

Advocate

Official news magazine of the B.C. Federation of Retirement Union Members (BC FORUM)

Vol. 25 No. 1, Spring 2022



*What's in store
for seniors' rights*

**Important
updates from
BC FORUM
p.3**

**SOLIDARITY
WITH UKRAINE**

**Looking forward to the
“end” of the pandemic**

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Advocate

The Advocate is published by the B.C. Federation of Retired Union Members. BC FORUM – supported by WE Consulting and Benefits and affiliated with the B.C. Federation of Labour – is dedicated to representing the interests of members and their families, continuing into retirement the relationship they enjoyed with the union movement.

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In this edition

We are very proud to present this edition of the Advocate. Despite some challenges and some sad goodbyes, we have put together a great magazine that includes news on the state of the pandemic, information on programs and initiatives in support of seniors, and important messages from our union partners.

- From the president 3
- Postal cutbacks 4
- Fighting for frontline heroes 5
- Solidarity with Ukraine 6
- Bill C-228 and you 7
- Pandemic relief for seniors 8
- From the Office of the Seniors Advocate 9
- From pandemic to endemic? 10
- The right to paper billing 12
- New Telus Internet program 13
- Motion M-50: on the rights of older persons 14
- Renew your membership and sign up a friend today 15
- Why local government elections should matter to you 16

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WE FIGHT FOR FAIRNESS

A time for new things

By Sam Wiese
Interim President, BC FORUM

Spring has always brought thoughts of plant shoots poking their heads through the earth, birds flitting about gathering materials for nests, and ever increasing hours of daylight and temperatures. In short, a time for new things. Never has that been truer than this spring for BC FORUM as we forge ahead without Diane Wood at our helm. That's right, folks, Diane made the hard decision to step down as president at the beginning of the year. Thankfully she remains on the Board of Directors representing the BC General Employees Union and will continue to represent BC FORUM at the Council of Senior Citizens Organizations of BC (COSCO).

Diane spent in excess of ten years in her executive position at BC FORUM, spending untold time meeting with and fighting for not only BC FORUM members but all seniors and their families. She has been our torch-bearer on issues such as Universal Pharmacare and Dental Care, pension protection, improvements to the Canada Pension Plan, Old Age Security and Guaranteed Income Support. Her words of wisdom and challenge have brought the issue of pension protection to workers young and old. Her compassion for others has manifested itself in the countless hours she devotes to improving the care of those in need of home care or who reside in long term care facilities. She is never hesitant to wade into the waters of regional, provincial, national and international politics without a care of the depths. She is a "femtor" to many, an icon to more and to me, I am lucky to say, she is also a friend.

Diane is small in stature, but those shoes – WOW – they definitely can never be filled. That doesn't mean the BC FORUM Executive and Board of Directors are not aspiring to those lofty heights. We have been working hard to ensure we have capacity

to continue on in our endeavours to make this world a more just, healthier, happier place and will always call on you, our members and colleagues, to assist and support us.

Like our most recent winter edition of The Advocate, this spring edition is another first; one wherein I am providing initial words to you as interim president and a first with our new editor, Aliza Nevarie.

Aliza brings with her over 25 years of union activism, holding office in many capacities, culminating in president of CUPE Local 391. She currently works as Communications support at FPSE, and as a freelance graphic designer. This work is supported by a BFA in Studio Arts from Concordia University and classes in Design at Emily Carr University. Aliza looks forward to bringing her love of unions together with her love of the printed word and graphic design as editor of The Advocate.

We are ever appreciative of the time that Joan Bech has given us providing access to Soren's files to assist Aliza in familiarizing herself with our publication. This along with the cooperation of Mitchell Press and the work of our ever efficient office administrator, Theresa Couture, is what gives us



Sam Wiese

the ability to provide you with an informative and enjoyable periodical. I am confident that you all join me in welcoming Aliza and thanking her for taking on this work for BC FORUM.

Happy spring and I wish you enjoyment in your perusal of this edition of The Advocate.

Important updates

POSTPONED

2022 AGM postponed

In order to ensure the safety of all our members while we continue to be at risk from COVID-19, the 2022 AGM is postponed until June of next year. We look forward to seeing everyone again in 2023.

We're moving!

The building which houses BC FORUM has been sold, and we will be looking for new premises. Please stay tuned for more information. In the meantime, staff will continue to work from home, and the Board of Directors to advocate for seniors. We continue to be reachable by regular mail and email.



Standing in solidarity with Ukraine

Canada's unions stand in solidarity with Ukraine and condemn unprovoked Russian aggression

On February 22, 2022 Bea Bruske, President of the Canadian Labour Congress, released the following statement:

The world is watching with horror as Russia launches an unjustified attack on Ukraine and its people. Canada's unions condemn this unprovoked act of aggression and stand in solidarity with the people of Ukraine who now face violence, hardship and an uncertain future.

"Russia's military assault will mean a terrible loss of life and will destabilize the lives of people throughout the region. Reverberations will be felt around the world.

"We are concerned about civilian casualties and a massive displacement

of people trying to flee the violence. As essential public services are disrupted and civil infrastructure destroyed, the urgent need for humanitarian assistance grows. It is vital that international agencies are allowed access so they can provide humanitarian assistance to the people affected.

"We call on Canada's government to open our country's doors to those fleeing the conflict, including through visa-free access for Ukrainians, and provide substantial humanitarian aid to these victims of Russian hostility.

"We further urge our government to work with like-minded multilateral organizations to press Russia to end hostilities, adhere to international human rights obligations and return to the path of dialogue

and diplomacy. The international community must stand united in the cause of peace for a free and sovereign Ukraine."

"This attack reminds us again of the dangers posed by tyrants and autocrats to all of us who value democracy. Ukrainians are now once again being called on to defend their right to self-determination. Canada's unions stand in solidarity with Ukrainian workers and families who want peace.

"Canada's unions also reach out in solidarity to our nation's proud Ukrainian-Canadian community, who fear today for the safety of family and friends tragically caught up in Russia's armed confrontation.

Bill C-228 and you

Why Bill C-228 an Act to amend the Bankruptcy & Insolvency Act, the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act and the Pension Benefits Standards Act, 1985 is so important to pensioners.

The following information is courtesy of Michael Powell, President of the Canadian Federation of Pensioners (CFP). The complete text is available on their website at <https://www.pensioners.ca>

The Canadian Federation of Pensioners (CFP) advocates on behalf of defined benefit pension plans and their members. Founded in 2005, the CFP is the united voice of 22 retiree groups, representing 300,000 defined benefit pensioners, who work together to improve pension security across Canada.

Pension protection is sadly lacking and much needed in Canada. Since 1982, more than 250,000 Canadian vulnerable seniors have suffered the loss of pension income for the rest of their lives due to corporate insolvency. There are still over 4 million Canadians counting on their defined benefit pensions.

What is a defined benefit (DB) pension?

- A defined benefit pension plan is part of an employee's total compensation package and is legally considered deferred compensation.
- A defined benefit pension consists of deferred wages that are earned while an employee is working and collected when they retire.
- The annual pension amount is calculated using a formula that reflects an employee's salary, length of service and age.
- Pensioners have planned their retirement based on their defined pension income.
- Pension income is taxable in the hands of pensioners.



How are DB pensions regulated in Canada?

- The pension regulatory framework in Canada is very complex.
- Canada has two tiers of legislation that impact pension security. Eleven different jurisdictions are responsible for pension legislation and regulation.
- Federal insolvency legislation is the primary legislation. In the event of a conflict, it supersedes other pension-related legislation.
- Pensions are also governed by additional federal and provincial pension benefit and corporate governance legislation.

What is the risk to defined benefit pensions?

- There are no real protections for defined benefit pensions when a company goes bankrupt.
- The risk to defined benefit pensions occurs when a company becomes insolvent and its pension is underfunded.
- When companies are in trouble but haven't yet become insolvent, pensioners are powerless to intervene and secure their pensions.

All other creditors can negotiate terms to protect their interests.

- Insolvency law does not treat pensioners fairly. Unlike creditors, pensioners are not automatically able to negotiate their terms when assets are divided. They aren't even allocated a seat at the table, unless the court grants them one.

Note from Sam:

So, while it is extremely seldom that I ask anyone to stand in support of an action presented by a conservative member of parliament, I am asking just that of you now.

MP Marilyn Gladu, Sarnia-Lambton brought Bill C-228 forward and by the time you are reading this edition of The Advocate it will likely have gone through second reading. Previous bills that would have enacted the changes to the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act to protect pensions died on the order floor. I am asking you to call, write, text or e-mail your MP and ask that she/he/they support Bill C-228.

Postal cutbacks by stealth

By Marion Pollack

BC FORUM Director, CUPW

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Canada Post workers kept us connected. They delivered our parcels, cards, letters, and even our bills. The pandemic emphasized the need for a universal public postal service.

But it seems that the new federal Minister responsible for Canada Post Corporation has different ideas. She wants a stripped-down postal service that does not meet our needs.

In December of last year The Honourable Filomena Tassi polled Canadians about some potential drastic and negative changes to our postal services. The list of potential cutbacks included shutting down rural post offices, ending home delivery and replacing it




with so called community mailboxes, and cutting back mail delivery to three times a week.

These “proposals” would have an adverse impact on seniors. Experience has shown that the move away from door-to-door delivery has made it more difficult for seniors to receive letters and parcels. Shutting down

rural post offices, which are often the heart of the community, would hurt seniors who can’t or don’t drive.

The union representing the majority of postal workers is concerned about the poll and is opposed to the possible changes. “We’re really concerned and disappointed the government is actually taking a poll right now about reducing postal services when the public is actually asking them to have more services, not less,” said Jan Simpson, president of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW).

Organizations such as BC FORUM have been important in the struggle to protect our postal service, and their voice will be needed in the future.



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From the Office of the Seniors Advocate

The following are excerpts from the *Seniors Advocate Monthly Update – March 2022*. Full details and the entire monthly update can be found online at <https://www.seniorsadvocatebc.ca>

The *Monitoring Seniors Services Report* focuses on key services in the province that fall under the Advocate's legislated mandate. It highlights where seniors' needs are being met and where improvements are most needed. Access to health care, appropriate housing, adequate transportation, enough income to meet basic needs such as food, shelter and medicines and protection from abuse and neglect are key to the health and well-being of seniors.

This report, first published in 2015, is updated each year reflecting the latest information available. *Monitoring Seniors Services 2021* is the 7th edition and focuses on 2020/21 data.

Current report highlights:

- The overall health of B.C. seniors has remained relatively stable over the last five years. 42% of seniors are either healthy or have a low-complexity condition such as asthma, while 19% live with high-complexity conditions, and 6% have been diagnosed with dementia.
- Emergency department visits and hospitalizations for those over 65 dropped by 9% and 7% respectively, and there was a decrease of 28% in days spent in alternate level of care.
- There was an 87% decline in Adult Day Program clients and 96% reduction in Adult Day Program days due to the program's suspension during the pandemic.
- Over the past five years the number of subsidized, registered assisted living units have decreased by 3%, and private assisted living units have decreased by 26%.
- There was a 37% decrease in long-term care residents waiting to transfer to their preferred facility,

demonstrating more seniors are living in their preferred facility.

- The proportion of long-term care residents taking antipsychotics increased by 7%.
- Over the last 5 years, the number of seniors subsidized housing units per 1,000 population 55+ has decreased 14%.
- The average monthly income of Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters (SAFER) recipients is \$1,675, their average rent is \$1,052 and the average rent subsidy provided is \$199 per month. The average subsidy dropped by 4% in the last year.
- There was a 6% increase in seniors accessing GIS and a 4% increase in seniors accessing the B.C. Senior's Supplement.

COVID-19 update

Rapid tests for seniors

COVID-19 rapid antigen tests are now being distributed to people aged 60+ at B.C. pharmacies. Seniors in this age group can pick up 5 tests every 28 days free of charge. Eligible seniors will need to provide their Personal Health Number, full name, and date of birth.

B.C. Budget 2022

The newly released 2022 B.C. Budget includes some good news for seniors in the upcoming year. The new budget contains continued commitments to long-term care and assisted living in the context of COVID-19, as well as capital funding to improve long-term care infrastructure and eliminate multi-bed units.

Other highlights for seniors include a \$25 million investment to expand training for health care assistants to address staff shortages in long-term care, assisted living, and home care programming.

Seniors subsidized rental housing will also be on the rise with a planned \$100 million in accelerated funding for the development of units for seniors and people with disabilities.

Tax preparation

Posted on April 3, 2021

The deadline to file taxes is starting to creep up; it's April 30, 2022. Unless you're self-employed or have a spouse or a common-law partner who is self-employed, then the deadline to file your taxes is June 15, 2022.

The Canada Revenue Agency has a directory of community organizations hosting free tax clinics. Some clinics that are currently operating may complete and file taxes for free, by videoconference or by phone. To find a clinic in your community, check the directory, which is updated regularly. Before visiting a clinic, call to learn about any COVID-related restrictions or protocols. (website: www.cra-arc.gc.ca and search for free tax clinics)

Please note: many clinics that have provided services in the past may have been cancelled or postponed due to concerns surrounding COVID-19.

And finally, in a previous report the Seniors Advocate advised that a new B.C. Seniors Guide has been printed. It is available in PDF at <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/people/seniors/about-seniorsbc/guide/bc-seniors-guide-12th-edition.pdf> or e-book format at https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/people/seniors/about-seniorsbc/guide/bc-seniors_guide_12th_edition_mi.epub, or phone their office at 1-877-952-3181 during office hours to receive a free printed copy. Monday-Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., excluding statutory holidays.

The Office of the Seniors Advocate is an independent office of the B.C. provincial government acting in the interest of seniors and their caregivers.

From pandemic to endemic?

The following are some excerpts from the BC Gov News website on March 10, 2022. For the complete document and subsequent updates please visit the website at <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2022HLTH0081-000324>

Effective March 11, 2022, at 12:01 a.m., the following changes will be made to public health orders:

- Face coverings order: Face coverings will be optional for people in all indoor public settings. People may want to continue wearing a mask based on personal choice.
- Individual businesses and organizations can choose to continue to require mask wearing on their premises.
- Gatherings and events for faith gatherings: The requirement of faith communities to restrict attendance based on vaccination status is no longer required.
- Indoor common area mask requirements for employees as part of the Workplace Safety Order will no longer be required. Employers may choose to continue to require wearing masks for operational reasons or in certain settings.
- Overnight camps for children and youth order requirements: COVID-19 safety plans are no longer required to be submitted to a medical health officer for overnight camps.
- Masks are encouraged on public transit and BC Ferries but are no longer required under public health order.

Changes are also coming to B.C.'s long-term care facilities. By March 18, the number of visitors to long-term care facilities will no longer be restricted as long as visitors are fully vaccinated and screened. Some facilities will be able to implement these changes earlier. Visitors should check with their local care home.



Dr. Bonnie Henry © Province of British Columbia

“Vaccines are the primary tool in our toolbox for managing COVID-19 in the long term and people have stepped up in a big way to get vaccinated, which has made a huge difference in creating high levels of immunity and protection across the province,” said Dr. Bonnie Henry, B.C.’s provincial health officer. “As we move through this transition period and lift restrictions, we encour-

age people to respect the comfort levels of those around them.”

COVID-19 guidelines are being adjusted to advise that mask use is no longer required when K-12 students return from spring break. Dates for return from spring break vary by school district. Similarly, public health is working with the child care sector to revise guidelines. However, students and staff are supported to continue to use masks and other layers of protection based on their own comfort and risk factors.

Easing restrictions is based on ongoing and careful review of data by the provincial health officer and the BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC). This includes a significant decrease in weekly hospital admissions (from 877 to 391) and 34% decrease in critical care admissions (from 121 to 80) in the past month.



In addition, effective April 8, 2022, at 12:01 a.m., the following changes will also be made to public health orders:

- Showing the BC Vaccine Card proof of vaccination to access non-essential events, services and businesses will no longer be required.
- Individual businesses and organizations can choose to continue to require the BC Vaccine Card proof on their premises.
- The remainder of the Workplace Safety Order will be lifted, which means businesses will transition back to communicable disease plans to reduce risk of all communicable disease.
- The requirement for students residing in residence to be fully vaccinated under the Post-secondary Institution Housing COVID-19 Preventative Measures Order will be repealed.

Vaccinations remain the primary layer of protection that has limited severe health outcomes from COVID-19. As of March 10, 2022, 93.3% (4,322,690) of eligible people 12 and older in B.C. have received their first dose of COVID-19 vaccine, 90.7%

(4,204,895) received their second dose and 55.7% (2,580,562) have received a third dose.

B.C. has also increased the supply of rapid tests, helping people monitor and manage mild COVID-19 symptoms at home. (see COVID -19 section of The Seniors Advocate March update)



The Province, provincial health officer and the BCCDC will continue to monitor and provide updates on the COVID-19 pandemic in B.C. An update will be provided in the coming weeks about the daily information bulletin moving from daily to weekly reporting.

Note from Sam:

Over the past couple of years, we have become all too familiar with the terms epidemic and pandemic. Many of us are now hearing the term “endemic” and are hoping that the World Health Organization classifies COVID-19 as such in the near future. So what does that mean to you and me?

Endemic does not mean that an illness is eradicated. The root of the word comes from the Greek endēmos which means “in the population.” In epidemiology, it means that the disease is always with us at a baseline level but differing from an epidemic or pandemic in that it is no longer surprising, unexpected, or uncontrollable. Rather, it is more predictable.

Epidemiologist Dr. Isaac Weisfuse, an adjunct professor in Cornell University’s Master of Public Health Program explains: “Endemic means that the disease or infection reached a steady state where it doesn’t cause large outbreaks but it still circulates, causing individual cases. There’s always a background rate of infection causing cases — or maybe more cases in enclaves of people who haven’t been vaccinated.”

It is within the purview of the World Health Organization (WHO) to classify and reclassify a disease. Today COVID-19 is still a pandemic, and with news of yet another new variant, “Deltacron” (a Delta/Omicron “blend”), spikes in fatalities in Hong Kong, and China recently reporting over 1,000 new cases daily for the first time in two years; it is hard to say when the world will reach a state of endimicity in respect to COVID-19.

So, to all, don’t stop wearing a mask if you feel more comfortable with the level of protection it provides. Don’t expand your “bubble” if you don’t feel safe doing so. And don’t feel pressured into joining the congo line when all you want to do is slow dance.

Pandemic relief payments now excluded from seniors' income

On March 3, 2022 Bill C-12, An Act to Amend, amends the Old Age Security Act to exclude from a person's income any payment under the Canada Emergency Response Benefit Act, Part VIII.4 of the Employment Insurance Act, the Canada Recovery Benefits Act or the Canada Worker Lockdown Benefit Act for the purposes of calculating the amount of the guaranteed income supplement and allowances payable in respect of any month after June 2022; received royal assent.

This is the piece of legislation that Kamal Khera, Minister for Seniors, presented in the House as a means by which the Liberal Government might fulfill one of its campaign promises from the fall of last year.

Last year, approximately 83,000 seniors became ineligible to receive all or a portion of the Guaranteed Income Support due to the fact that they received emergency pandemic supports such as CERB. The majority of the seniors affected were working full and/or part time jobs not by choice rather because they are unable to live on pension incomes. Seniors that were most susceptible to the COVID-19 virus, who were cautioned more than others to "remain home" and were therefore affected hardest were then further distressed mid- year by being stripped of an essential monetary benefit. While Bill C-12 remediates this, it is shameful that low income seniors bore this burden at all.

In mid February Jenny Kwan, NDP MP for Vancouver East wrote the following:

"I am so glad to report that the NDP's work to advance the voices of the most vulnerable low-income seniors have won the day. On February 16, I voted in favour of Bill C-12, which will exclude from seniors' income calculations any payment under the

CERB, the CRB, or the Canada Worker Lockdown Benefit Act for the purposes of calculating the amount of the GIS and OAS payable after June 2022.

The Liberal government has also finally agreed that, in exchange for our support in fast-tracking Bills C-10 and C-12, they will speed up payments for seniors. Specifically, the timeline for the one-time payment will be moved up to April 19, and an emergency fund will be set up by the government that

rapid tests. Based on our pressure the government will also be committing to regularly and transparently report on the money being authorized in the Bill so that there can be accountability with access to rapid tests.

I want to take a moment to thank the many seniors and advocates, like the 411 Seniors Society and the Kettle Society, who have been in touch with my office to speak up about the shameful decision that the



Jenny Kwan, MP, Vancouver East, courtesy of the Office of Jenny Kwan

would allow the most in-need seniors to receive supports beginning March 18, 2022, just over one month away.

Members of Parliament will also be able to identify qualifying seniors and to support their applications. More information about this payment process will be provided in the coming days. This is a major victory for the most vulnerable senior citizens and I believe that this relief will literally save lives.

With regards to C-10, this bill is a direct result of our pressure that the government provide more supports and funding to provinces and territories so that Canadians can access

Liberal government made to cut the GIS support. It should never have happened.

New Democrat advocacy for low-income seniors will not stop here. One lesson that the government should have learned from the pandemic is that low-income seniors, those who rely on the GIS, cannot make ends meet. That is why they have to supplement their incomes with additional work in retirement. To that end, I will keep pushing for the NDP's proposal for a guaranteed livable basic income so that seniors will never have to suffer the indignity they had to endure during the pandemic."

Fighting for frontline heroes

By Kim Novak, President, UFCW 1518

In March of 2020, as COVID-19 began to overtake the world, an unprecedented level of panic, chaos, and uncertainty entered our lives. I couldn't imagine then that two years later, we would still be struggling to control the virus and enduring ongoing threats at home and throughout the world.

What I did know then, however, is what I still know now: that the members of UFCW 1518 – grocery and retail workers, health care and community support workers, industrial food producers, and cannabis workers – would be on the frontlines of these disasters, doing their best to cope and support their communities.

While those early days were full of anxiety, they also provided many moments of pride, hope, and optimism. Coast-to-coast-to-coast, Canadians took time to celebrate front-line workers every night at 7 p.m. They went out of their way to let frontline workers know that they were important and that they were valued. They were patient and cautious, wearing their masks to stores, observing social distancing, and thanking workers for their service.

Early in the pandemic, frontline workers were held up as heroes, and rightly so. UFCW 1518 members showed heroism and bravery every day simply by showing up to work, maintaining some small measure of normalcy and calm during a difficult and chaotic period.

Sadly, some of that goodwill has faded as anti-science paranoia has grown. Our members have confronted anti-maskers and anti-vaxxers, harassment, and even physical assault at work. Is this how we treat our frontline heroes? Is this how we thank ordinary people who do their best every day to keep us supplied and to care for vulnerable citizens?



Kim Novak, President, UFCW 1518 © UFCW

While frontline workers in grocery, health care, industrial food processing, and cannabis did inspirational work over the last two years, the truth is that the work they do today is the same work they did before the pandemic and the same work they will do when it finally comes to an end. They have always been heroes, and always deserved better. They deserve better wages and benefits, more job security,

healthier and safer workplaces, and more power in their jobs. Outside of work, they deserve affordable housing, a clean and healthy environment, an inclusive society, and a world at peace.

And these workers know it, too. They have been standing up for themselves and building their power since the beginning of the pandemic. UFCW 1518 has stood side-by-side with them over the last two years to fight for extraordinary victories. We pushed the government to enact critical workplace protections at the start of the pandemic. We negotiated one of the strongest retail contracts in the country at Save-On-Foods. We helped gig workers gain representation in the first-ever agreement between Uber and any union anywhere. We've built power in the cannabis industry, representing over 70% of cannabis retail stores in Victoria. And we're just getting started.

When we look back at the COVID-19 crisis years from now, we'll remember two things. That the people who stood up for their communities on the frontlines deserve our gratitude and respect. And, more importantly, that this is a moment when workers stood together to build a better future.



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GOOD TO KNOW

The right to paper billing

Media Release February 10, 2022:

The Public Interest Advocacy Centre (PIAC) and the National Pensioners Federation (NPF) today hailed today's Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) decision that requires all communications service providers (Internet, wireless, home phone and TV companies) to provide seniors, persons with disabilities and certain customers without home Internet to get free paper bills from their CSPs.

"This is the best result we could get after an unnecessary five year battle with telecom and TV providers in Canada to do the right thing and provide Canadians who said they rely on paper bills to continue to receive them, free," said John Lawford, Executive Director and General Counsel of PIAC. "We are pleased the CRTC ordered, effective today, that many customers will get free paper bills, but disappointed that all customers will not get this choice and may have to adapt to electronic bills."

Trish McAuliffe, President of NPF, claimed the decision as a clear victory for seniors rights to important services: "Seniors told us they need paper bills to make sure they understand and pay their bill on time. They rightly said they should not have to pay more for a paper copy of a bill that they then must pay. They are responsible people and now can demand their TV and Internet providers treat them responsibly too."

PIAC and NPF originally fought for a requirement to provide paper bills in 2018. The CRTC denied this initial application.

"We will continue to argue for consumer rights in telecommunications and broadcasting services for as long as it takes to convince the regulator of the need to vindicate the public interest. We are pleased the CRTC finally put consumers first today," added Lawford.

The Public Interest Advocacy Centre (PIAC) is a national not-for-profit corporation and a federally registered charity that protects consumer interest in regulated industries such as telecommunications, energy, financial services, privacy and transportation.

The National Pensioners Federation (NPF) is a national, not for profit, non partisan, non sectarian organization of 350 seniors chapters, clubs, groups, organizations and individual supporters across Canada with a collective membership of 1,000,000 seniors and retirees devoted entirely to the welfare and best interests of ageing Canadians.



WE'VE FACED COVID-19 TOGETHER.

Now let's make health care even stronger.

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New Telus Internet program for seniors

The following is from a February news release from Telus:

Low-income seniors can get TELUS high speed Internet starting at \$9.95 per month across British Columbia and Alberta.

Canadian seniors receiving the Guaranteed Income Supplement will qualify for low-cost Internet for Good from TELUS to keep them connected to what matters most.

TELUS is proud to launch its Internet for Good® for Seniors program providing low-income seniors in British Columbia and Alberta receiving the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) access to high-speed Internet starting at \$9.95 a month. This expansion comes as more than 33 per cent of Canadian seniors reported that their mental health has declined since the

onset of the pandemic. TELUS Internet for Good® for Seniors ensures that more seniors have the means to stay connected with loved ones, manage their well-being, and access important healthcare resources, information and entertainment online.

“The 411 Seniors Centre Society is very supportive of this community-minded program from TELUS which will reduce the digital divide that many of our members on the GIS experience,” said David Handelman, Board Member 411 Seniors Centre Society. “Our current membership is over 600 and at least 200 of our members do not have Internet access because they cannot afford it. The affordable monthly cost starting at \$9.95 will ensure that all of our members who want Internet at home will have the

means to access it. We are confident that this program will improve our members’ lives by giving them access to services and information, and by helping them strengthen their social connections.”

Eligible seniors can apply for Internet for Good online at telus.com/InternetForGoodSeniors and are required to provide a copy of their Old Age Security T4A (OAS) that identifies them as a recipient of the GIS. If an applicant does not have access to the Internet or email, they can submit their documentation via mail, or enlist the assistance of a friend, family member, or case worker to apply on their behalf. Qualified customers will receive a unique code from TELUS which they can then use to sign-up for Internet for Good®.

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Motion M-50: on the need for a dedicated international convention on the human rights of older persons

The following is the text of the Motion M-50, on the need for a dedicated international convention on the human rights of older persons, presented by Peter Julian, NDP MP for New Westminster – Burnaby. This Motion was based on the resolution carried at the National Pensioners Federation Convention in 2021, a resolution which was fully supported and similar to ones previously passed by BC FORUM.

Motion M-50 was placed on Notice to Parliament on March 1st, 2022:

Motion text:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should immediately: (a) recognize that many studies of conditions in long-term care residences conducted in Canada over the last decade have shown serious deficiencies in the quality of life of residents in long-term care related to low staffing levels, inadequate compensation and high staff turnover, inadequate direct hours of care of residents, poor nutrition and access to health care, over medication with mood-altering drugs, too many beds per room, and lack of regular inspections, among other issues, documented by the B.C. Seniors Advocate and Professor Pat Armstrong, among others; (b) recognize that COVID-19 has exposed these problems and that the deaths in long-term care residences in Canada were the highest among OECD countries as a proportion of total COVID-19 deaths; (c) recognize that two Ontario inquiries and a report from the Canadian Army have documented the desperate situation in 2020 of residents in long-term care and revealed a profound lack of respect or care for the human rights of Canada's most vulnerable citizens;

and (d) support the UN Convention on the Human Rights of Older Persons that is currently under development and be a signatory of that Convention.



Peter Julian, MP New Westminster-Burnaby

I know you will all join me in thanking our friend Peter Julian in putting this Motion on Notice and raise your voices/take action to ensure that the recommendations arising from surveys being completed by the Health Standards Organization (HSO) and the Canadian Standards Association (CSA) come to fruition sooner than later.

The new standard is to be developed as a National Standard of Canada as a revision of HSO's existing Long Term Care Services standard which hasn't been updated since 2020. The following is from the HSO's website on Long Term Care:

The new standard provides LTC home residents, workforce, organizational leaders, and governing bodies with guidance on:

- Providing evidence-informed resident-centered care practices that

value compassion, respect, dignity, trust, and a meaningful quality of life.

- Working in a team-based way to deliver high-quality care that is culturally safe and appropriate to the diverse needs of residents, the workforce, and the broader team involved in the life of a LTC home.
- Enabling a healthy, competent, and resilient workforce and healthy working conditions.
- Upholding strong governance practices and operations and a culture that is outcome-focused and committed to continuous learning and quality improvement.

By the time you read this the public review period will have ended but rest assured BC FORUM has been working with partners such as the National Pensioners Federation (NPF) and the Council of Senior Citizens' Organization of BC (COSCO) to ensure your voices are heard. During a recent online event (webinar) jointly hosted by the NPF and COSCO the current state of long term care homes and the affect these new standards would have was presented by a panel of experts of which Isobel Mackenzie the Seniors Advocate of BC was one. The presentation was very worthwhile and informative. One issue that really stood out for me and which I have addressed as part of my feedback of the draft standard is that a strong measure of accountability must be imposed with penalties levied if they are not.

A recording of the 1 ½ hour webinar entitled *COSCO & NPF – National Standards in Long Term Care Webinar* can be watched at <https://coscobc.org/cosco-npf-national-standards-in-long-term-care-webinar/>.

Why local government elections should matter to you

By Orion Irvine

Regional Director, Canadian Labour Congress Pacific Region

Local governments, which include municipal councils, regional districts, and school boards, have a greater impact on our day-to-day lives than many of us realize. Most of the services that we access daily are controlled by local governments, such as the roads we drive on, the water we drink, the libraries we visit, and the schools our children attend. Local governments also make decisions affecting public transit, affordable housing, land use, and parklands.

B.C. municipalities spend more than \$8 billion each year. The ways in which municipal councils prioritize this spending have a very large impact on the lives of working people, including affordable housing, recreation centres, and essential infrastructure. This is why the Canadian Labour Congress and your local labour councils have worked hard to engage union members in civic affairs. Our *Stronger Communities Together* campaign has always sought to build strong, productive relationships between unions and local governments so that they can work together to build robust and economically vibrant communities.

On October 15, 2022, local government elections will take place in B.C. I hope you take some time to speak to the candidates running for election and ask them where they stand on issues of importance to working people, such as how they will invest in your community, ensure sustainability, and encourage family-supporting jobs. Your local labour council will also be speaking to local candidates in the coming months and will then endorse the candidates who they think will best represent the labour movement's

values. We ask that you consider giving your support to these labour endorsed candidates.

Finally, we encourage you to consider running for local government yourself. The decision-makers in local governments should reflect the people that live and work in their areas, instead of only representing the views of a small segment of the population. Workers have valuable

skills and viewpoints that can make our communities stronger and more inclusive.

This October you have an opportunity to elect representatives who will support public services, help make our communities more resilient, and will support the needs of our diverse population. The time that it takes you to vote is a small investment that can have a great return.



New address? New e-mail address?

Please send your new address and e-mail address to BC FORUM. You can mail in the form on page 15, or you can reach us by telephone at 1.800.896.5678 (toll free) or 604.688.4565; or by email at bcforum@bcfed.ca.



Please check the expiry date on your label. Is your membership due for renewal?