

Council of Senior Citizens' Organizations of British Columbia (COSCO)

The voice of BC Seniors since 1950

www.coscobc.org

BC Government Retired Employees Association
October 16, 2024

by: Leslie Gaudette, COSCO President



“plan with seniors, not for them”

Land acknowledgement

COSCO BC and its affiliated members are grateful to live, work, and be in relation with people from across many traditional and unceded territories, covering all regions of British Columbia. We are honoured to live on this land and are committed to reconciliation, decolonization, and building relationships in our communities.



Overview of Presentation:

COSCO BC (Council of Senior Citizens' Organizations)

- About us : Purpose, Values, History, Membership
- Structure, Communications, Committees and Networks
- Advocacy
- Conference 2025: October 4 and 5!

COSCO Seniors Health and Wellness Institute

- Workshops
-

COSCO Purpose: Advocate, Educate, Campaigns:

New Strategic Plan:

Mission:

COSCO promotes and advances the well-being of seniors in BC. We do this through advocacy, education, information sharing and collaboration with partner organizations and individuals.

Tag line: *We are the voice of BC Seniors*

COSCO Values

Democratic

Independent

Non-partisan

Volunteer driven, grass roots

Respectful

Promote healthy ageing

Detailed written policies

Be a voice for all older persons especially those with lower incomes.

COSCO will celebrate its 75th Anniversary in 2025!

Key history:

- 1950: Formed by employees of Canadian Pacific, Canadian National and British Columbia Railway to voice the need for decent pensions
 - 1981: Registered under the BC Societies Act
 - 1991: Effective campaign against Bill C91
(to boost monopoly of drug companies on prescription drugs)
 - 2003: **First COSCO Conference** (also 2005, 2008, 2012, 2016, 2021)
 - 2007: First workshop on Falls Prevention
COSCO Seniors' Health and Wellness Institute – created in 2010
 - 2010 - 2013: **advocated with many organizations for a Seniors Advocate in BC.**
 - 2014: Campaign to renew the Health Accord between Fed and Prov Govts,
 - 2015: Public Forum and Round Table leading to the *Declaration Concerning a National Health Care Strategy for Seniors.*
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COSCO Membership: Major Affiliates

Our major affiliates are

- BC Retired Teachers' Association (BCRTA) – *started 1945*
- BC Government Retired Employees Association (BCGREA) – *founded 1947*
- BC Old Age Pensioners Organization (BCOAPO) – *founded 1932*
- BC FORUM (Federation of Retired Union Members) – *founded 1995*

Characteristics of Major Affiliates

- Members and Branches from come from all parts of the province
 - Total membership is over 3,000 members
 - Appoints five (5) delegates to COSCO at the provincial level
 - One delegate is named as General Vice-President for effective liaison
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BCGREA and COSCO

- General Vice-President: Wilf Brodrick
 - Other COSCO Board members include:
 - Patrick Harkness, Jean Sickman, Jerry Gosling (and Diane Wood)
 - About 9 Branches of BCGREA affiliated with COSCO in 2024, fewer than in 2023
 - We have 15 to 20 active Delegates from BCGREA Branches
 - BCGREA members serve as
 - Committee Chairs for Finance and Transportation
 - Committee members for many of our committees
 - Members of the Board of the COSCO Health and Wellness Institute
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COSCO Structure involves a working board

Executive Board meets monthly on 1st Friday (except July/Aug)

- Table Officers – President, 1st VP, 2nd VP, Secretary, Treasurer
- Four General Vice-Presidents (*for major affiliates*) **Wilf Brodrick for BCGREA**
- Membership Secretary (*appointed*)
- Members at Large – 7 plus Past President
- Committee Chairs can be appointed and thereby become Board members

Delegates meet monthly on 2nd Friday (except July/Aug)

- In person with virtual option – *can join from anywhere in the province*

Committees meet regularly

- involve Executive, Delegate and Associate Members
 - Make recommendations to Executive and Delegates for decisions on policy and financial - *for new policy directions notice for motion is given.*
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COSCO Membership is broad-based

- Members are organized in 70 affiliates representing 80,000 seniors
 - Affiliate Members include:
 - Seniors' groups located in all parts of the province
 - Branches of major affiliates
 - Seniors Centres and Planning Tables
 - Faith-based or ethno-cultural groups
 - Union retiree groups, including college pension plans,
 - Dues are paid in relation to number of members
 - Entitled to name delegate(s) to vote at Delegate meetings and AGM
 - Associate Members (approx. 125 members)
 - Individuals may join for dues of \$25 per year.
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COSCO Affiliations and Partnerships

COSCO is a member of

- National Pensioners' Federation
- BC Health Coalition
- BC Poverty Reduction Coalition
- Canadian Coalition Against Ageism

Partnerships / representation with (among others)

- ARRC, Action for Reform of Residential Care -
- BC Community Response Networks
- BC Federation of Labour
- BC Therapeutics Institute
- Canadian Medication Appropriateness and Deprescribing Network -
- Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives – BC office
- Disability Alliance of BC
- International Longevity Centre (ILC Canada) and Global Alliance for the Rights of Older People
- National Association of Federal Retirees
- Translink
- Universities – SFU, UBC, UVic and others.

Ongoing challenge to nurture these relationships



COSCO Communicates through:

- COSCO News: quarterly
- Website: www.coscobc.org
- Facebook: COSCOBC
- Monthly meetings – minutes distributed to delegates/affiliate/associate members
- Emails with relevant links to work of other groups
- Webinars – often in collaboration with other groups.
- Presence at tables at seniors' events in person: Global Fest
- Presentations to member and non-member groups
- Media interviews, letters to the editor, op eds

Ongoing challenge to improve our communications, website and membership systems to reach as many people as possible – you can help

COSCO News – print and electronic

COSCO News
 Council of Senior Citizens' Organizations of B.C.
 June 2024
 Number 128
www.coscobic.org
<https://www.facebook.com/COSCOBC/>

Milestone decision at the UN: COSCO was there

At the Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing in New York, older Canadians made their voices heard loudly, clearly, and powerfully, advocating for a UN convention on the rights of older persons, the elimination of ageism, and the promotion and protection of their human rights. More than 24 members of the International Longevity Centre Canada (ILCC) and the Canadian Coalition Against Ageism (CCAA) provided strong civil society representation at the event, including the Council of Senior Citizens' Organizations of BC and our national affiliate the National Pensioners' Federation (NPF), together with other partner organizations.

A groundswell of support from civil society, NGOs, major aging-related organizations, and a sufficient number of supportive member states created enough momentum to achieve a significant milestone.

Tuesday May 21 marked a historic day in the 14-year history of the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing (DEWG) when it adopted a substantive decision on the human rights of older persons. This decision document recommends identifying gaps in the protection of the human rights of older persons and suggests how best to address them.



The Canadian contingent at the United Nations in New York City

COSCO News
 Council of Senior Citizens' Organizations of B.C.
 March 2023
 Number 123
www.coscobic.org
<https://www.facebook.com/COSCOBC/>

WHERE'S WALDO?

Budget BC:

How to find seniors in the BC Budget

Most of us are familiar with the children's books where Waldo is hidden in a crowd of people and the challenge is to find him/her/them... somewhat reminiscent of our quest to find any mention of seniors in the 170-page BC Budget document! Just how did COSCO's asks in the BC Budget Consultation process fare? And what was the response to the recommendations made by the BC Seniors Advocates? Keeping in mind that one million seniors account for one in five residents in British Columbia, here is our response:

What COSCO asked for and what we got

COSCO asked for a Seniors Strategy that recognizes the needs of an aging population, ensuring effective use of public resources, coordinating health, housing, and income needs in aging communities. What we got was a response that recognizes the needs of an aging population, ensuring effective use of public resources, coordinating health, housing, and income needs in aging communities. What we got was a response that recognizes the needs of an aging population, ensuring effective use of public resources, coordinating health, housing, and income needs in aging communities.

2019 BC Summit for Older Adults on Safe Medication Use: Seniors Empowering Community

On Friday, May 17th, 2019 COSCO and the Canadian Deprescribing Network participated in the 170-page BC Budget Consultation process. 100 seniors from all over BC met in Richmond. The summit addressed the potential health problems for seniors that created by consumption of too many medications. There is also the potential risk of inappropriate medications being prescribed to seniors.

Almost half of Canadian seniors are prescribed medications deemed inappropriate, or risky for this population, or more than one in four seniors take more than 10 different medications (CIHI 2018).

While there are existing workshops on medication safety given by the "COSCO Seniors Health and Wellness Institute" (among others) this summit spread awareness to a much larger audience.

COSCO Associate Membership

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


Name: _____ Phone: _____
 Address: _____
 Postal Code: _____ Signature: _____
 E-mail: _____
 Date: _____

COSCO does not share mailing lists with third parties. Associate Membership is \$25 a year. Please make checks payable to Linda Forsythe, Membership Secretary, 782 - 4353 Hastings Street, Burnaby, B.C. V5C 2M1. For information about Affiliate (organizational) Membership, please contact Linda at 604-435-3353.

You can now contribute on-line at www.coscobic.org

Medications and Summer Heat

For many Canadians, summer is synonymous with having fun in the sun. Unfortunately, over the past several years, extreme heat waves have become increasingly common. This not only makes summer less enjoyable but can affect your health. Heat and humidity can cause heat stroke, dehydration, dizziness and fainting, hospitalizations, and death.



1. Decongestants such as pseudoephedrine, an active ingredient in cold medications that are available off the shelf.
2. Anticholinergic medications, which include some off-the-shelf allergy medications (e.g. diphenhydramine or Benadryl®), off-the-shelf sleeping pills (e.g. Nycto®), medications used to treat urinary incontinence (e.g. oxybutynine), and some antidepressants (e.g. amitriptyline or nortriptyline).

5 QUESTIONS TO ASK ABOUT YOUR MEDICATIONS when you see your doctor, nurse or pharmacist.

1. CHANGES? Have any medications been added, stopped or changed, and why?
2. CONTINUE? What medications do I need to keep taking, and why?
3. PROPER USE? How do I take my medication, and for how long?
4. MONITOR? How will I know if my medication is working, and what side effects do I watch for?
5. FOLLOW-UP? Do I need any tests, and when do I book my next visit?

KEEP YOUR MEDICATION RECORD UP TO DATE

Remember to include:

- Drug allergies
- Vitamins and minerals
- Herbal/natural products
- All medications including non-prescription products

Below are several examples of medications that can increase your risk of heat stroke. These medications can make you more sensitive to the heat? These medications can increase your risk of heat stroke and other heat illnesses. The medications you take, the greater your risk.

Older adults are particularly at-risk during extreme heat. As you get older, it becomes harder for your body to adjust to changes in temperature. Older adults are at greater risk of heat stroke and other heat illnesses. Medical conditions are more common in older adults, such as diabetes or Parkinson's disease, which make it harder for the body to adapt to heat.

Medications that can increase your risk of heat stroke

Below are several examples of medications that can increase your risk of heat stroke. These medications can make you more sensitive to the heat? These medications can increase your risk of heat stroke and other heat illnesses. The medications you take, the greater your risk.

Some medications impair the body's ability to cool itself. Beta blockers (e.g. metoprolol) are medications used to treat high blood pressure and for treating heart disease.

Print and digital copies distributed quarterly to 80,000 members, and more.

COSCO Committees: consider issues and make recommendations

Policy Oriented

- Health
- Housing
- Income Security
- Transportation
- Strategic Policy and Planning

Member Services Oriented

- Communication
 - Membership and Fundraising
 - Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
 - Finance
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COSCO: Our Current Work

From the 2021 conference – 3 key areas to guide our work:

1. UN Convention on the Rights of Older Persons and Ageism

- Met with Seniors Minister Kamal Khera in August 2022; new Minister of Labour and Seniors O'Regan at NPF convention in Fall 2023; now Steven MacKinnon
 - COSCO is a member of Steering Committee for the Canadian Coalition Against Ageism (CCAA) along with Federal Retirees, the National Pensioners Federation and FADOQ (Quebec) and others
 - COSCO now accredited as part of the United Nations Open-Ended Working Group on Ageism (OEWGA)
 - Joined the Global Alliance for the Rights of Older People
 - COSCO Attended the UN Meeting in New York in May 2024 => Decision document
 - UN General Assembly approved the Decision Document
 - Work is now ongoing at the Human Rights Council in Geneva
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COSCO: Our Current Work

From the 2021 conference – 3 key areas to guide our work:

2. Elder Abuse

- World Elder Abuse Day - June 15;
- member of the Council to Reduce Elder Abuse
- BC Community Response Networks have joined COSCO

3. Social Isolation and the need to improve funding for seniors programs.





- Funding for the seniors' centres is fragmented – met with Megan Dykeman, Parliamentary Secretary for Non-Profits – good progress in ongoing discussions
 - Invited participant in Victoria for the proclamation of Non-Profit Day on October 30
 - Research project with SFU Gerontology Centre: a major SSHRC grant awarded last year
 - Ongoing work to understand the landscape of seniors groups in BC and their role in averting social isolation
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COSCO: Key activities

- **Elections Committee** for the 2024 BC provincial election
 - COSCO News covers key election issues
 - Contacting party leaders re election platforms
 - Special tab on our website has further information
 - **Conference Committee**
 - Join us October 3-5, 2025 to celebrate our 75th Anniversary
 - Theme is ***Advocacy for an Equitable Future – Strategies for Healthy Ageing.***
 - Improve **Membership System and Communications**
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COSCO: Improve Economic Security

Strategy: Increase incomes and security of pensions




- Campaign **on Bill C27** regarding target benefit pension plans 
 - ⇒ WIN: Bill did not progress past 2nd reading and died on the order paper
- Pension protection and solvency issues with National Pensioners Federation 
 - ⇒ letters to Prime Minister and Senators re Bill C228
 - ⇒ WIN: **legislation now passed in the Senate** 
- **BC Seniors Supplement** for lowest income => increased by \$50 to \$99.30 
 - ⇒ *partial WIN – Poverty reduction strategy/ NDP Election Platform*

Still advocating for:

CPP & GIS improvements in line with Liberal party elections promises

COSCO: Improve Economic Security

Strategy: Control Personal Expenses

- Health related
 - ⇒ WIN: **Dental Care** now in place for seniors as of Spring 2024 
 - **Bill C-64**: An Act respecting pharmacare
 - ⇒ WIN: Royal Assent given on October 10, 2024 
 - Still advocating: Vision, hearing, mobility aids to improve health*
 - Housing
 - SAFER – Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters 
 - ⇒ WIN: increase in place for the income cap; rent cap is up but **not enough**
 - Support Coalitions advocating for vacancy control of rents
 - Increase awareness of Property Tax Deferral Program
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COSCO: Improve Health Care

- Integrated team-based community health 

- ⇒ Promote Primary Care Networks and Community Health Centres

- ⇒ Advocate for free **home care** to keep seniors out of Long-Term Care

WIN: Community Care in Aging with Dignity Agreements with BC and Fed govts

- Ongoing advocacy on **Long Term Care** 

- ⇒ care hours per BC resident now raised to a standard of 3.36 hours per day; results show an average higher rate.

- ⇒ pay and benefit levels more equal across the province

- ⇒ input into National Standards to feed into Safe Long Term Care Act

- Support publicly funded health care 

- ⇒ Support BC Health Coalition on Cambie Clinic/Dr Day case

WIN: Supreme Court did not hear the case; protected publicly funded health care

COSCO: Connecting seniors to communities

Transportation

- HandyDART campaign to *insource* contracts to Translink to improve working conditions and service; more integrated across the province
- Integrated bus service in all parts of the province
- Discount bus passes

Housing

- Build more social/coop housing for seniors with rents at 30% of income

Social connections to combat social isolation

- Support our member groups to keep connected with their members
 - Seniors Centres and Programs to combat Social Isolation
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National Pensioners Federation (NPF)

COSCO is affiliated to this national seniors organization

NPF focuses on Federal issues; examples are:

- Public Interest and Advocacy Centre
 - Telecommunications, consumer protection and much more
 - Seniors Advisory Committee to Service Canada
 - Much more on housing, health care, etc.
 - Quarterly newsletter is chock full of information
 - Holds a convention every 2 years: will be in Vancouver in 2025
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COSCO: Ongoing Actions and Briefs to Government

- Federal government briefs
 - Supporting a National Pharmacare program and Dental Care
 - Supporting changes to regulations affecting drug pricing to the Patented Medicine Prices Review Board – *presentation on December 5 2024 re impact on seniors*
 - Briefs to 2025 Budget Consultation and Long Term Care Standards
 - Provincial government
 - Provincial budget consultations 2024
 - Ongoing discussions with various government ministries and officials
 - energy affordability, accessibility, protections against heat domes, accessible housing
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**COSCO Executive
with Seniors
Advocate Dan Levitt,
April 2024**

Meetings with Parliamentary Secretary Sandhu and Health Minister Dix - March 2024



Dental Care Rally !



Meeting re Seniors Centres



COSCO Community Tables



Photo 1: COSCO BC board members sharing deprescribing resources at the Global Fest 2024.
Photo 2: COSCO BC members at the Labour Day table in 2022.



Canadian Coalition Against Ageism
Coalition Canadienne Anti-Âgisme



Inaugural Meeting in Toronto November 2022

Seniors' Health & Wellness Institute COSCO

- Registered as a Charity under Canada Revenue Agency
 - COSCO does not qualify for charitable status due to advocacy focus
- Separate mandate, finances and Institute Board
- Yet, COSCO Board forms the members of the Institute and Institute Board is elected from among COSCO executive members
- Offer **free** Health and Wellness workshops in-person and via Zoom
- Resource page available for further information on workshop topics
- Visit www.seniorshelpingseniors.ca for more information



Workshops from COSCO Institute

Now offer 47 workshops on topics related to

- Healthy living
- Legal and financial concerns
- Personal planning
- Safety issues

Including – Keeping Seniors Safe, Fraud and Scams, Financial Literacy, Care for the Caregiver, Dealing with Stress, Dealing with Conflict

Thank you!

- For COSCO membership information contact our Membership Secretary membership@coscobc.org
 - To book a workshop www.seniorshelpingseniors.ca
 - Visit www.coscobc.org for more information.
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Ageism

- Ageism is how we think, feel and act towards others or ourselves based on age. This age discrimination violates human rights.
- Ageism Awareness Day is October 9, 2024

October 7th

Ageism Awareness Day

#AgeismAwarenessDay



StopAgeism

#AgeWithRights



Canadian Coalition Against Ageism
Coalition Canadienne Anti-Âgisme

COSCO: Strategic Planning for 2024 - 2026

1. Expand COSCO's reach and diversity through membership and partnerships that are representative of all seniors in BC
 2. Enhance COSCO infrastructure to ensure our organization and culture are set up for the future
 3. Strengthen our community leadership and advocacy presence across all levels of Government
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COSCO: Key Advocacy Issues (*from Brochure*)

- Quality **public health care** system, including pharmacare and dental care
 - Affordable and accessible seniors **housing** with rent-geared-to-income at 30%
 - Work with partners to promote safe, affordable, accessible, and efficient **transportation**
 - Support measures to achieve **income security** for all
 - Combat **elder abuse and ageism**
 - Work towards a UN Convention on the Rights of Older Persons
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Canadian Coalition Against Ageism
Coalition Canadienne Anti-Âgisme

The **Canadian Coalition Against Ageism (CCAA)** is a nation-wide social change movement to combat ageism against older people while protecting and strengthening their human rights.