



1

Speaking up  
for retirees

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### INTERNATIONAL DAY OF OLDER PERSONS

**October 1, 2017**

The theme of International Day of Older Persons 2017 is “Stepping into the Future: Tapping the Talents, Contributions and Participation of Older Persons in Society.”

This year’s day is about enabling and expanding the contributions of older people in their families, communities and societies at large. It focuses on the pathways that support full and effective participation in old age, in accordance with old persons’ basic rights, needs and preferences. For more on Oct. 1, see the article Seniors Voice.

## SAVE THE DATE!

The 13 th CURC Constitutional Conference will be held, May 29 to June 1, 2018. Details on the conference to follow.

## THE NEWSLETTER FOR CANADIAN UNION RETIREES

### *Seniors Voice*

by Lucienne Bahuaud

Seniors’ Voice is a collaboration of organizations that have come together to celebrate the contribution of seniors to Canadian society on October 1 which the United Nations has designated as the International Day of Older Persons.

<http://www.un.org/en/events/olderpersonsday/>

Seniors’ Voice promotes the concerns of seniors’ at all three levels of government.

One of the things that has come from this collaboration is incorporating the

Canadian Maple Leaf on the same flag as the United Nations to celebrate the International Day of Older Persons.

In 2017, our objective is to again celebrate the United Nations focus recognizing the contributions seniors make every day; with a flavour towards Canada’s 150th birthday. We want to increase recognition that aging Canadians deserve through celebrating 1 day a year together. We encourage all members to participate and encourage organizations to plan and work together to celebrate. You want to get involved, contact your CURC Council in your city or even better get some organizations together and start an event.

In 2016, events were conducted in many cities across Canada. Event pictures, media coverage and other information have been posted on the website, please check out <http://seniorsvoice.org/2016%20Events>. In 2016, the focus was on health, pensions, housing and inequality. In 2017, the focus remains on the same issues.

# Presidents Message

*By Len Hope*

While most people have read or heard about the shameful treatment of employees and retirees of Sears Canada, there is another element to this story that highlights the need for stricter legislation to protect workers and their pensions.

After years of struggle the company is trying to reinvent itself and re-establish financial stability by closing 59 stores and laying off 2,900 workers in the hope of selling off the company. While we may feel empathy for anyone who loses their employment what is particularly disturbing in this instance is that Sears has abdicated any responsibility to their former employees by going to court to get out of paying severance to those 2,900 workers. As a result of this court action, Sears will not be paying severance, not even paying out the minimum statutory entitlements, to lay off workers and will cease making contributions to the benefit plans and pension plan on

Canada's federal government can take immediate steps to improve the lives of seniors in the following areas:

## **A - HOUSING**

Make a national seniors' housing strategy a component of the new national housing strategy.

Triple the budget for affordable housing geared to low-income seniors to \$300 million a year.

Assure that part of new affordable housing units, announced in the 2016 federal budget, is allocated to seniors.

Partner with the provinces, territories, indigenous governments, municipalities and private sector to reach the goal of providing the purpose-built seniors housing goal for 18.5% over-75s as Quebec has now— in all of Canada within 10 years.

Develop comprehensive programs with, the provinces, territories, indigenous governments and municipalities to help seniors stay in their own homes.

## **B – HEALTH**

1. Implement a National Health Care Strategy for Seniors as outlined in a “A Declaration concerning a National Health Care Strategy for Seniors” developed by those participating in the 2015 Vancouver Roundtable.

2. Implement in cooperation with the provinces a national pharmacare plan.

## **C – PENSIONS**

1. Improve the Canada and Quebec Pension Plans.

2. Reject any move to change defined benefit plans into target benefit plans.

## **D – INEQUALITY**

1. Pass legislation to limit corporations' use of off-shore subsidiaries to shift profits and reduces taxes paid in Canada. This can be done by requiring economic substance for offshore subsidiaries to be considered separate entities for tax purposes and capping interest payments to offshore subsidiaries.

2. Close unfair and ineffective tax loopholes such as the stock option deduction

3. Institute a Robin Hood Tax, which is a tax of about 0.05%, on financial transactions.

4. Establish a mechanism for reporting on major foreign financial transactions.

## Reading for Retirees!

Canada's leading progressive organization has released report called *'An Analysis of the Economic circumstances of Canadian Seniors.'* to read or download the report go to;

[http://www.broadbentinstitute.ca/income\\_inequality](http://www.broadbentinstitute.ca/income_inequality)

## CURC joins Edmonton rally to demand new health care deal with Feds

Edmonton: Provincial Premiers' meeting in Edmonton were challenged by a loud *Rally for Public Health Care* telling them to demand Fair Funding for Our Medicare System in their negotiations with the federal government.



**16 members of the Edmonton Area Council (EAC) of CURC attended the Pharmicare rally. L to R Geny & Vicky Beauchamp, Merle Schnee, Judy Lederer (President EAC), Cathy Wintle and Noel Lapierre. Photo by AFUR President Lucien Royer.**

A contingent of seniors from the Edmonton Area Council of CURC added their voices to a broad spectrum of community, union and other groups concerned with the

contributions to the benefit plans and pension plan on September 30th.

If this isn't bad enough shortly after Sears Canada announced it was not going to issue severance pay and cease payments to its pension and benefit obligations, it announced it would be paying out \$9.2 million in retention bonuses to key staff while it attempts to restructure.

Furthermore, of the \$9.2 million, \$7.6 million would be paid out to 43 executive staff and senior managers at Sears head office in Toronto.

This has created a situation where 2,900 employees slated for layoff are being asked to continue working on the liquidation sales at the stores that will be closing without any severance or terminations pay.

While it may be easy to cast this off as just another example of corporate greed, arguably it is, and showing how out of touch corporate executives are with the people they employ, we must take it upon ourselves to ensure that what has happened to Sears employees and retirees does not happen

in future to any workers or retirees.

As a nationwide organization, our members must be prepared to fight back against corporate greed and lobby politicians of all stripes at all levels for better laws to protect the pensions and benefits of current and future retirees.

### *Have a story you would like to send to us?*

*If you have a story about CURC or other seniors activities in your region that you would like to submit for consideration in next newsletter, please submit it to CURC national office:*

**Congress of Union Retirees  
of Canada**

**2841 Riverside Drive  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1V BX7**

*or email to:*

**Bob Linton at**  
[hqcongressofunionretirees@gmail.com](mailto:hqcongressofunionretirees@gmail.com)

**Telephone :**  
**(613) 526-7422**

**Fax:**  
**(613) 521-4655**

state of health care.

Judy Lederer, President of the Edmonton Area Council of CURC, talked about a growing crisis in seniors' care, pointing out that a growing shortfall in long-term care facilities provides still another reason why the Trudeau Government must get serious about a new health accord.

'Four thousand long-term care beds are needed to meet Alberta's needs,' said Lederer. "Because of insufficient funding, there has been a steady decline, especially since the early 1990's."

"Alberta's NDP government has begun to address this crisis, but their 2017 budget announcement of 345 new publicly-funded beds are only a drop in the bucket."

Lederer closed her comments with a 1979 quote from the Father of Medicare, Tommy Douglas, who said, "We can't stand still. We can either go back, or we can go forward!"

"This is the choice we have to make," she said. "This is why we want the Premiers to get back to the bargaining table with the Federal Government to sign a new accord."

Sixteen Edmonton area members were joined by Lucien Royer, President of the Alberta Federation of Union Retirees (AFUR) to carry CURC banners. Presidents of provincial labour federations who came to meet the Premiers added their voices to the rally,

along with the National Nurses Union, health organizations and unions.

### October 1<sup>st</sup> 'International Day for Seniors' on the agenda for spring sitting of Alberta's Legislature

The government of Alberta will put the recognition of October 1<sup>st</sup>, the UN International Day of Older Persons on the order paper for the Spring 2018 Session of the provincial legislature.

The decision was made at a meeting in the legislature between executive members of the Alberta Federation of Union Retirees (AFUR) and senior staff to the Hon. Lori Sigurdson, Minister of Seniors and Housing. AFUR is the provincial body for local units of CURC.

A Bill will be introduced to make the celebration of October 1st an annual event. This year the Government will raise the profile of the International Day by issuing a Proclamation throughout the Province.