



COSCO NEWS

Council of Senior Citizens' Organizations of BC
www.coscobc.ca

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WE TOLD YOU SO! COLD COMFORT FOR COSCO MEMBERS Editorial

The Council of Senior Citizens' Organizations of BC (COSCO) has been warning the provincial government for the last four years of severe health consequences which would occur when frail, elderly seniors were moved from their beds. In many cases residents of care facilities are moved against their, and their family's wishes, from one facility to another and from their home community to other communities. These moves in most cases were predicated by public facilities being closed in the senior's home community, to be replaced by private-for-profit facilities some distance away necessitating a search for a replacement, publicly funded bed anywhere in the jurisdiction of the Health Authority.

It is too easy for the government to attempt to pass the buck by saying that the fault lies with the local Health Authority. It is a fact that it was the government's policy of closing down public care facilities and reducing home support that has caused these human tragedies. Eliminating the procedure where seniors could put their name on a waitlist for a complex care room has made the problem even more serious. In addition, the government can be faulted for the insufficient number of palliative care beds available in the province. Trail Hospital, with only one single palliative care bed for the entire community, is a situation that is not only inconceivable but morally repugnant.

COSCO met with the Minister of Finance and the Minister in Charge of Seniors on February 8th of this year, and made it clear that the concept of **AGING IN THE COMMUNITY** is only being paid lip service and is not taken seriously. We told the ministers some of the horror stories seniors had to tell when they were forced to move from one facility to another. Little did we know that just three weeks later a horror story with fatal consequences for Mr. and Mrs. Albo would unfold? Mr. Albo was an active member of the Steelworkers Organization of Active Retirees (SOAR) and an affiliated member of COSCO.

At the request of seniors in Trail, COSCO has launched a province wide petition campaign addressed to the Premier, the Leader of the Opposition and all members of the Legislature. We are calling for an end to privatization and the restoration of public or non profit Long Term Care facilities, with provisions for end of life care. In addition the petition calls for an end to forceful removal of seniors from facilities in their home communities. We urge all seniors to circulate these petitions and return the signed petitions to the COSCO Secretary. Let us remember that we must make our voices heard, and our elected representatives listen or we could find ourselves or our loved ones, in the same unfortunate situation as Mrs. and Mr. Albo.

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**COUNCIL OF SENIOR CITIZENS'
ORGANIZATIONS OF BC (COSCO)**

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BCGREA, 604 312 2089

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604 576 9734

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14372 Ridge Cr. Surrey V3X 1B6
sscribe@telus.net 604 594 5023

Directors:

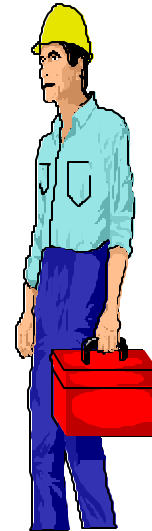
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**COSCO has a website. www.coscobc.ca.
Please check it out for past issues of the
COSCO NEWS, and senior-related
issues.**



The SAFER program offers rental subsidies. It has recently expanded. If you are over 60 call 1 800 257 7756 or on the lower mainland 604 433 2218 to see if you qualify.

The Seniors Repair Service is run by the Plumbers and Pipefitters' Union #170. Give them a call from nine to noon, or leave a message at 604 291 1133. They have plumbers, handymen, electricians, wall paper hangers, painters, appliance service, carpenters and gas fitters. Workers are retired tradespeople and the service is limited to the lower mainland. Rates are reasonable.



If you have a seniors' issue for the Premier's Council on Aging and Seniors' issues write to this address: PO Box 9490, STN PROV GOVT, Victoria BC V8W 9N7 or make email contact PCASI@gov.bc.ca

[www.mcaaws.gov.bc.ca/seniors/
premiers_council/council.htm](http://www.mcaaws.gov.bc.ca/seniors/premiers_council/council.htm)

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The Executive Board of the Council of Senior Citizens' Organizations of BC put together a legislative brief, which was presented to Ida Chong, Minister for Seniors, Carole Taylor Minister of Finance, and on a separate occasion, Katrine Conroy, the opposition critic for health. Here is a condensed version of the text.

THE COUNCIL OF SENIOR CITIZENS' ORGANIZATIONS LEGISLATIVE BRIEF

Who we are

COSCO was founded in the early 1950s by a group of retired railway workers who wanted to speak out on benefits and pensions for seniors. Today COSCO has close to 100 member organizations and 80,000 affiliated members and has experienced phenomenal growth in the past four years alone. Our mission remains constant - to be an effective voice for seniors in BC.

Our legislative priorities

Our foremost priority is to regain the right to retire knowing that our retirement plans will not be adversely affected by new laws or regulations. Seniors plan for their families as well as themselves, and a fixed income cannot be adjusted without personal sacrifice. Reinstatement of the programs cut by the BC Legislature in the last five years is an immediate priority.

Health

Very little is spent to keep seniors healthy. Emphasis is on operative and post operative care and precious little is spent on home support, dietary assistance and preventive and maintenance programs for seniors. Community based Wellness days, which utilize volunteers for blood pressure testing, pedicures, massage treatment and energy work contribute greatly to the quality of life for seniors but receive very little financial support. A more holistic community based approach to health care planning and public policy deserves more support and attention than the higher cost medical/drug approach.

Pharmacare

COSCO has tried valiantly to get the government to re-examine Pharmacare. Drastic cuts have meant that seniors cannot afford medication and the end result is greater public expenditure on acute care. A recent study in the Canadian Medical Association Journal backs up our concerns, and proves that when patients have to pay part of the costs of drug treatment, their visits to the doctor increase, their prescriptions are filled less frequently, and their trips to the hospital increased. We urge that Pharmacare benefits be reinstated.

Medical Services Plan

COSCO set up a hotline to gather first hand anecdotes of the inferior service of MSP which was privatized and sold to an American based company. The company was fined several times for not fulfilling its mandate, and made an announcement that it was decreasing staff and automating its phone system to reduce costs. COSCO requests that the Province reinstate a better quality public service.

Aging in the community

Many elderly are not able to continue to live in their own homes and find themselves in seniors' housing, assisted living or long-term-care facilities. There have been horror stories brought on by the closure and privatization of seniors' residential care facilities, with real health consequences for seniors. Public facilities have been replaced with predominantly private, low-grade assisted living facilities often built on the outskirts of communities, keeping their residents isolated. Private Assisted Living facilities serve those who can afford them, and can evict those with medical, behavioural and physical problems. We would recommend community based integrated seniors' residential and day care facilities preferably public and non-profit and recommend that you read the report on seniors' care in Williams Lake.

Privatization and Extra Billing

All this does is allow people with fat wallets to jump the queue, and does nothing to improve the quality or accessibility of healthcare to over 90% of the population. We have documented proof of knee replacement operations for \$2500 and fast cataract operations. These violate the Canada Health Act and the moral principle of equal access. The head of Vancouver Coastal Health Authority said that surgery done in the Cambie Street Clinic was more costly than that performed in public hospitals.

Seniors' Housing

Happiness for seniors means living in the family home, amongst family members, and within a well known neighbourhood. We would ask the government to strengthen programs and policies which will enable seniors to stay in the primary residence for as long as possible. Affordable seniors' housing is in very short supply, and more home support is needed. Those who live in manufactured homes are facing eviction as zoning changes increase the value of the land for landowners. Meals on Wheels, community Wellness Days, and a Seniors' Repair service are all designed to help seniors stay in their own homes. Material from a Danish study indicates home support is a priority over institutional care, and saves money while improving the quality of life for seniors.

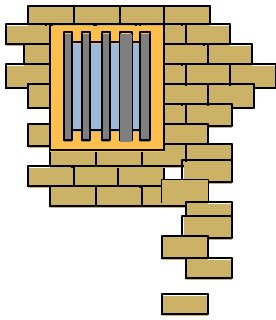
Income

Pressure on income increases. A federal increase in the GIS, and a provincial increase in SAFER have been offset by the increased costs in rent, energy, food, Medicare premiums, drug costs and costs of de-listed medical services. Poverty affects elderly women, and determines all aspect of physical and mental health.

Co-operation with the Provincial Government

Seniors have experienced four and a half years of confrontation, and feel betrayed by legislation and policies. The majority of voters in the last election cast ballots for an opposition party, and the hope is that some of the programs and services which were cut, will be reinstated. The province is experiencing a booming economy and there is a surplus of funds. Seniors deserve a share.

Should you wish the entire text, contact the Secretary at 604 594 5023.



World Elder Abuse Awareness Day

June 15, 2006

“My World...Your World...Our World...Free of Elder Abuse”

As part of a world-wide effort to raise awareness of Elder Abuse, the Council of Senior Citizens' Organizations of BC (COSCO) is holding a one day conference on June 15th at the Vancouver Trade and Convention Centre. We plan to address this insidious and harmful plague which is affecting a great number of seniors. The conference will hear from many experts on Elder Abuse detection, prevention and education. Delegates will also discuss strategies and actions in groups, and learn how to protect themselves and other seniors from abuse.

This conference illustrates COSCO's policy of 'seniors helping seniors'. Most elder abuse is hidden and age discrimination is a major factor in many cases. Elder abuse is often the result of disempowerment, so empowering older persons is the most effective tool in response to incidents of elder abuse. Unfortunately elder abuse, neglect and financial exploitation are more common than our society cares to admit. The ultimate challenge for society then is not only to listen to what abused elders are saying, but believe them and act for them. We hope that this conference will provide us with the following knowledge and outcomes:

- **Empowerment of Elders:**

To enable older adults to act for themselves and on their own behalf and to exercise their rights advocating for their own interests.

- **Awareness:**

To ensure that the general population is aware that elder abuse happens and that it is not acceptable. Older adults need to be aware of their rights as well as services and resources which are available to them when they feel abused.

- **Education:**

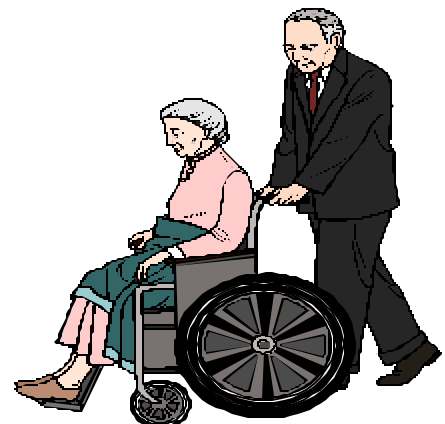
To educate the public to perceive older people more favourably and as positive contributors to society. To educate and train people, including professionals involved in the care of the elderly, to recognize and act on abuse or suspicion of abuse.

- **Intergenerational Relationships:**

To link awareness to education, and to place an emphasis on the need to encourage closer and more positive contacts, and endeavour to foster better attitudes, between generations. The social isolation and neglect of older adults needs to be remedied and intergenerational relationships, among other solutions, may be the answer.

This is an important conference for senior activists, officers of seniors' groups and especially for COSCO affiliates. We are only able to accommodate 300 delegates, so register early. Come and equip yourself so that you are able to effectively deal with, address and possibly prevent, cases of Elder Abuse.

We hope to see you on June 15th 'Under the SAILS'!



**PRESENTATION BY ART KUBE, 1ST VICE PRESIDENT OF COSCO TO THE
PREMIER'S COUNCIL ON AGING AND SENIORS' ISSUES.**

THE ISSUE OF SENIORS' HOUSING

The vast majority of seniors want to live independently for as long as possible and if choices have to be made about housing and care, they want to participate. Needs and preferences, regardless of ability to pay, must be met. Happiness for seniors is remaining in their primary residence where family members are welcome, and neighbours and the community are familiar, safe and comfortable.

Government programs and policies which enable seniors to remain in their homes for as long as possible, should be strengthened and more emphasis placed on home support. Alternatively, seniors' housing is in short supply. With senior's disposable income shrinking, finding affordable accommodation for independent living is next to impossible. Those seniors who live in trailer parks are being pushed out as rezoning allows for development and alternative housing or compensation is lacking.

While there is emphasis on new seniors' housing, greater emphasis should be put on utilizing the present housing to be health maintenance, stock. The primary aim has sickness prevention and a living often smacks of promotes dependency with access or activities.



new seniors' housing, greater utilizing the present housing to be health maintenance, high quality of life. Assisted seniors' 'warehousing' and no thought to community

COSCO promotes 'Seniors assist with Meals on Home Repair service, and

Programs, all of which are designed to keep seniors in their own homes. A published Danish article mentions that Denmark has not built seniors' homes in the past six years, but provides free home support and home care where it is needed.

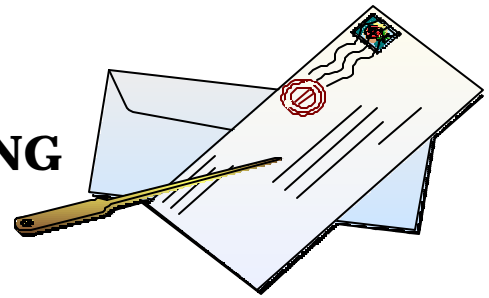
Helping Seniors'. Members Wheels, staff the Seniors' Minor support Wellness Day

We would recommend Aging In The Community as a policy for adoption by this government, with community based integrated seniors' residential and day care facilities, preferably public or not for profit. Private facilities serve those who can afford them, and can evict those seniors with medical, physical or behavioural problems. Our report on the situation in Williams Lake accurately reflects what happens when seniors are moved from public to private care facilities.

With the changing demographics it is imperative to address present problems and shortcomings and to increase support to seniors in their own homes and to prevent them from becoming patients in costly complex-care and acute-care facilities. The New Vista Society is planning a pilot project with the expansion of their Burnaby complex to accommodate some assisted living units and they are working with Burnaby Planning department towards this end.

COSCO would advocate public or non-profit seniors' housing over private-for-profit seniors housing, where the bottom line is profit and public accountability is lacking. Some of the most caring forms of seniors' housing have been community based organizations, sponsored by religious orders, ethnic groups, service organizations and the provincial and federal government.

SOCIAL HOUSING



To whomever cares –

Fourteen years ago I was very happy to move into seniors housing at Sunset Towers in the West End. I felt at least I had security of tenure, a place I could live in until I die, and rent I could afford on my disability pension. I had supportive senior friends in the building, got to know my community, joined a church, became active in the Seniors' Network, made sandwiches for the homeless, etc. I love my community. The bus stop is on the corner and I can get to Carnegie Community Centre where I have many friends and I volunteer.

Over the years things have changed but I'm comfortable with the changes. More people with mental illnesses, physical illnesses and the working poor etc have come to live here. We share our park with King George High School. There's a balance that's liveable.

Now there's been a change and I'm scared. I've been told that the seniors who live here can stay until they die or move. But the government has a plan that all new tenants (whom it is now calling 'clients') have to be people who are 'hard to house'. 'Hard to house' means people who can't function in most housing. These people desperately need secure housing, but so do the seniors on the waiting list for the building. This is an example of pitting one group which needs housing against another group. Besides, if the government plan happens, our building will become a ghetto and isolated from the community. I no longer feel I have security of tenure. I am anxious about the future, if there is one.

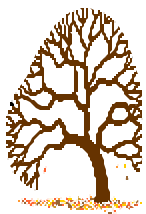
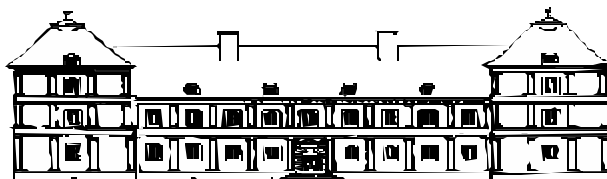
Everyone needs a home, but why take ours away when there is a surplus of at least \$2 billion in the provincial budget? Why doesn't the government build decent housing for everyone who needs it?

It will be difficult for the seniors who are left when their neighbours die. How many more social housing buildings is this happening to?

According to an article in the Times Colonist, the minister in charge of housing, Rich Coleman, says the day for low rent government owned housing has passed.

Why does the government do this to seniors? How many die because of government's negligent decisions.

Sincerely,
Sheila Baxter



If you are interested in exploring the possibilities of starting a branch of COSCO in your area, please contact the secretary and ask for application forms and the Policies governing local or regional branches of COSCO. Any two local branches of COSCO affiliate organizations, or one local branch with ten individuals may make application to form a branch. Our largest affiliates are BCGREA, BCRTA and OAPO organizations and they have branches throughout the province.

From the Golden Gang Gazette - the newsletter of the Vancouver Municipal and Regional Retirees Association.



We maintain membership and have a delegate in the Council of Senior Citizens' Organizations of BC, a seniors' umbrella advocacy group which has grown to include almost 80,000 elders in our province. COSCO worked with the Retired Teachers' Association and the BCAA Traffic Safety foundation to produce a two hour long Mature Drivers Program. It is designed to help reinforce what you know about safe driving strategies and teach a few new things. Last year, volunteer trainers attended seminars and there is a small, growing cadre of people ready to present the program to just about anyone who can gather 15 people or more. Fittingly, at our last membership around 40 people participated with the assistance of David Dunne of the Traffic Safety Program. It was time well spent and the program was very well received.

**MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION
(TO BE MAILED TO THE ADDRESS BELOW)**

I wish to join COSCO as an associate member and I enclose a \$25 membership fee ____
I wish to make a donation to COSCO - please find enclosed cheque for \$ ____

Name _____

Address _____

Postal Code _____ Phone _____ Fax _____

Email address _____

Date _____ Signature _____

Please make cheque payable to COSCO and send to: Ernie Bayer, Membership Sec.
6079 184 A Street, Surrey, BC. V3S 7P7 (604 576 9734)

Seniors' Groups or organizations wishing information about joining COSCO should write or phone Ernie Bayer and request a membership package.

**PLEASE FEEL FREE TO PHOTOCOPY YOUR COSCO NEWS AND PASS ALONG
TO OTHERS WHO MAY BE INTERESTED.**



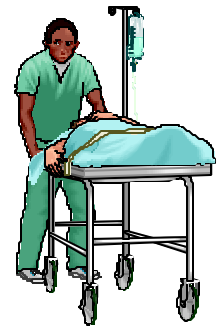
TRAIL AND TRIBULATION!

The Trail Daily Times of December 5th 2005 carried a quote from Alan Dolman, Chair of the Interior Health Authority Board.

“In the early days we used to get a lot of letters and our patient’s reps spent a lot of time on that (residential care bed) issue, but I can’t remember the last time I saw a letter from someone who couldn’t access care for a member of their family. So that’s a litmus test. It shows we’re moving in the right direction.”

And then came the News Release on February 23rd from Castlegar and District Health watch headlined “Albo Case is not Unique”. Next came the Nelson Area Society for Health news release on February 24th headlined ‘Albo Family Tragedy Not an Isolated Incident’. On March 1st we read ‘Seniors suffer in BC while premier ignores acclaimed model for elder care, focuses on ineffective for-profit hospital’ from the BC Health Coalition, and then on March 3rd ‘BC government cuts to social safety net and health services put seniors at risk’ – also from the health coalition. On March 13th a news item from Trail tells of relatives of a dying woman being sent away from her bedside in the Trail hospital, in spite of their family doctor’s intervention. Her son in law is reported to have said “they haven’t made an attempt to do anything to change the way they do things.”

In the press on March 16th the Interior Health Authority says it is moving on a host of recommendations to improve services to seniors in southeast BC. 12 new residential care beds will open *over the next couple of years* and there will be 29 hours of palliative care in the region each day. That surely makes us all feel better.



Feel like kicking up your heels?
Come along on April 23rd to the
Polish Hall at Fraser and 24th in
Vancouver.

Dancing from 3pm, dinner at
6pm, floor show at 7pm and then
more dancing. Prizes! Cost is \$20
per person.

Sponsored by
The
**BACKSTAGE
CLUB.** For
more
information
contact Ian
Buck at 604
299 9519.



Stay on your feet!

Wearing shoes is your best
protection from falls. Research
shows that going shoeless
indoors and out can increase your
risk for falls up to 10%. Each year
about one third of seniors are
hurt in falls. Their injuries
include sprains and strains,
broken bones or head trauma. In
Canada more than 5,000 seniors
die from falls each year.



IN 2005 COSCO PRESENTED A SERIES OF WORKSHOPS FOR ADVOCATES

To assist our members who may need help in an area specific to seniors' concerns, here is a list of the trained advocates, their locations and their phone numbers. If they cannot help you directly, they may be able to suggest alternatives to assist you.

Abbotsford	Patrick Brady	604 856 2430
Armstrong	Derric and Elsie Gerdes	250 546 1939
Burns Lake	Mary Dicker	250 695 6396
Cranbrook	Pat Casey	250 426 4513
Dawson Creek	Margaret Sutton	250 782 3221
Delta	Lois Voth	604 946 4236
Fort St. John	Lucille Gagne	250 795 2867
Grand Forks	Ted Martens	250 442 2370
Kamloops	Bob MacIntosh	250 579 9685
Kelowna	John and Maxine Teichrob	250 868 3802
Langley	Judy De Vries	604 530 7103
New Westminster	Bill Zander	604 525 8915
Parksville	Bob Taverner	250 752 2274
Port Alberni	MaryLou McLoughlin	250 723 6339
Prince Rupert	Lorne Clerihue	250 627 7257
Richmond	Ralph Steeves	604 273 3211
Rosedale	Doug Carson	604 794 3225
Sointula	Victor Tracy	250 973 6646
Summerland	Ron Awai	250 494 8808
Summit Lake	Terry Burgess	250 965 0007
Surrey	Art Kube	604 576 8000
Trail	Jim Saare	250 364 1051
Vancouver	Tom Brunner	604 739 7410
	Gudrun Langolf	604 266 7199
	Sylvia MacLeay	604 921 7823
	Sheila Pither	604 684 9720
	Linda Russell	604 929 7500
Victoria	Reg Miller	250 381 5202
White Rock	Glen Pinch	604 538 7140
Williams Lake	June Striegler	250 392 9649
	Audrey MacLise	250 392 5337