



COSCO News

Council of Senior Citizens' Organizations of B.C.

Election Issue
P7-P14

Number 129



www.coscobc.org

September 2024

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

COSCO Gives Notice to BC Candidates: SENIORS VOTE!

As the voice for BC Seniors, we at COSCO take our responsibilities seriously to inform our members and indeed all older adults of key election information to ensure you will be well prepared to Vote on October 19.

Thanks to our hard-working Elections Committee, the centre section of this newsletter contains 8 pages jam-packed with information on how to vote along with highly relevant information on 12 key issues important to our lives as older adults in British Columbia.

What a relief this summer has been! For the first time in over four years, we have been able to get out and visit freely with friends, reconnect with relatives, and enjoy conversations with people we have not seen in person for the past five years or more. And how wonderful to be able to plan for an election where many events will be held in person. In reviewing material from elections past, it is great to see progress being made on some issues (remember MSP premiums?) while others (think HandyDART) still need to be resolved. Income security and housing continue to be issues faced by many seniors in our province.

As Fall approaches, take time to review the material in this Elections issue of COSCO and prepare yourself for when you meet with candidates. Know what issues are important to you and prepare yourself to ask questions. Have conversations with friends and family about the issues. Know that your voice and your vote matter. Watch for more information to be posted on the COSCO website as the Election proceeds:

<https://coscobc.org/elections/>

Watch over the next month for more information on how to celebrate International Day on the Older Person on October 1 leading into Aging Awareness Day on October 9th.



Finally, it has almost become a rite of summer as we welcome the Honourable Steven MacKinnon as our new Minister of Labour and Seniors. We look forward to getting to know him and his staff in the coming months as we await next year's Federal Election.

President Leslie Gaudette

Council of Senior Citizens' Organizations of BC (COSCO)

Visit us at www.coscobc.org &
<https://www.facebook.com/COSCOBC/>

President:

- Leslie Gaudette (LSA)
pres@coscobc.org

First Vice-President:

- Barb Mikulec (BCRTA/VRTA)

Second Vice-President:

- Terri Van Steinburg (KPURA)

Secretary:

- Albert Lemonnier - (ILWU)

Treasurer:

- Stephane Lapierre (Carrefour 50+)

Membership Secretary

- Linda Forsythe (VOBSS)
membership@coscobc.org

General Vice-Presidents:

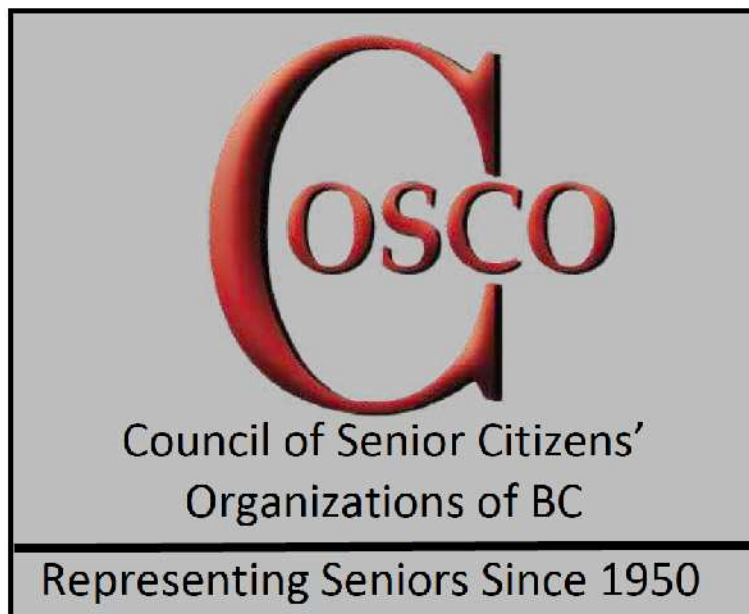
- Wilf Brodrick - (BCGREA)
- Don Bayne - (BCOAPO)
- Barb Mikulec (BCRTA)
- Diane Wood - (BC FORUM)

Members-at-Large:

- Jerry Gosling - (BCOAPO)
- Patrick Harkness - (BCGREA)
- Marion Hartley - (SVSHC)
- Agnes Jackman - (BC FORUM)
- Barry Jones - (CNPA)
- Rod Mclvor - (CNPA)
- Jean Sickman - (BCGREA)

Committee Chairs:

- *Income Security* - Terri van Steinburg
- *Communications* - Linda Forsythe
- *Finance* - Wilf Brodrick
- *Health* - Louise Holland
- *Housing* - Barb Mikulec
- *Membership & Fundraising*
- Anthony Kupferschmidt
- *Strategic Planning & Policies* - Leslie Gaudette
- *Transportation* - Jerry Gosling
- *Diversity, Equity & Inclusion* – Agnes Jackman



IN THIS EDITION

COSCO Gives Notice to BC Candidates: SENIORS VOTE!	1
Dementia News	3
UN General Assembly Resolution on Older Persons' Rights	4
Oct 1 – UN Day of Older Persons	5
Dental Update	5
QMUNITY	6
Problems with E-Bikes and Other Mobility Devices	6
Special Election pullout section	P7-P14
Ageing At Home – With Virtual Care	15
Federal Budget 2025 – COSCO's Submission	16
Texada Island Non-Profit Seniors Housing Society	17
Pharmacare: A Plan for Everyone	17
From the Office of Seniors Advocate	18
Retirement Reinvented: Your Guide to a Healthy, Active Future	19
Johnson Travel Exclusive (advertisement)	19
Seniors' Health and Wellness – This Fall Leap into New Learning & Growth	20
COSCO Associate Membership Form	20

About COSCO

COSCO is an umbrella organization that brings together older adults to work on common issues. We now have over 75 groups, representing over 80,000 seniors.

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

COSCO is a registered non-profit society.

Send your letters to the editor or other contributions to:

cosconews.editor@coscobc.org

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.

Dementia News

As we live longer, the numbers of people living with dementia will increase, according to the Lancet Commission Report on Dementia. Women with dementia outnumber men by a 2:1 ratio in the numbers afflicted. By modifying risk factors, half of the dementia cases may be prevented or delayed. The report includes two new risk factors to those already known: vision loss and high cholesterol. The other factors include lower education and cognitive stimulation, head injury, physical injury, smoking, excessive alcohol consumption, hypertension, obesity, diabetes, hearing loss, depression, limited social contact, and air pollution.

Specific policy changes governments can make to help delay or prevent dementia include:

- quality education for all and mental stimulation in mid-life
- make hearing aids accessible for those with hearing loss and reduce exposure to harmful noise
- treat depression
- encourage and support the use of head protection in contact sports and on bicycles
- encourage and support physical activity
- reduce smoking by putting a number of blocks in the way

- prevent or reduce high blood pressure (hypertension) keeping systolic blood pressure at 130 after 40 years of age
- detect and treat high LDL cholesterol from mid-life onward
- maintain a healthy weight and treat obesity as early as possible
- reduce alcohol consumption
- prioritize age-friendly and community environments and housing, and reduce social isolation by facilitating participation in activities and living with others
- make screening and treatment for vision loss accessible for all
- reduce exposure to air pollution.

Once dementia has been diagnosed, interventions include drug treatments. Interventions also need to be put in place for family caregivers. Activities for dementia patients should be person centred.

Information taken from Dementia prevention, intervention and care; 2024 report of the Lancet Commission. This report is long and detailed and can be found at [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(24\)01296-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(24)01296-0).



COSCO executive members at the Langley Global Fest event August 2024

Resolution adopted by UN General Assembly on older persons' rights!

The UN General Assembly adopted a resolution on 13 August 2024 marking the culmination of over 14 years of work by the Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing (OWEGA) in New York. This landmark resolution acknowledges OWEGA's completion of its mandate with the formulation of recommendations aimed at addressing gaps in international law, and it calls upon other UN entities to seriously consider these recommendations. Foremost among the recommendations is the proposal to establish an international, legally binding instrument safeguarding the human rights of older persons, commonly referred to as a convention. The resolution also includes other key recommendations that address various aspects of older persons' rights and protections. Decision 14/1 underscores the role of the Human Rights Council (HRC) and other pertinent UN bodies in further deliberating on these crucial initiatives. When published, this Resolution's final version will be A/RES/78/324.

Why is a UN convention on the rights of older persons crucial?

A United Nations convention on the rights of older people is crucial if we want to ensure that as we grow older, our rights and well-being are protected and respected. It would help us build a solid foundation from which effective national laws can emerge. It would ensure age discrimination is

prohibited in the law, including services that uphold older people's dignity. It also ensures that attitudes and behaviours towards us when we're older must be more respectful.

The passing of this resolution marks the start of a critical new phase in our advocacy for older people's rights. To keep the momentum going, we must:

1. Engage with governments: Continue and strengthen dialogue with national governments to ensure they support the drafting of a UN convention.
2. Collaborate with civil society: Work closely with civil society organizations to amplify our voices and prioritize older people's needs in the convention process.
3. Raise awareness: Increase public understanding of the importance of protecting older people's rights and the impact a UN convention could have.
4. Ensure inclusion: Guarantee that older people and their representatives are meaningfully involved in all discussions and decisions.

The participation of older people and civil society at the Human Rights Council's 57th session, taking place from 9th September to 11th October, will be crucial in shaping the discussions and outcomes.

Based on material circulated by the Canadian Coalition Against Ageism and HelpAge International.



Leslie Gaudette,
COSCO president,
speaking to the UN
in May 2024

October 1 – UN Day of Older Persons



Once again, the October 1st United Nations International Day of Older Persons approaches. The 2024 theme for the UNIDOP is “Ageing with Dignity: The importance of strengthening Care and Support Systems for Older Persons Worldwide”

On December 14, 1990, the United Nations General Assembly made October 1st as the International Day of Older Persons. This day was observed for the first time on October 1, 1991. The day is celebrated annually to recognize the contributions of older persons and to examine issues that affect their lives.

Suggestions as to how one can acknowledge and celebrate the UNIDOP are:

Volunteer: Offer your time to assist older persons in your community through local programs or organizations. Another option is the personal approach by supporting a senior you know who could do with your caring assistance. Or take a senior to lunch or coffee. Celebrate the day!

Raise awareness: Use social media to share information about the importance of this day and the contribution of older persons.

Advocate for rights: Engage in advocacy efforts to promote policies that protect the rights

Educate yourself: Learn about issues facing older persons and how you can help make a difference. A good source of information can be found online on the UN site for “The Decade of Healthy Aging” (2021 to 2030). COSCO’s website <https://coscobc.org/> is also another excellent source of information on the issues that concern seniors, with links to other relevant sources.

Host events: Organize community events, such as health fairs, workshops, or social gatherings to celebrate and support older persons. If time is too short to organize anything for this year, start planning for October 1, 2025!

UNIDOP link is <https://social.desa.un.org/issues/ageing/events/2024-unidop>

Submitted by Agnes Jackman, COSCO Diversity Chair

Dental Update



As of late July, more than 2.3 million Canadians have signed up for the Canadian Dental Plan (CDP). A large percentage (75%) of dental providers have also signed up. These include dentists, hygienists, and denturists. The program coverage includes low-and-middle income seniors, children under 18 and the disabled, who don’t belong to an existing dental program.

The announcement was made by Mark Holland, Minister of Health, Government of Canada, in a CTV News interview.

<https://www.ctvnews.ca/politics/liberal-government-hopes-changes-to-dental-care-program-will-increase-uptake-1.6955479>

QMUNITY



Finding inclusion, belonging, and meaningful connections can become more challenging as we age. That's why QMUNITY hosts social events, co-develops and provides educational workshops, assists in one-to-one support and referral services, while fostering connections within diverse communities to improve the lives of 2SLGBTQIA+ persons 55 years and older.

Weekly Seniors programs include yoga, Quills (online writing workshop), and Gathers (in person in Vancouver and online for others wanting to meet and get to know others). QMUNITY offers support and information for food security assistance as well as an older adult bulletin that includes events, short stories and articles, pictures, and book reviews. QMUNITY is involved with Aging With Pride.

Check out this organization for the many activities throughout the province.

Website: QMUNITY.CA

email: seniors@qmunity.ca

phone: 604-684-5307



Problems with e-bikes and other mobility devices



Regulations are urgently needed for E-Bikes and E-Mobility devices operating on B.C. roads and sidewalks. Presently, BC does not have enforceable regulations applying to e-bikes, e-scooters and other e-mobility devices operating on our streets, sidewalks, lanes and alleys. There is no age limit or licensing required for these and no requirement for protective head gear or clothing. Handicapped people such as visually impaired, hearing impaired and frail seniors are among those being extremely vulnerable to injury, compromising their safety in our communities.

Research was unable to find how many blind or visually impaired people are injured or killed in BC or Canada from e-mobility devices, including e-bikes as neither Health Canada nor Statistics Canada keeps these types of records. We are aware that our hospital emergency rooms are operating at full or near capacity and this will increase if enforceable guidelines and regulations are not put in place.

Jerry Gosling, Chair, COSCO Transportation Committee



COSCO Election Special: Final Voting Day is Saturday, October 19

What you need to know about the BC provincial election

This special section of the COSCO News includes important information from Elections BC about how to vote along with crucial information from our COSCO Elections Committee regarding 12 key issues facing seniors in our province. We hope you will use this as a guide to determine which candidates will best respond to your needs. We are also contacting the leaders of the four parties with seats in the legislature to determine their commitment to these issues and will distribute their responses separately – watch for this later in September.

Also visit <https://coscobc.org/elections/> to learn about election-related events and information.

New Electoral Districts

As a first step visit the Elections BC website, which provides clear information about the upcoming vote. For 2024, the boundaries of many ridings have changed – please refer to <https://mydistrict.elections.bc.ca/> to determine your electoral district.

Election Integrity

We are fortunate in British Columbia and in Canada to have non-partisan, independent agencies to run our elections. If in doubt, please refer to Elections BC as your trusted source for accurate and up-to-date information about the electoral process.

During an election, voters receive information from many different sources including candidates and political parties, third-party advertising sponsors, news outlets and

social media. Knowing the facts about the next provincial election will make voting easier when the election is called, and it will help you spot disinformation.

To register to vote in British Columbia, you must be:

- a Canadian citizen 18 years and older and a B.C. resident for the past six months.
- You can register or update your information no later than midnight October 7, 2024:
 - [online](#)
 - by phone at 1-800-661-8683 (Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. PST)
 - by mail, fax or email by sending us [this form](#)
 - in person at a [registration drive](#) or at our office at #100 – 1112 Fort St, Victoria, BC, V8V 3K8

Ways to Vote

1. At any district electoral office: from the day the election is called until 4pm on Final Voting Day (October 19, 2024).
2. Vote by mail: packages must be returned to Elections BC by 8 pm on Final Voting Day.
3. Vote in advance: October 10-13 and October 15-16.
4. Vote on Final Voting Day, October 19
5. Vote Anywhere (new technology makes this possible).



ELECTION BC '24

Voting with new technology:

- New voting processes and technology will be used to administer the election.
- Networked laptops will be used to look up voters and cross them off the voters list, instead of paper lists. This reduces line-ups, makes the voting process more efficient and helps voters vote at any voting place.
- Electronic tabulators will be used to count paper ballots. Tabulators are accurate, secure and efficient. They help us report results quickly on election night.
- These changes mean that almost all ballots will be counted on election night.

Where to Vote:

Preliminary voting places for the October 19, 2024 Provincial General Election are now available at the links below. Voting place locations will be updated before the election, so make sure to check Elections BC for updates and look for your Where to Vote card in the mail after the election is called on September 21.

Advance voting

Advance voting will be available **October 10 – 13 and October 15 – 16** (advance voting will be closed Monday, October 14, for Thanksgiving). Advance voting places will be open from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. local time. Not all advance voting places will be open on every day of the advance voting period. [Preliminary advance voting places \(PDF\)](#)

Final voting

Final Voting Day for the 2024 Provincial General Election is scheduled for **Saturday, October 19**. Voting places will be open from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. (Pacific time). [Preliminary election day voting places \(PDF\)](#)

Who is nominated in your riding

The official list for nominated candidates can be found at <https://elections.bc.ca/2024-provincial-election/candidate-list/>. Nominations close on September 28

For those of you planning All-Candidates Meetings, an unofficial list that may be more up-to-date may be found along with other background information at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2024_British_Columbia_general_election





ELECTION BC '24

Here is what BC Seniors want to see in party Election platforms

1. Long-term Care

Deficiencies in the system of long-term care services have been noted in many reports by many authors over the years. The results of inadequate attention to these issues were glaringly visible during the time of the pandemic. Concerns about quality of care and quality of life in long-term care in BC are plentiful. They include aging physical infrastructure, short-staffing, high staff turnover, insufficient allied health staff in disciplines such as recreation, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, and social work, lack of recreation and meaningful activities, unappetizing meals, and high rates of inappropriate use of antipsychotic medications. More specifically, the seniors advocate's report, *Every Voice Counts: Long-Term Care Resident and Visitor Survey*, released in the fall of 2023 noted the significant need for improvement with respect to residents' quality of life in the areas of experience of meals, frequency of bathing, and lack of meaningful activities. For example, 51% of residents said staff only 'sometimes', 'rarely' or 'never' make time for a friendly conversation or ask how to meet their needs. As well 50% reported only sometimes, rarely, or never bathe as frequently as they wish. The long-standing nature of the institutional model in long-term care and the complexity of the systemic issues call not just for piece meal action, but instead cry out for true holistic, systemic reform.

COSCO asks political parties to pledge their support for the development of a comprehensive plan to reform long-term care.

2. Home Support

Personal assistance services such as bathing, toileting, grooming, and medication management offered through the provincial Home Support program enables seniors to remain at home longer, delaying or preventing the need for admission to long-term care. Frequently cancelled visits, rushed caregivers, inflexible care plans that do not meet a person's needs, and a high degree of caregiver burden are some of the concerns that have been identified by the seniors advocate in the report, *We Must Do Better*.

In this report, the advocate noted that 13% of newly admitted long-term care residents in B.C. could have been cared for at home, which is a rate twice as high as Alberta and Ontario. One possible reason for this finding is that the charge for home support presents such a financial burden for some low-income seniors that long-term care can be a less costly alternative. The seniors advocate recommended waiving the home support charge as well as increasing respite care, modernizing care plans, and establishing provincial standards to better evaluate program performance.

COSCO asks that political parties follow through and implement the Seniors Advocate's recommendations for improvements to the Home Support program.





ELECTION BC '24

3. Support for vision, mobility, and hearing needs

Treatment, equipment, and devices for vision, mobility, and hearing needs are critical to supporting the health, functioning, and independence of seniors. According to the Seniors Advocate, 83% of low-income seniors do not have an extended health care benefits plan. This means that costs for items such as eyeglasses, walkers, or hearing assistive devices are out-of-pocket and out of reach for many. Aside from the value of supporting the health of older British Columbians because it is good and right to do so, financial support for these needs is in the interest of all British Columbians as it may prevent or delay decline in health and functioning that may reduce the need for services in the future. For example, consider the impact of hearing loss. Alzheimer Society Canada has noted that hearing loss is a modifiable risk factor for dementia and is calling for governments to support policies that promote better brain health which may reduce the prevalence of dementia.

COSCO asks that political parties commit to addressing the issue of seniors who cannot afford the treatment, equipment, or devices necessary for meeting their vision, mobility, or hearing needs.

4. Building an adequate supply of safe affordable housing

A recent report from a US University claims that housing in Vancouver is “Impossibly Unaffordable”. In order to purchase a house in Metro Vancouver, a family’s income has to be at least \$250,000/year. Some seniors are fortunate enough to own a home they purchased many years ago and that asset helps fund their retirement years. Senior homeowners can also help their financial situation by deferring their property taxes.

Currently, many levels of government seem to be counting on the “for-profit” housing development industry to provide much-needed affordable housing, despite the fact that industry has made it quite clear that they are only interested in building anything when profit levels meet their expectations.

Affordable housing can be provided and run by government agencies, co-ops, not-for-profit agencies or groups, faith-based organizations, or the private sector, provided guarantees are in place to ensure it remains as affordable housing in perpetuity.

COSCO BC continues to call on all levels of government to ensure the rapid construction of safe, appropriate and affordable (based on no more than 30% of gross annual income) not-for-profit housing, with necessary support services available on site (or nearby) for those who require them.





ELECTION BC '24

5. Ensuring rents are 30% of income

Seniors who are renters are often only one or two pension cheques away from being homeless. It's impossible for the private sector to build accommodation for low-income households – often older women living alone – with truly affordable rents unless there is significant public investment. The recent increases in the SAFER (Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters) rent ceilings to \$931 remain far below the market rents of \$1558 in October 2023 for a one-bedroom apartment in British Columbia.

COSCO BC calls on government to raise financial assistance levels, including the BC SAFER Grant, along with other social and income support programs to an amount that will ensure no senior ends up homeless due to the cost or unavailability of appropriate housing.

6. BC Seniors Supplement

A key priority for COSCO in the upcoming 2024 Provincial election is the need to address poverty issues for low-income seniors. The BC Labour Minister, Harry Bains said BC's minimum wage is "permanently tied to inflation" to "prevent our provinces lowest paid workers from fallen behind...".

Yet BC seniors are also falling behind. Approximately 45% of seniors make less than the minimum wage, which the BC government regularly increases to inflation. Similarly, increases tied to inflation are needed to the BC Seniors Supplement to prevent seniors from falling further and further behind. We acknowledge the BC government increased the Supplement from \$49.30 to 99.30 in 2021, however BC still has one of the lowest rates of seniors supplement in Canada.

COSCO asks each political party to support the following actions:

- **Increase the seniors supplement to at least the top three rates in Canada, joining Saskatchewan, Nunavut, and Alberta, who currently have the highest rates of seniors' supplement.**
- **Permanently index the supplement to the rate of inflation, as other pension incomes are.**
- **Extend without claw-back at the top rate, a wider income band.**

Supporting these measures will go a long way to meeting the target of reducing seniors' poverty by 50% laid out in the 2024 BC Poverty Reduction strategy.



ELECTION BC '24

7. Stable funding for Seniors Centres

The seniors' population in BC is increasing. Seniors live longer and have diverse backgrounds and diverse needs. Many seniors live at or near the poverty level and with increasing reports of food insecurity, the meal programs offered by many centres provide crucial nutrition.

Seniors' centres in BC also play key roles in our communities by keeping seniors out of the hospital, improving their quality of life, engaging with the broader community, addressing social isolation, ageism and other relevant issues through educational programs, as well as identifying problems seniors face. And seniors Centres help older adults navigate through the myriad of programs and services available.

Despite the good work seniors' centres do, funding is insecure and sporadic, with paid staff devoting many hours to secure grant funding, while costs continue to rise.

COSCO calls for parties to provide core sustainable funding and resources for seniors' centres to ensure our seniors remain healthy and able to contribute to their communities.

8. Ageism and Human Rights

Discrimination based on age (ageism) can seriously impact seniors. Ageism can negatively affect the financial well-being of seniors, the ability of seniors to access appropriate health care and the ability of seniors to live with dignity. The adverse effects of ageism can be particularly serious for low-income seniors. The United Nations is currently working to establish a UN Convention on the Rights of Older Persons. Recommendations to address this issue have recently been adopted by the UN General Assembly

Ageism is a pervasive and multifaceted form of discrimination that infringes upon the human rights of older persons. It manifests in various forms and leads to significant health, social, and economic challenges for our aging population in British Columbia and Canada. Guided by the World Health Organization's Global Report on Ageism, the COSCO together with the Canadian Coalition Against Ageism is committed to eliminating ageism through evidence-based interventions. These include education, intergenerational initiatives, and the development and enforcement of robust policies and laws. These efforts aim to protect the dignity and rights of older adults, ensuring they are valued and respected members of society.

COSCO asks that all parties commit to supporting the efforts of Canadian seniors and allied groups to combat ageism and support the efforts at the United Nations to establish a Convention on the Rights of Older Persons.





9. Affordable Transit

As transit is often the only means seniors can use to travel about their community, it must be affordable. Transit offers seniors access to shopping, social opportunities, medical appointments and entertainment that would otherwise not be available. Many seniors take pride in being able to navigate the transit system to meet their daily travel needs.

A significant number of seniors live on a fixed income. They have seen living expenses increase to the point where they are forced to make hard choices between rent, food, medication and transportation.

The 2024 Poverty Strategy recommends that the province increase access to transportation to more seniors, including assessing the feasibility of expanding the bus pass for people with disabilities and seniors to include HandyDART, so everyone can stay connected to their community.

COSCO asks that all parties commit to ensuring that transit and HandyDART passes for low-income seniors will be available at minimal or no cost.

10. HandyDART

People who are unable to use regular transit rely on HandyDART to move about their community. Many HandyDART passengers are seniors.

HandyDART is managed by Translink in Metro Vancouver and by BC Transit in the rest of the province. When HandyDART service is provided in-house, the drivers are well trained, better paid and motivated to do the job well. When not operated in-house, operators are contracted to provide the service with TransLink or BC Transit equipment. In many cases, non-profit organizations such as charitable societies or local governments provide very good service. When for-profit entities are involved, evidence shows that the quality of service will be sacrificed for profit. When taxis are substituted for HandyDART, neither the operators nor the equipment are able to match the high quality of in-house service.

In areas where HandyDART is offered, demand for the service often outstrips supply. Many communities have no service at all.

COSCO asks that all parties commit to ensuring that HandyDART services will be expanded to areas where needed and provided as a public service, or if that is not practicable, by not-for-profit agencies.



ELECTION BC '24

11. Province-wide public Transit Service

Many seniors living on a fixed income are not able to operate their own cars due to economic or health challenges. While some destinations may be within walking distance, many are not. These seniors require dependable transit service. For the regional travel required for health care and other needs, intercity bus service is required.

In our major urban areas transit service is falling behind demand, making it more challenging for seniors to get around. In Metro Vancouver there is a fast-approaching short fall in funding.

The Seniors Advocate Report *Resilient and Resourceful; Challenges Facing BC's Rural Seniors*, details the unique struggles of seniors aging in place in rural communities. One recommendation of the report is to “Make transit more reliable, frequent and affordable especially in rural, remote and Indigenous communities where many people without cars struggle to get around” The report also mentions the challenge that rural governments face in paying their share of the cost of transit service. The only source of funds for transit is property taxes. This funding source makes it difficult to maintain an adequate amount of funding for transit service.

The 2024 update of the Poverty Reduction Strategy from the Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction included seniors as a concern for the first time. The strategy recognizes that public transportation is an important part of social inclusion for seniors who don't drive. The report also specifies that both local transit and regional passenger transportation are important to seniors.

COSCO asks that all parties commit to ensuring that sustainable and ongoing funding for public or not-for-profit public transportation service will be available within, and between, all areas of the province.

12. Homelessness – Need for temporary safe housing

Up to 20% of current homeless people are seniors, and the results of any efforts by various levels of government to provide adequate permanent housing for those already un-housed always appear to be at least five years in the future. In the meantime, more and more seniors are in imminent danger of joining those who are already homeless, including those couch surfing or living in their cars.

COSCO BC calls on all levels of government to cooperate so that safe housing and associated support services are immediately provided for anyone who is homeless, even if it is “temporary” housing until more permanent solutions can be constructed.



Ageing at Home - with Virtual Care

Seniors will be supported to stay in their homes longer with a new virtual service that provides some of the essential support of a long-term care facility.

“Seniors prefer to live in their own home receiving supports and assistance, in a space that is familiar and comfortable,” said Adrian Dix, Minister of Health. “This innovative long-term care at home approach provides seniors and their loved ones with the services they need to age safely and independently for as long as possible.”



The Long-term Care at Home program (LTC@Home) equips seniors' homes with

technology for virtual care and monitoring, customized to an individual's needs and monitored by a care team who checks in if an alert is received. It also includes respite care to help alleviate family caregiver burnout, extending their ability to care for a loved one in the home longer.

The programs' technology will monitor seniors in their homes for fall detection, activity levels, medication adherence, wandering and vitals where appropriate to the individual. A variety of devices may be used for equipping a senior's home. Examples include a tablet for connecting to loved ones or participating in virtual programs, a wearable pendant or wall mounted device for fall detection, two-way emergency calls, and sensors installed throughout the home. The combination of devices used is tailored to the

seniors' home and health needs, ensuring they are safe wherever they are in their home.

The LTC@Home program is designed to support seniors who feel this is a viable solution for them, and whose care needs meet at least one of the following criteria:

- on, or eligible for, a long-term care wait list and is living at home with a primary caregiver (family or friend);
- on, or eligible for, an assisted living wait list and is living at home; or
- living at home with or without a primary caregiver and is capable of managing daily activities, but is at risk of isolation, at an elevated risk of a fall, or would benefit from vitals monitoring and/or medication dispensing.

The project is being piloted with the support of KinVillage in Delta (11 seniors enrolled) and Broadmead Care Society in Victoria (15 seniors enrolled). Each participant is attached to a care home and able to participate in programs in that home. The goal is to support more than 2,700 seniors and their caregivers over the next four years and expand to other communities around B.C. over the next 18 months.

The program is funded through the Canada-British Columbia Aging with Dignity agreement, which provides up to \$47 million over four years.

Edited version of BC Government News, July 31, 2024

Federal Budget 2025 – COSCO’s Submission

In preparation for the budget that will be presented in early 2025, we have made a number of recommendations. The background information and these recommendations are listed on our webpage <https://coscobc.org/federal-budget-submission-letters-to-the-editor/>

That the Government of Canada:

Recommendation 1: provide funding for and continue to support international and national initiatives to develop the proposed UN Convention on the Rights of Older Persons.

Recommendation 2: develop and implement a Seniors Strategy to address ageism and the needs of an aging population for social connectivity.

Recommendation 3: provide funding to implement the promised increases to the Guaranteed Income Supplement of at least \$500 for single seniors and \$750 for couples starting at age 65.

Recommendation 4: work with provinces and territories to implement the increases of 25% for the Canada Pension Plan (CPP) and Quebec Pension Plan Survivor benefit.

Recommendation 5: continue to provide funding and work with provinces and municipalities to ensure more social housing is built, with affordable housing defined as rents geared to no more than 30% of gross income.

Recommendation 6: fund a tripartite national commission with the provinces and transit agencies to develop a more resilient and equitable funding model for public transit.

Recommendation 7: develop the proposed Safe Long-Term Care Act and continue to collaborate with and provide funding for provincial governments to support the implementation of the National Long-Term Care standards published January 2023.

Recommendation 8: enact Bill C-64 to establish a universal, publicly-funded, single-payer, national Pharmacare program, and fund its implementation through collaboration with provinces and the Canada Drug Agency with a view to expanding the program beyond contraceptives and diabetes medications, including sustainable funding to ensure appropriate medication use.

Recommendation 9: continue to develop the Canadian Dental Care Plan to include those with inadequate coverage through their existing plan, and that Dental Care be included within the public universal health care system as a medically necessary service.

Recommendation 10: provide funding to further assist seniors to balance their budgets by implementing programs to cover expenses for health care needs and supplies including eye care, hearing aids and mobility aids.





Texada is a rural, sparsely populated island of less than 1,200 residents, 54% of whom are 60 and over and 21 % of whom are low income. There are no alternative housing options for seniors whose homes are not safe, accessible or adaptable.

Incorporated in 2019, Texada Island Non-profit Seniors Housing Society (TINSHS) is a registered charity (2022) directed by a volunteer working board. Our mission is to create 40 units of affordable age-friendly housing for Texada seniors. TINSHS envisions a development that is harmoniously integrated into the natural forest setting in alignment with Texada's rural character, close to amenities and services. A full timeline of our achievements and milestones is available on our website: texadaseniorshousing.ca

The biggest obstacle to building seniors housing on Texada is obtaining Title to buildable land. After much searching, an eight-acre parcel of land privately owned by Selkirk Mountain Forest Ltd (SMFL) was identified. With strong support and teamwork from the qathet Regional District and SMFL, TINSHS is currently going through the process of excluding this land from the Agricultural Land Reserve. (An Agrolgist report suggests the parcel to not be suitable for farming.)

TINSHS began its Capital Campaign in September 2023, with an auction (live and virtual), individual donations and a High Tea, which has brought the Society close to its goal. Selkirk Mountain Forest is donating 80% of the assessed value of the property. Together, we can do this!

Cathy Brown, President, TINSHS

Pharmacare: A Plan for Everyone

The Canadian Labour Congress has been pushing for a universal pharmacare since 2017. The following is their statement about what they did and what's next.

“A Plan for everyone: Since 2017, workers, activists and healthcare advocates across Canada have been busy pushing to ensure that every prescription is covered.

“How it Started: We hosted over 20 townhalls to rally support for universal public pharmacare. We flooded the Advisory Council on the implementation of national Pharmacare with calls for universal single-payer public pharmacare system. We were heard and the final report of the Advisory Council recommended a single-payer public pharmacare system. Hundreds of organizations came together to demand action from the federal government for universal pharmacare. We kept pushing forward with petitions, letters, lobby events, rallies and media outreach.

“How it's going: This fall the Senate will decide on the Pharmacare Act – a huge step towards universal public pharmacare. If passed, it will provide over 3 million people with diabetes access to life-saving medications and contraceptive coverage for millions more.

“What's next: We need your voice to ensure the Act passes and to expend the coverage for everyone. But the truth is that too many workers (and retirees) can't afford medications due to the pharmaceutical companies' greed. We're working on something big to demand that big corporations put people before profits. Stay tuned for an exciting announcement.”



The Pharmacare Team. Website: <https://canadianlabour.ca/>

Forgotten Rights: Seniors Not Afforded Equal Rent Protection – Posted July 4, 2024

Office of the Seniors Advocate is urging the provincial government to act quickly and enforce the Residential Tenancy Act (RTA) to protect the 30,000 B.C. seniors in retirement homes from illegal rent increases and evictions. Forgotten Rights: Seniors Not Afforded Equal Rent Protection highlights the practice of many landlords to ignore the RTA and leave seniors facing annual cost increases ranging from the rate of inflation to as much as 24%.

The report makes two recommendations:

1. The government take immediate steps to ensure the Residential Tenancy Branch (RTB) consistently enforces the RTA in recognizing seniors living rental units are covered by the RTA as are any service fees they pay that are a requirement to rent their unit (editor's note: service fee is food, laundry, cleaning).
2. The government review the practices, capacity and expertise of the RTB to address the issues raised in this report regarding the intimidation and vulnerability many seniors feel when trying to address legitimate residential tenancy issues with both the RTB and landlords.

Update – July 16, 2024: The BC government responded quickly to rectify this omission. Their update states 'Seniors independent living residences are subject to the Residential Tenancy Act. This means that rent and/or service fee increases are capped each year. The maximum allowable annual rent increase for 2024 is 3.5%'. If your rent and/or service charges have increased more than this amount, call the Residential Tenancy Branch to report your concerns. For further information contact the OSA Information and Referral Line: 1-877-952-3181.

Free Fitness Programs for Seniors Starting Soon



Both programs have online and in-person options and are led by trained staff from the BC Recreation and Parks Association.

Registration will be opening soon for Choose to Move and ActivAge, two free physical activity programs for seniors. Both

The programs are designed for those who identify as older adults living across B.C. and are currently physically inactive. Get involved to learn more about fitness, meet new friends, and make a positive healthy lifestyle change.



Contact **Kirkland Halliday**, Senior Program Manager, call 604-629-0965 ex 260 with questions.

Be sure to sign up to receive the Seniors Advocate reports.
Contact online: seniorsadvocatebc.ca or call 1-877-952-3181.

WIN 1 OF 11 CASH PRIZES OF \$2,500*

Simply scan the QR code and
enter for your chance to win!



belairdirect.com/win2500

belairdirect.

Get exclusive group savings.

As an affinity group member you get access to exclusive savings on enhanced car and home insurance. Plus save even more when you bundle your car and home insurance.



Access add-ons like:

- ✓ **Accident Forgiveness™** so your premium won't go up as a result of your first at-fault accident¹
- ✓ **Temporary replacement vehicle coverage** so you can stay in the driver's seat



Get extra coverage at no additional cost:

- ✓ **Up to \$25,000 in protection** for identity theft and cyberattacks
- ✓ **Up to \$20,000 in theft coverage** for valuables like jewellery, watches, and furs

Get a quote at

belairdirect.com/exclusive-savings or **833-887-3399**



Take peace of mind on your next trip.

With MEDOC® Travel Insurance, group members like you can enjoy an annual, comprehensive travel plan that includes:



Medical emergencies

Emergency medical coverage, including for COVID-19 related medical emergencies.



Trip protection

Trip cancellation, interruption and delay insurance for all your trips throughout the policy year.



Baggage protection

For lost, stolen or damaged baggage.

When you add MEDOC® Travel Insurance, you'll save an **additional 5% on home insurance with belairdirect!**

JOHNSON

Call 1.833.463.0223 or visit johnson.ca/travel-insurance for your no obligation quote.

This Fall Leap into New Learning and Growth



Take control of your future by planning and documenting your personal, medical, and legal needs. Enjoy peace of mind.

Our Safety and Personal Planning series are back by popular demand this September. Don't miss out on these essential workshops.

Safety Series: Starting September 4

Equip yourself and your loved ones with crucial skills to protect against disasters, personal injury, and fraud. Learn practical strategies to stay safe and secure in today's world.

Personal Planning Series: Starting September 12

Each series is FREE, one morning a week, for 6-7 weeks.

For more details and to register, visit our website: <https://seniorshelpingseniors.ca/>

Seniors' Health and Wellness Institute Society, COSCO



COSCO Associate Membership

Name: _____

Address: _____ Town: _____

Postal Code: _____ Phone: _____ 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. Join on the COSCO website: <https://coscobc.org>

or make cheques payable to **COSCO** and mail with this application form to:

Linda Forsythe, Membership Secretary, Box 81131 Stn S. Burnaby, Burnaby, BC V5H 4K2

Telephone: (604) 444-4300

For information about **Affiliate (organizational) Membership**, please contact the Membership Secretary at membership@coscobc.org

