



COSCO News

Council of Senior Citizens' Organizations of B.C.

Number 114



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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



The virus is a determined little devil but we are learning to live with it. The wonders of Zoom are gradually revealing themselves and, as we celebrate COSCO's seventieth year, I have been thinking about all of the people who left a legacy of care that we are hoping to live up to. A few days ago, I came across a brief to the provincial government, which had been submitted in 1987. As I read about the concerns, which were worrying seniors more than 30 years ago, I realized that some of them could have been mentioned today. That discovery could have been depressing but, though times change, many of the needs of seniors and their

families are the same. Enough affordable housing. Stability of pension plans. Requests to be included in decision-making when seniors are affected. Our motto ***"Don't plan for seniors, plan with them"*** is still apt. So is my favourite pledge, ***"Nothing about me without me"***.

As we celebrate our successes, please remember that when we achieve our goals it is often because our members make it plain that we are speaking for them. Seventy years ago a small group of determined seniors founded COSCO. They were worried about their pensions. We don't know exactly what problem they faced but they realized that they were more likely to be heard if they spoke for a goodly number of people. Makes sense, right?

So we enter the next phase of our work, clad in masks and carefully maintaining a suitable distance from others. When will it end? Nobody knows for sure but we are coping, each in our own way. Now I am going to ask you to think about what you would like COSCO to accomplish in the years to come. Every year we adopt our main objectives for the year. Then along comes a crisis that needs to be dealt with. My contact information is overleaf. Your response will help us to plan for the future.

Sheila Pither, COSCO President

Council Of Senior Citizens'
Organizations Of BC (COSCO)

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

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Council of Senior Citizens'
Organizations of BC

Representing Seniors Since 1950

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About COSCO

COSCO is an umbrella organization that brings together 70 different seniors groups, representing approximately 80,000 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.

COSCO is a registered non- profit organization

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

COSCO TURNS 70!

The Council of Senior Citizens' Organizations of British Columbia Representing Seniors for Seven Decades



The Early Years

Employees of the Canadian Pacific, Canadian National and British Columbia Railway formed COSCO in the early 1950s in an effort to provide an effective voice for their concerns for decent pensions and social benefits. The organization was registered under the Societies Act in 1981 as, The Council of Senior Citizens' Organizations of British Columbia (COSCO).

Our purpose has remained the same for over the last 70 years. The purpose of COSCO, as stated in its Constitution and Bylaws, is:

(a) to assemble, coordinate, advance proposals and resolutions concerned with the welfare of elder citizens, and submit them to the appropriate government bodies;

(b) to advance the social and physical welfare of all elder citizens in the province of British Columbia.

Membership

COSCO is an umbrella organization, made up of various seniors' organizations. COSCO acts as a coordinating body, and submits briefs to appropriate levels of government on members resolutions related to health, and the social and economic well being of senior citizens in this province. It currently has 72 affiliates representing approximately 80,000 seniors.

Several years ago, COSCO amended its bylaws to allow individuals who do not belong to any particular seniors' organization to become associate members for \$25.00 annual membership fee. These individuals are entitled to receive copies from the delegates meetings, financial statements, the COSCO newsletters and other information throughout the year. They can attend council meetings with voice, but no vote. These meetings are held every second Friday of the month (excluding July & August) normally at the Hastings Community Centre in Vancouver. Associate members act on COSCO committees and participate in other activities of the council.

Allies

COSCO recognizes the importance of having strong allies and resources for information, and adding strength in providing a loud clear voice for concerns of seniors. The organization handles seniors concerns at all government levels. At the federal level, COSCO is a member of the National Pensioners Federation, at the provincial level, COSCO relies on information and support from a number of organizations like *the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternative, the BC Health Coalition, the Public Interest Advocacy Centre, the BC Federation of Labour, the BC Coalition to Eliminate Elder Abuse, the University of British Columbia, the University of Victoria, Simon Fraser University*. Provincially, COSCO has led the fight against service cuts and in support of

the protection and enhancement of Medicare. COSCO has participated in countless conferences, workshops and demonstrations in support of seniors' causes, and a civil society.

Congratulations on COSCO's 70th anniversary. Since I have been in contact with COSCO over the last decade I have been impressed with the outstanding work that it has done to improve the lives of older adults in BC and Canada. Given the disproportional impact of COVID-19 on older adults, COSCO's contributions are even more important than they have been in the past. Keep up the good work!!

Irving Rootman,

*Adjunct Professor, School of Public Health and Social Policy, University of Victoria
Chair, BC Health Literacy Networks*

From our affiliates we have been able to organize members to participate as chairpersons, on housing, transportation and health committees.

COSCO has always played an active role at the Federal level, and continues to do so. As early as 1991, we successfully campaigned against Bill C-91, which was designed to boost the monopoly of the national drug companies on prescription drugs. We continue to lobby the federal government to review the drug patent restrictions, which prevents lower cost generic drugs coming on the market.

Over the past several years, the organization has held successful public forums and made presentations to the federal and provincial governments on healthcare issues and seniors' abuse.

Conferences

The theme "***Joys of Living Longer***" was the very successful conference staged by COSCO in 2012 in Richmond B.C. The most recent conference in 2016, ***Aging Well - A Quest for All Generations***, also held in Richmond, was an unqualified success.

In early July 2013 COSCO representatives met with the 37th Elders Gatherings in Prince George to hear and discuss Aboriginal Elders' concerns, and share with them COSCO's concerns for all seniors. COSCO supports an integrated public system, which will deliver a continuum of care for seniors with community care and assisted living. COSCO advocates that the act that covers care homes be re-written and updated.

Through our *National Pensioners Federation* membership COSCO participates in discussions about seniors' issues that are monitored and promoted at the federal level.

For many years, the major press generally ignored seniors' organizations. This changed in early 2001, when COSCO led the fight to get Provincial and Federal governments to provide subsidies for seniors, to help them deal with the fast-rising home heating costs. COSCO now enjoys a good working relationship with the news media, and is periodically featured on TV, radio and in the printed press.

The organization continues to grow, and is the largest federation of seniors' organizations in the province. Seniors' organizations, and individuals, are invited to join with us in providing a

united front and strong voice, to stand up for the many social programs, that, over the years we have fought and paid for, which are now being eroded by both the Provincial and Federal governments.

COSCO has responded to the challenge facing seniors, and society, and will continue to strive to maintain and improve a better "Quality of Life" for all seniors, whether you live in the North, the Kootenays, Vancouver Island or the Lower Mainland. The issues are as important today as they were in the 1950's when the organization was founded.

The COSCO newsletter is published and distributed four times a year, plus special editions when warranted. Other information is available on the COSCO website at <http://www.coscobc.org>.

To summarize, COSCO is determined to live up to its mandate: ***Seniors Helping Seniors***. We promote the concept of ***Plan With Seniors, Not For Them***.

We are proud of our heritage carried out for 70 years. It is a wonderful legacy from those pioneers who recognized the needs of seniors and worked to promote them.

COSCO News

In May 1993, Secretary ***Millie Canessa*** and ***President Russell Hunter*** started the **NEWS Bulletin for Seniors**, published by COSCO.

In March of 1994, ***Jack Phillips*** became President and along with ***Millie Canessa***, continued communicating with members through the **NEWS Bulletin for Seniors**,

In April 2000, ***Rudy Lawrence*** and ***Millie Canessa*** continued the **NEWS Bulletin for Seniors**, until 2001.

Sheila Gair, newly elected secretary, took on the task for the next ten years.

Soren Beck was responsible for designing the **COSCO News** and continued until 2016.

CORRECTION: We have had a concern raised, about the date of the poem 'And the People Stayed Home' published in the last issue of COSCO News. We have now discovered that the poem was written and published by Catherine (Kitty) O'Meara, a retired teacher from Madison, Wisconsin on her blog, 'The Daily Round', in March 2020.

<https://the-daily-round.com/2020/03/16/in-the-time-of-pandemic/>

Presidents of the Recent Past



Rudy Lawrence was COSCO president from 1998-2008 and focused on developing a fully functioning executive committee, expanding the membership and general planning and scheming. With boundless energy he worked with others to form plans for seniors and took them to Victoria for other ministers and staff. He was involved with the Office of seniors, worked with the press to bring a strong voice for seniors' issues to the public attention and brought forward demands to help low income seniors.



Art Kube was COSCO president from 2008 until ill health forced him to step down in 2014. Along with an illustrious career working in the BC and Canadian Labour movement, Art was a tireless worker for the rights of seniors. He was on the boards of the New Vista Society, and Seniors on Guard for Medicare along with others. He championed the Health and Wellness Institute, the workshop and educational wing of COSCO. He was guided by principles of equality and fairness and was a superb strategist. In 2015 he was recognized for his lifetime of work in the labour movement and with seniors when he was awarded the Order of Canada.



Lorraine Logan took over the leadership of COSCO when Art Kube stepped down in 2014. Before that she was a delegate from the BCGREA and a vice president of the organization. Lorraine worked tirelessly as president and worked closely with Art to ensure a smooth transition in leadership. Her interests were always with the handicapped and concerns for their ability to travel throughout the regions. But, as president, she spoke out on all issues of COSCO from housing, to healthcare and pensions. And she was unrelenting. She also was a great team player, getting many people involved in the issues. She was doing a good job in her role when she was stopped by ill health and her subsequent death. She has been greatly missed.



Gudrun Langolf became the President of COSCO under very sad circumstances. Lorraine Logan had been ill for some time when she died and Gudrun, who was First Vice-President, had to take over. She quickly established herself as a knowledgeable and forthright leader who represented COSCO in many different circumstances. Gudrun's past experience in trade union affairs proved to be very useful as she sought out opportunities to pursue our goals in face to face meetings with people who could influence the welfare of seniors. Gudrun is now Past President of COSCO. She is very well informed and we all benefit from her ability to search out information that we use to support our goals.



Sylvia MacLeay was a champion for senior rights during the years she worked for COSCO. She was unfailingly gracious but determined to make sure that the powers that be knew what would be a deal and what would be half a loaf. She had bargained for teachers for many years, plus working in the Bargaining Division at the BCTF. When she joined COSCO she found that, in retirement, she could work for the well-being of seniors all around the province. She called a spade a spade but not in an antagonistic way. She knew how to present her point of view without becoming hostile. A team approach was her way of working. Sylvia was a 'no nonsense' person and a very good friend. We miss her.

Life Members

Chosen as life members by the delegates for their years
of working for seniors and for COSCO:

Ernie Bayer – CAW/Unifor
- Canadian Auto Workers/Unifor Retired
Workers Council

Wayne Dermody – BCGREA
- BC Government Retired Employees Association

Sheila Gair – BCRTA
– BC Retired Teachers' Association

Rudy Lawrence – BCGREA
- BC Government Retired Employees

Association

Sylvia Macleay – BCRTA
- BC Retired Teachers' Association

Sheila Pither – VRTA
– Vancouver Retired Teachers' Association

Jean Sickman – BCGREA
- BC Government Retired Employees
Association

COSCO Major Affiliates (3,000 plus members)



A Message from the British Columbia Old Age Pensioners' Organization! (BCOAPO)

Congratulations to the Council of Senior Citizens' Organizations of British Columbia on achieving 70 years of serving seniors in British Columbia.

My first knowledge of our participation on the Executive of COSCO was in 2008 or 2009 when then BCOAPO President *Elsie Gerdes* appointed *Fred Coates*, BCOAPO Vice-President to represent the BCOAPO on the Executive of COSCO as a General Vice-President. When Fred stepped down in 2015, I became the delegate representing the BCOAPO as a General Vice-President on the COSCO Executive. It has been a busy, but rewarding experience.

Jerry Gosling is the current President of the BCOAPO and a General Vice-President of COSCO, continuing the exchange of ideas between the two organizations and participation in COSCO Committees.

For many years now, COSCO and the BCOAPO have worked together to make governments aware of the needs and concerns of seniors. In the case of the BCOAPO, our branches submit resolutions outlining their concerns to the Annual Convention and, if passed, these resolutions are relayed to the Provincial and Federal Governments and to COSCO. There are many examples of COSCO then taking these concerns to various levels of government. It also worked in reverse: if COSCO has specific concerns, they are taken to our members at our Annual Convention in the form of resolutions from the Provincial Board of the BCOAPO. This cooperation has resulted in many seniors' issues being brought to the attention of and being addressed by government.

It is our hope that this joint effort will continue for many more years and that the beneficiaries will be the seniors of British Columbia.

Again, congratulations on achieving 70 years of serving seniors in British Columbia!



Betty Bolton
BCOAPO Delegate
COSCO Treasurer



BC FORUM celebrates the 70th Anniversary of the Council of Senior Citizens' Organizations of BC (COSCO). We congratulate you and thank you for 70 years of advocating for the wellbeing of seniors and their families. We are proud to have been a long-standing

affiliate member of COSCO. It has been a very productive partnership due to our representation on the Executive and with Delegate representation. Working together, we have advocated for policies that will allow seniors to remain active, independent and engaged in society, whether it be quality public health care; a universal Pharmacare and dental plan; affordable housing; safe, affordable, accessible and efficient transportation; or improving support measures to achieve income security for all seniors. Giving praise when praise is due for measures that are positive for seniors and their families and criticizing policies or lack thereof when they are not! We are grateful to work with our coalition partners and allies that come together with COSCO to affect change when change is needed. Working together we are stronger. We can, and do, make a difference. At this time, our work together is more important than ever with the light that has been cast during COVID on seniors in Long Term Care and the suffering that could have been avoided had governments listened to our many submissions on changes needed to save and protect our most vulnerable in care. So together we will continue to speak out and advocate on needed and necessary public policy changes.



Diane Wood,
President, BC Federation of Retired Union Members (BC Forum)
and COSCO General Vice President



BC Retired Teachers' Association (BCRTA)

Some years ago, directors of COSCO approached BCRTA to introduce the organization. The BCRTA Directors reviewed the objectives, bylaws, policies and procedures of COSCO and were very impressed with the many similarities of objectives and policies within the two organizations. With very little discussion, BCRTA Directors passed a motion to join with COSCO and its member organizations.

Subsequently, the BCRTA and its representatives have taken a very active part in the advocacy activities of COSCO; served as Delegates to COSCO's Delegate meetings; became members of various committees, task forces and the COSCO Executive; and provided significant financial support to COSCO in the furtherance of its objectives. The relationship has been strong over the years and is expected to remain so.

Advocating for seniors continues to be at the forefront of the efforts of both organizations and the successes over the years have been noteworthy.

Pat Brady
Past President, BCRTA



BC Government Retired Employees' Association (BCGREA)



President *Jack Philips* welcomed the BCGREA to COSCO in 1998.

"We have very much in common with the BCGREA. This is a logical development. It will further the process of achieving unity of purpose and action by the organized seniors in BC." Through BCGREA, COSCO has received many benefits from the BC Government and Service Employees' Union (BCGREU).

COSCO CONFERENCES:

INFORMING AND INSPIRING

During the first two decades of the 21st century, COSCO has taken a strong leadership role in providing the opportunity for seniors and others to come together to examine the factors that contribute to and detract from the well-being of seniors. These discussions have been intergenerational. Now COSCO believes that it is time to take a look at the progress we have made and to develop a vision of what may be achieved in the future.

Five major COSCO conferences have taken place in the first two decades of this century. The attendance target for each was 400 people but we usually exceeded that figure. The focus was clearly expressed in the conference title. The brief summaries below will provide a snapshot of each event.

March 2003 – The Romanow Report: Building on Values

In November 2002 *Mr. Romanow* released a report following a Royal Commission he had chaired, *The Future of Health Care in Canada*. He attended the COSCO conference and highlighted the major thrust of his report which was that provinces and territories should work together to solve Canada's health care problems which were primarily because of shortages, both financial and in terms of trained personnel. The full report is available online.

June 2005 – Working to Prevent Elder Abuse

June 15 is *Elder Abuse Awareness Day* and COSCO called together many individuals who described the various forms of abuse, the frequency and the measures that need to be in place to deal with this societal problem. COSCO asked municipal governments to join in a declaration which pledged their support for such measures. More than 100 declarations were received. As a member of the *Council To Reduce Elder Abuse*, COSCO works with many agencies to achieve zero tolerance of abuse.

September 2008 – Seniors' Health, Housing and Income in a Global Age-Friendly Community

In 2008, a lot of attention was being paid to defining what an age-friendly community looks like. Environmental factors were considered and the needs of people as they age were identified. This conference was solution oriented. To say that there should be hazard-free sidewalks is true but if it doesn't lead to action then it is futile. The provincial government gave grants for municipalities to adopt age-friendly goals. This workshop examined three major areas of need. A report of the proceedings identified actions that should be taken to fulfil the conference goals.

October 2012 – The Joys and Tears of Living Longer

This conference explored the challenges and opportunities of Canadians' increased longevity. Speakers from around the world explained how other jurisdictions are dealing with demographic changes and their impact on seniors' health, housing and income. Workshops gave participants the opportunity to contribute their point of view regarding needs and solutions. Clearly this conference was a natural follow-up from the 2008 conference. A report was prepared to record the conference highlights and aspirations.

September 2016 – Aging Well: A Quest For All Generations

This conference encouraged participants to think about the varying needs of people as they age. Speakers who dealt with some of the changes that come as we age, focused on physical changes. Others dealt with three large areas which have a huge impact on well-being: health, housing and income. Since its inception in 1950, COSCO has been active in fulfilling its mandate to work towards an optimum aging experience. The report that emerged from this conference mirrored our aspirations and our intentions.

October 2021

Although this conference is only in the planning stage, know that it will continue the tradition of informing and inspiring begun many years ago. Some of the concerns haven't changed a great deal but others are part of a new world which we want to identify and explore, always through the lens of aging with respect and dignity in a society that values growing old as an opportunity, not a burden.

Workshops

Passing the Torch

In 2013, COSCO was given a New Horizons grant to conduct workshops for people who were interested in group leadership. We called the program *Passing the Torch* because we knew that most senior groups are eager to attract new leaders. Our team of facilitators was *Art Kube, Garnet Grosjean, Pat Brady* and *Sheila Pither*. We chose fifteen communities around the province, designed a two-day course, and hit the road. The workshop content was devoted to various aspects of leadership and there was a great deal of participant input, for most of the people attending were already in leadership positions. Some were new to their appointment, others wanted to give up their duties but not without replacements. Still others wanted to improve their skills and do well in their present work. The curriculum was built around subjects such as goal setting, running a meeting, dealing with conflict, recruiting new members, problem

solving--all practical aspects of group management. The workshop was very well received and we would have liked to continue presenting it in more communities. However, the money ran out and the schedules of the facilitators were demanding. Perhaps we will be able to revitalize the project post-COVID-19. Good leaders are never out of style!

Stay on the Road



Remember the dreaded '*Drive Able*'? *Lorraine Logan* and *Sheila Pither*, through meetings with the Superintendent of Motor Vehicles, were able to influence changes to the process for seniors. When these changes were announced, COSCO created a workshop called – '*Stay on the Road -- A Practical Guide for Senior Drivers*'. It is a one-day workshop for people who are interested in learning more about driver assessment, particularly when they are nearing the age of 80. Drivers of any age are welcome to attend, and the presentation will be useful for anybody. The program involves **COSCO Facilitators**, an **ICBC Driver Examiner** and the **Car Fit Program**.

Please note: Although this program has been postponed due to COVID-19, we are hoping to continue it in the future, when safe to do so.

COSCO SENIORS' HEALTH AND WELLNESS INSTITUTE CELEBRATING 13 YEARS



From a single workshop on Falls Prevention to 44 sessions on topics ranging from health and wellness to practical information about financial and legal issues, COSCO Seniors' Health and Wellness has grown to become a vital information link for seniors across the province. The topics are for information only, not individual advice.

2020 marks 13 years as the educational wing of COSCO and our 10th year as an official Society. The first workshop was created and presented by the now COSCO president *Sheila Pither*. Past president *Sylvia MacLeay* and *Sheila Pither* even gave workshops in Newfoundland and Alberta where they also trained facilitators. Ten of the early workshops were translated into Chinese and Punjabi. To date, over 50,000 people have attended the free sessions province-wide.

We have been able to expand and continue this work thanks to a cadre of volunteers who facilitate the sessions. As well, a group of volunteers create and update the workshops with the input of topic experts who advise, enhance and support their efforts. In addition, donations and grants support our ability to further create and develop new topics of interest, while keeping our workshop sessions relevant and up to date.

Due to the advent of COVID-19 this year, we have transitioned to virtual workshop presentations. Our host organizations have reassured us they are ready and willing to work with us to present our workshops online, via Zoom.



The COSCO Seniors Health and Wellness Institute offers 23 of our sessions online. To book a virtual session, click on *How to request a workshop for your group* on our website: www.seniorshelpingseniors.ca

Barb Mikulec, chair

COSCO Affinity Plan

In 2014, led by President *Lorraine Logan*, COSCO met with Johnson's and discussed with them providing group insurance options for COSCO members.

The executive endorsed the Johnson's Insurance programs in Feb. 2015.



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



Johnson Scholarship Program available for you,
your child or grandchild:

<http://cosco.johnson.ca/scholarship>

**Check out all the available options and comparison
shop!**

<http://cosco.johnson.ca/> toll free: 888.412.8822

National Pensioners Federation  Fédération Nationale des Retraités

NationalPensionersFederation.ca

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May 11, 2020

Greetings Sheila Pither, President of COSCO

On behalf of all of our members I send you **Congratulations on COSCO's 70th Anniversary**, standing up for the rights and responsibilities of the citizens of BC. The National Pensioners Federation (NPF) shares your enthusiasm and dedication to serving the seniors in Canada, with your targeted focus on Health, Housing, Income Security and Transportation issues. As always, the NPF encourages dialogue and joint resolutions which we bring to the governments in BC and across Canada to help seniors be protected from loss when insolvency issues arise, to be protected from pension reform which takes away the agreed upon financial stability for their retirees, and protection from housing and health challenges.

Currently the deep concern over COVID-19 has united many Canadians as they demand better training, pay and protection for long term care workers. Our senior population needs more availability to home care service, adult day care centres, senior centres with programming specifically for socialization and sharing knowledge with the seniors.

Innovative use of technology, use of intergenerational programs and enough funding to make adjustments in positive longevity will help our growing seniors' population to live in dignity and face advancing age with a positive outlook.

Let's continue to build together and unite our collective strength in making the next 30 years, a time of powerful change for the better, as COSCO engages in policies and actions toward their centennial.

Additionally, we would be happy to place a congratulatory message in your Anniversary program and help with a donation to the event that you are planning. We salute you!

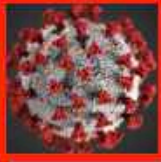
For further information about the NPF, see our website <https://nationalpensionersfederation.ca>

Best Regards,

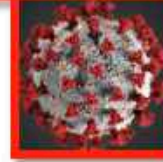
Trish McAuliffe

President,

National Pensioners Federation



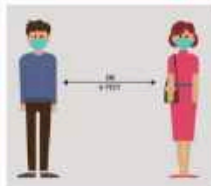
50 WAYS TO BEAT THIS VIRUS



Stay away from the pack, Jack
Don't visit your Gran, Stan
Wipe down every toy, Roy
To keep virus-free



Don't hop on the bus, Gus
Don't listen to Don, Ron
Don't hoard the TP, Lee



Just stay virus-free
Sneeze into your sleeve, Steve
Stop touching your face, Grace
Keep back to six feet, Pete



Heed the CDC

Just use the Purell, Mel
Keep wipes in your purse, Nurse



Take of your stock, Doc
You need PPE

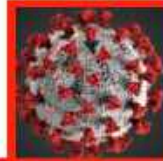
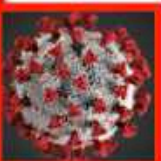
This isn't Spring Break, Jake
Stay home if you're sick, Dick



As COVID leaps, peeps
Just follow the rules, fools
And stay virus-free

Glen Greenhill -- MSTJ, AdeC

Manager, Patient Care Delivery, Comox-Strathcona District
BC Ambulance Service – BCEHS, Island Districts
Provincial Health Services Authority



Will you still need me, will you still feed me when I'm ~~sixty-four~~ eighty four? Looking for the right care in the right housing setting for older adults

Many Canadians now live well into their eighties and nineties with the 85+ population increasing rapidly. Most are female and one in four lives alone. Most BC seniors remain in their own homes - 93% of those aged 65 plus and 72% of those 85 years or older. Just 4% live in long term care (15% for those aged 85+). How are we meeting their living and care needs?

As we age, older adults are bombarded by relentless advertising for seniors housing, assisted living residences and residential care facilities. The plethora of options available for housing and care may reassure us that when the time comes, we will be able to find an appropriate place, with access to health care, social services, and transportation. However, the sad reality can be very different. Recent reports depict a disturbing pattern of lack of increase in housing supply, which hits low income seniors particularly hard. When combined with rising demand, ever older adults with ever poorer health continue to live in accommodation which no longer meets their increased needs for health and social care.

Is home care the meeting the demand?

Current public policy considers that staying in their own homes is best for seniors. Older adults are encouraged to 'age in place', with supports such as home health care, Meals on Wheels, help with housework, and other assistance provided in their home. Yet, the BC Seniors Advocate reports little change in the provision of *home support*, whether it is in number of clients, or the average hours of care delivered for each client, or the total home support hours delivered. The number of *home care clients* who receive nursing, physical or occupational therapy, or social work, increased by 2.4% from 2017 to 2019, while little change occurred in the number of visits (up just 0.9%). Furthermore, complaints related to delayed, inappropriate, or unavailable care increased over the past five years. These stark statistics tell us that staying at home does not mean needed services will be available. Many older adults cannot afford private home services. Some may turn to low cost housing – but what options are available?

For **seniors social housing**, escalating demand from increasing numbers of low-income seniors, is meeting a static supply and resulting in reduced access. Over two recent decades, seniors have increasingly competed with younger persons with disabilities for scarce social housing units. Overall, the number of seniors subsidized housing units has declined by about 10%, with spaces now allocated to other groups in need, including those who may be dealing with mental health and substance use issues. Such mixed tenancy housing generates further stress in older adults, who already experience poor health due to multiple chronic conditions, poverty level incomes and social isolation. While many tenants with disabilities receive considerable support from contracted social services agencies, not all may be able to live independently without disturbing others. One proposed evidence-based solution is to hire and train Resident Service Coordinators to ensure residents have access to much-needed services and develop a sense of community among the diverse groups.

Is assisted living a viable option? Here again the supply is limited. Statistics show the number of publicly subsidized units in BC stagnated from 2008 to 2017 (4,393 up to 4,485). And while the number of private pay units did increase, lower income seniors often cannot afford monthly fees which cover rent, some meals, social activities, as well as extra fees for support and care services, telephone etc. This income-expense gap leads to unmet care needs, along with inadequate supplies of clothing, incontinence supplies and medication. And inevitably, residents as a group will become frailer, with increasing health care needs. Quality of care then suffers when undervalued and overworked staff face the challenge of caring for residents some of whom may really require Long Term Care.

Long Term Care: Older adults not able to access affordable assisted living may turn to Long Term Care, before their health care needs would require it. Again, the number of long-term care beds has remained relatively constant at about 36,000 beds in recent years, even though the percentage of beds managed by for-profit companies increased to 34% with the remainder managed by non-profits or health authorities. In BC, most beds (88%) are in now in single-occupancy rooms, with the average resident aged 85 years and a median length of stay at about 16.5 months. Reports of bullying and intimidation of seniors in one long term care facility in Vancouver, by other residents with mental health and substance use problems, is a pattern distressingly similar to those reported for social housing.

Where are we now?

Increasing demands for home-based health care in the community, when combined with a stagnant supply – whether for home care, social housing, affordable assisted living or long term care – leaves us in a quagmire. And as our growing population of seniors ages and as their health worsens through chronic disease and normal aging processes, care needs to increase. We need new models of integrated community care, with enhanced skill levels for care team members and funding provided for adequate care hours. In short, housing options with appropriate care available in all our community care settings must be developed for older adults that respects their dignity and individual needs.

Leslie Gaudette

COSCO's Long Term Care Campaign



If growing old is not for the faint of heart then the prospect of being a resident in long term care is enough to break anyone's heart.

COVID-19 has exposed the grim conditions that many residents of care homes in Canada have long been forced to endure. Now labour groups and advocacy organizations have initiated campaigns calling for fundamental change in how that care is provided. Public opinion polls also show the vast majority of the Canadian public wants change.

So far, very little is being done by our governments to answer that call for change in long-term care. Indeed, for the seniors in care homes confined to their rooms for months on end during COVID-19, whatever quality of life they enjoyed has likely been eroded by fear of infection and public health bans on family visits, staffing issues, going outside, and various other disruptions and restrictions. The absence of informal monitoring by families in for-profit care homes is a major concern for families.

COSCO and the NPF have been advocating for change in long term care for years, most recently through letters with recommendations for change to Prime Minister Trudeau and other ministers, news articles, and pre-budget submissions to the BC and federal Finance Committees.

Now NPF and COSCO are partnering on a new campaign demanding national standards for long-term care be implemented immediately. The current and future residents of long-term care can't wait for a national review or commission of inquiry or for the inclusion of long term care in the Canada Health Act, however wonderful that would be.

As it did with the transfer of designated funding for home care and mental health in 2018, the federal government must define national standards for quality long-term care and transfer funding to the provinces and territories in return for the implementation of standards of high-quality care. Provinces and territories must provide an implementation plan and be transparent and accountable to the Canadian public through regular progress reports.

We ask for your support in our big push to get our governments to protect the human rights of seniors in long-term care to lives and deaths with dignity.

Kathleen Jamieson

A New Study on the Impacts of COVID-19 on Multicultural Seniors in Metro Vancouver

The Metro Vancouver Cross Cultural Seniors Network (MVCCSN), an affiliate of COSCO BC and the National Pensioners Federation, is pleased to announce that it is releasing a new study that looks at the impact of COVID-19 on the well-being of some low income seniors from different ethno-cultural groups in Metro Vancouver. The study is based on interviews with 25 seniors from the Filipino, Punjabi, Chinese, and Korean communities. These seniors were interviewed by four MVCCSN volunteers in the language of their choice.

The study was initiated by Ihsan Malik, President of MVCCSN, and Mohinder Grewal, Past President of MVCCSN. The project was designed and coordinated by another volunteer, Kathleen Jamieson, who is the Chair of the COSCO Health Committee.

For more details, please contact Ihsan or Mohinder at MVCCSN.

Kathleen Jamieson

News Flash!!

Just as the News was going to press the provincial election was announced. COSCO immediately struck an Election Committee to plan how to identify the issues that we want to have included in the parties' platforms. COSCO is non-partisan and our slogan is Seniors Vote for the Future. Our monthly Highlights publication will let you how we get along. We hope to sponsor a Town Hall on October 16th where representatives from the NDP, Liberals and Greens answer questions from the public. The party leaders are being invited. We hope they remember that seniors vote.

You can vote three ways!



1. In Person On Election Day

Once you receive your voter's card in the mail, you can follow the information there. It will give your poll station on the day of the election. Make sure you have ID with you

2. Advanced Polls

You can also vote before the election in Advanced Polls. Your voters card will give you the location of the polls and the day and time you can vote. Again. Take ID with you.

3. By mail

In order to get a mail-in ballot you need to have one form of ID: BC driver's licence number: BC Identification Card number: the last 6 digits of your Social Insurance Number: last six digits of your personal Health number.

You can request a mail-in ballot by computer. Go to eregister.electionsbc.gov.bc.ca and follow the prompts. It should take about 5 minutes.

Or you can call at 1 800 661 8683.