of their age. It can be institutional, interpersonal or self-directed*".

A recent presentation offered by COSCO and the **National Pensioners** (NPF) pointed out that the checks and balances to ensure a safety and dignity of people living in care homes is not in place. There are few resident/family councils in the care homes. Those that exist often do not have any ability to be heard or taken seriously. There is chronic understaffing, partly because the wages are so low and the work is so strenuous. There is little accountability in the care homes and when infractions are noted, the enforcement mechanisms have few teeth.

The problem of social isolation has hit long-term care residents particularly hard. Residents have essentially been locked up for the past year. They have not had the right to see family or friends, and certainly not in the privacy of their own rooms. Social isolation leads to feelings of loneliness and mental health problems. The **BC Seniors Advocate** has noted that the use of anti-psychotic drugs is once again increasing in care homes, and has set back all the gains that were made in the past few years in controlling this practice.

For most of us, happiness comes from social interactions. Social isolation affects thinking, sleep and life expectancy. In fact, people suffering from social isolation can have a 50% higher mortality rate.

So what can we do about this situation? We need to have a separate covenant on the rights of the older person. We need to see these rights enshrined in law and we need to see that these laws are enforced. The rights of older persons are not just a long-term care issue. It affects all of us. We need to demand that our governments listen to us and take clear action; action that is based on our human rights.

Linda Forsythe

ADVANCE NOTICE

Living IN THE 21ST CENTURY **STRATEGIES *for* SENIORS**

**Choices. Solutions.
Mark your calendar today.**

Major challenges and opportunities face seniors, our families, and our communities

WE MUST find the best way forward. That's why the Council of Senior Citizens' Organizations of B.C. is organizing this important virtual conference.

Ideas. Facts. Leading edge research on issues that affect us all. You'll hear all that and more from our impressive speakers and presenters.

Equally important, a series of workshops will invite participants to share their experiences and wisdom.

We invite you to plan to participate, to learn and to contribute your insights as we work to build inclusive, sustainable, age-friendly communities.

Please mark your calendar now, and watch for more details coming soon!

September 2021

Sunday 26	Monday 27	Tuesday 28	Wednesday... 29
	<i>COSCO Conference</i>	<i>COSCO Conference</i>	

Who should participate?

THIS VIRTUAL conference will be of particular interest to:

- Seniors and seniors' representatives.
- Municipal councillors and planners, parks and recreation, and health authority representatives.
- MLAs, MPs and First Nations.
- Federal and provincial departments dealing with seniors.
- NGOs such as social planning councils, community centre representatives, advocacy groups, and everyone who works with seniors.

For more information:

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