

Advocate

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



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Irene Lanzinger, President of the BC Federation of Labour, and Chair of the BC Federation of Retired Union Members (BC FORUM).

Working together for a better BC

THE SPIRIT of solidarity shone brightly as delegates participated in a lively annual general meeting of the BC Federation of Retired Union Members (BC FORUM), held at the UFCW 1518 meeting hall in New Westminster.

Retired workers, union leaders, and political leaders – including MLAs Raj Chouhan, Kathy Corrigan, Judy Darcy, Salina Robinson and Shane Simpson – debated resolutions, shared experiences, and heard featured speakers call for change.

Irene Lanzinger, President of the BC Federation of Labour and Chair of BC FORUM, captured the mood of the meeting with a call for people to stick together to bring about positive change.

“We have a (provincial) government that thinks the economy is run entirely by big business.

“We need a government that shares our values,” said Lanzinger.

“We need to think about the opportunity we will have a year from now,” she said, adding that the next election will be a chance to start building the kind of province we really need for us, and for future generations.

Lanzinger said that while the Christy Clark government was bragging about the strength of the BC

See “When we stick together...” page 7

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Advocate

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In this edition

The BC FORUM annual general meeting was energetic and spirited, with speeches that inspired, and heartfelt debate of the serious issues that affect the lives of ordinary people. We provide full coverage.

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Critical issues that must be addressed in the next election

By Diane Wood
President, BC FORUM

WE ARE about to have a very busy year – which is turning out to be the rule rather than the exception.

Over the many months, as you know, we have been focused on defeating the Harper government and reversing the harm done by its disastrous policies.

The issues at the provincial level are no less urgent and the next BC election is now only months away.

As reported in the Board of Directors' report to our annual meeting, BC FORUM will be campaigning for a new government that will:

- Provide quality public services, not further cuts in public health care, education, transit and other key services.
- Build an economy that works for working people, giving ordinary families more opportunities to get ahead through expanded skills training and value-added industries. Our priority must be to create wealth, opportunities and jobs in British Columbia – not to export raw logs or natural gas at rock bottom prices to create jobs in foreign lands.
- Promote public power and conservation, not pile more billions of long-term contract obligations on BC Hydro to guarantee profits for the private power producers that are industrializing hundreds of pristine rivers and streams. Through conservation, investment and innovation, we can create good-paying jobs in every community in BC and ensure British Columbians have access to clean and affordable electricity for generations to come.



Diane Wood

- Bring in fair taxes that are based on ability to pay, and scrap flat-rate taxes like the MSP which only serve to deepen the tremendous inequality that the BC Liberals have created in BC.
- Expand public home care services to allow seniors to stay in their homes, and residential care facilities to take the pressure off acute care hospitals.
- Introduce quality, affordable child care services to enable young families – particularly women – to fully participate in building our economy.
- Take action to ensure that Brit-

ish Columbians are paid a living wage, not keep BC's minimum wage at the lowest level in the country.

- Adopt a clear plan, with definite targets, to help lift families and children out of poverty.
- Recognize the right of every worker to choose to join a union and thereby have a real voice in health and safety, wages and conditions at her workplace.

We will be working with the labour movement and our allies to hold the BC Liberals to account for their mismanagement of public services, and their failure to stand up for ordinary people. With the BC Liberals' single-minded focus on LNG, they have neglected the social, intellectual and physical infrastructure people need to succeed.

We will continue to highlight provincial election issues on our website – bcforum.ca – and in our news magazine *The Advocate*. Our strategy is to ensure that our members and the many others who read our communications are fully aware of the harm caused by Christy Clark's decisions, and the opportunity we have to bring about real change just a few months from now.

We ask every BC FORUM member to join us in these initiatives. We ask you to help us grow stronger by signing up a friend, relative or co-worker. An application form is printed in each edition of *The Advocate*, and is also available on our website.

British Columbians deserve a better government, one that cares about the everyday needs of ordinary people.

We must help make it happen. Together, we can.

Your help needed to improve the Canada Pension Plan

BC government appears to be backing away from signing agreement to enhance the CPP

By Diane Wood
President, BC FORUM

I HAVE RECENTLY emailed every BC FORUM member for whom we have an email address, asking them to please take action and to ask their friends to do likewise.

If you're not yet a member, or if you didn't receive the email for some other reason, then I urge you to join us in taking action on this important issue.

The BC Government appears to be backing away from its support for the federal-provincial agreement to make modest improvements to the Canada Pension Plan (CPP).

This would destroy the entire deal. The CPP enhancement may not help us all but it will sure help our younger colleagues, our kids, grandkids, nieces and nephews.

It requires your attention very soon.

Note that 80 percent of the cost of the increased benefit is paid for by investment income. This will save money in the long run because it will decrease the need for the Guaranteed Income Supplement which is paid from current operating funds.

The provincial governments, with the exception of Manitoba and Quebec, have agreed to enhance Canada Pension Plan benefits.

BC's participation is essential to make sure the agreement meets the population requirements for amending the CPP.

Websites for more info:

engage.gov.bc.ca/canadapensionplan/
engage.gov.bc.ca/canadapensionplan/for-employees/
engage.gov.bc.ca/canadapensionplan/for-employers/

Email address for your response:

citizenengagement@gov.bc.ca

BC has now slowed down the actual signing of the detailed agreement. The government signed the agreement in principle, but are now holding a "public engagement."

This will give organizations that oppose the CPP enhancement a stage for their self-serving propaganda (CFIB, Fraser Institute, Canadian Taxpayers Federation, etc).

The labour movement and ordinary workers who will benefit from this increase in pension at retirement must also become engaged and let the BC Government know that they support this retirement security enhancement.

The BC Government websites listed above have material that is basically supportive of the CPP enhancement. These websites and email addresses are very hard to find on the government's website.

However, anyone can take a quick look and write an email to support the enhancement. The more citizens who write in, the greater the impact.

My fear is that the BC Government may be yielding to pressure from these organizations to back away from the agreement, which would then terminate the whole deal.

The government will hear from those organizations opposed to the

enhancements very soon and may then shut down the website, so the sooner you can respond the better.

Individual emails are just as effective as long submissions.

Please respond soon. And please share this email with your friends, family, members, colleagues and co-workers.

A simple email is all that is required to counteract the comments and attacks by those above organizations.

CLC pledges continued push for improvements

THE CANADIAN Labour Congress has welcomed an agreement-in-principle by finance ministers but will continue to push improvements to the Canada Pension Plan.

Signed by all provinces except Manitoba and Quebec, the proposed phased-in expansion of the CPP will provide a maximum one-third increase in annual benefits to Canadians when they retire.

CLC president Hassan Yussuff said the changes are a "success" because they expand the pension plan, but the increase isn't enough.

"We will continue to push," said Yussuff, calling for improvements that would allow Canadians workers to "live a decent life" at retirement.

BOTTOMS UP! CHEERS!

Water has unexpected benefits

By David Porteous

Have you or have any of your friends or relatives ever said.....

"I don't want to drink anything before going to bed because I will have to get up during the night!!"

Gravity holds water in the lower part of your body when you are standing.

When you lie down and the lower body is level with the kidneys, the kidneys will then want to remove water.

Well, you may want to reconsider and have that drink before bedtime.

I was told by a Cardiac Doctor if you drink one glass of water before going to bed it could help avoid a

stroke or heart attack!

We all need water to flush the toxins from our systems but I didn't know there is a correct time to drink water.

I recently read an article in a medical journal which described how drinking water at the proper times can maximize the effectiveness and benefits to the body.

The examples given were:

- two glasses of water after waking up in the morning helps activate internal organs,
- one glass of water 30 minutes before a meal helps digestion,
- one glass of water before taking a bath helps lower blood pressure,

and

- one glass of water before going to bed may help avoid strokes or heart attacks.

If the only downfall drinking before going to bed is, "having to get up during the night" it's obviously a small price to pay. Remember, ask your doctor about ways to improve your personal health. It may help you live longer!

David J.A. Porteous is an Elder Planning Counselor (EPC) and President of Working Enterprises Consulting & Benefits Services Ltd.

He is a charter member of the Canadian Initiative for Elder Planning Studies.

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“We can do a whole lot better”



Judy Darcy, the BC NDP’s spokesperson on health care, told BC FORUM delegates an NDP government will make a real difference in the lives of British Columbians by improving services to people, tackling unfair taxes and supporting the creation of good jobs.

IN A SPIRITED address to BC FORUM delegates, Judy Darcy, the BC NDP spokesperson on health care, characterized the BC Liberals as contemptuous and arrogant.

For example, when she noted that a cabinet minister had failed to answer a question in the Legislature, he responded, “It’s question period, not answer period.”

Among the highlights of Darcy’s speech:

- We have the only medical services tax in the entire country. It’s an unfair tax. An NDP government will change that.
- There are seniors who every day are forced to make unacceptable choices about whether they can afford to pay for prescriptions.
- BC has the longest wait times in the country for hip and knee replacements, with people waiting in pain for up to two and a half years.
- Fifty percent of seniors on anti-psychotic medications in residential care homes don’t have a diagnosis of psychosis. Instead of adequate staffing to help seniors live in dignity, they are being restrained with chemicals.
- In three out of five health regions, the availability of home support services has declined.

“There aren’t very many promises they made to British Columbians that they have actually kept,” said Darcy.

“We can do a whole lot better if we achieve government,” said Darcy.

She said the NDP will offer bold, inspirational policies that will make a real difference in the lives of British Columbians.

Darcy called on delegates to “ensure that everyone gets mobilized for 2017. It’s not very far away.”

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Focus shifts to BC election

DIANE WOOD, President of BC FORUM, presented a detailed report on the campaigns and actions that BC FORUM has initiated or participated in during the past 12 months.

“This report reflects a lot of activity for BC FORUM. We’re proud of what we’ve done, and we know there’s more that needs to be done.... We may be retired, but we still fight for what’s right,” she said.

In the months ahead, leading up to the May 2017 provincial election, BC FORUM will be working with the labour movement and allies to “hold the BC Liberals to account for their mismanagement of public services, and their failure to stand up for ordinary people.”

Wood urged all BC FORUM members to work together to “bring about real change, just a few months from now,” as well as helping to further strengthen the organization by signing up new members. She noted that you don’t have to be retired to join. Full report: bcforum.ca



Grandmothers to Grandmothers, which works with the Stephen Lewis Foundation to combat the devastation of AIDS in Africa, was one of many progressive groups that attended the AGM to share information with delegates.

FROM PAGE 1

When we stick together, we can win

economy, it clawed back bus passes for people with disabilities and gave a tax break to the richest 2 percent of British Columbians.

“The political landscape can change, and we have the power to make it happen. You are making a difference.”

Changing the world isn’t easy, she said, but it can be achieved by working together in solidarity.

“We face two enormous problems: climate change, and poverty and inequality,” she said.

To tackle climate change, labour

and environmental groups are working together through Green Jobs BC to make it clear that it’s possible to have good jobs and a clean environment.

The work to implement good environmental policies and create good family supporting jobs “is so critical for future generations,” said Lanzinger.

As for poverty and inequality, she noted that unions have a key role to play. “The higher the union density, the more people who are in unions, the smaller the gap is between the

rich and the poor. More people in unions means more equality.”

Political pressure for change is also needed.

Many people, including older workers, are working full time and still living in poverty. That’s why the labour movement is fighting for a \$15 an hour minimum wage, she said.

“We need to look after each other. We need to look after our most vulnerable citizens,” said Lanzinger and the way to get there is for ordinary people to stick together.

Key issues debated at AGM

THERE WERE frequent reminders during the debate of resolutions that the issues being discussed were not theoretical abstractions – they have a direct and personal impact on the well-being of retired workers, families and our communities.

The five resolutions that were adopted established or expanded BC FORUM policies on residential care, postal services, benefits for people with disabilities, childcare and the sale of blood for profit.

Residential care

According to a 2015 report by the BC Seniors Advocate, the vast majority of publicly-funded residential care facilities – 232 of 292 – fail to meet the government’s minimum guidelines for staffing.

Private residential care facilities say they are reducing staff because chronic government underfunding threatens their profits.

The resolution adopted by delegates says seniors deserve quality care in a safe and stable environment where they are treated with dignity and respect.

Delegates resolved to work with BC FORUM allies to:

- Ensure that minimum staffing guidelines for seniors in residential care are followed,
- Protest staff layoffs and oppose privatization of residential care facilities, and
- Work for an expanded public health care system, including additional public residential care facilities.

Postal services

Delegates endorsed the Canadian Union of Postal Workers’ “Delivering Community Power” initiative.



BC FORUM Vice President John Savage served as chair of the Resolutions Committee and presented five resolutions for debate. The full text of the resolutions adopted by delegates is available online at bcforum.ca.

This proposal includes postal banking services in underserved communities, converting the postal fleet to run on renewable energy, electric charge stations at post offices, and expanded door-to-door mail delivery.

Disability benefits

Delegates demanded that the provincial government reinstate the transit subsidy for persons with disabilities, and implement an annual cost of living increase in disability assistance payments.

The resolution noted that disability benefits, frozen since 2007, were recently increased to \$982 a month (compared to \$1,580 in Alberta), far short of the poverty line. The BC Liberals clawed back most of the \$77 increase by eliminating transit subsidies.

Childcare

“I don’t want to let my kids down, but one day I won’t be able to do it any more,” said one delegate, echoing the concerns of many seniors who are looking after grandchildren while their children work due to a lack of affordable childcare.

BC FORUM was instructed to seize any opportunity to endorse and support initiatives to achieve acceptable, accessible, affordable, and public not-for-profit childcare for Canadian children.

Sale of blood for profit

Citing both safety and ethical concerns, delegates called on the BC government to ban all paid-blood donations in BC. They also urged the federal government to legislate a national ban on the purchase of blood donations by corporations.

Horgan says BC NDP will raise minimum wage to \$15

BC NDP Leader John Horgan says an NDP government would get to a \$15 per hour minimum wage in its first term.

He made the announcement in Kamloops in front of a gathering of 450 committed campaigners eager to defeat the BC Liberals.

“It’s not good enough that people are working full time or more just to keep their heads above water.

“It’s not good enough that this generation will actually be worse off than their parents when it comes to affordability and opportunity,” Horgan said.

“Christy Clark was elected on her promise to put BC families first, but in fact people have never been her priority. She is focused on the needs of her wealthy and well-connected supporters at the expense of the rest of us,” Horgan said.

“Christy Clark has chosen to keep BC’s minimum wage one of the lowest in Canada.

“Minimum wage is no longer something earned just by teenagers in their first jobs. Students, parents, seniors, new Canadians in every part of the economy are paid minimum wage,” Horgan said.

“The premier, who takes \$50,000 a year in a private top-up to her nearly \$200,000 public salary, thinks \$10.45 an hour is enough for people to get by on. I disagree.

“I will give British Columbians a raise. The minimum wage needs to be \$15 an hour, and New Democrats are going to get it there,” Horgan said.



BC NDP Leader John Horgan

BC Fed welcomes NDP pledge

British Columbia is one step closer to ending poverty wages

THE BC Federation of Labour is applauding John Horgan and the BC NDP for committing to bring the minimum wage up to \$15 an hour.

“British Columbians are struggling to make ends meet with the ever increasing cost of living and skyrocketing user fees,” said Irene Lanzinger, president of the BC Federation of Labour.

“Christy Clark is well-aware that people working full-time in this province and earning the minimum wage are living thousands of dollars below the poverty line, but she just

doesn’t care.”

“We welcome the announcement from the BC NDP. John Horgan gets it – he understands that when you give low-wage workers a fair wage, you are also supporting families, communities and the local economy.

“This is exactly the kind of plan we have been asking Christy Clark to implement for close to two years now,” said Lanzinger. “But despite strong public support, she has ignored the problem of growing poverty and inequality in BC.”

In a recent poll, 76 percent of British Columbians said they supported a \$15 an hour minimum wage, and 83 percent said that a person working full-time should not be living below the poverty line.

There are over 100,000 people earning minimum wage (\$10.45 an hour) in BC, and nearly half-a-million earning less than \$15 an hour.

“Today, low-wage workers are one step closer to being lifted out of poverty. That is something to applaud,” said Lanzinger.

An important step, says BC FORUM

INCREASING THE minimum wage will improve the lives of thousands of families, says BC FORUM.

“It is false to suggest, as the BC Liberals do, that the minimum wage only affects young people who are starting out,” says Diane Wood, President.

“With inadequate pensions, many seniors are working minimum wage jobs to try to make ends meet.

“Many more seniors still have adult children living at home because they also are struggling in low-wage jobs. John Horgan’s plan will help these families get ahead,” she said.

Christy Clark puts fundraising chief first

“British Columbians need a government that puts them before political fundraising, not after”

NEW DEMOCRATS are demanding answers from Premier Christy Clark about why her chief B.C. Liberal Party fundraiser had details about the new tax on foreign real estate buyers weeks before other British Columbians.

“Premier Clark put the interests of one of her biggest donors and the head of her fundraising efforts for the B.C. Liberal Party ahead of the interests of all British Columbians struggling to afford real estate, and ahead of other real estate businesses in the province. It’s appalling,” said David Eby, New Democrat spokesperson for housing.

Eby has written to Premier Clark demanding answers about how and why Bob Rennie had insider information about the new tax weeks before British Columbians were told about it on July 25.

“British Columbians struggling to buy or rent a home deserve answers. Other real estate professionals dealing with this sudden change deserve answers.

“When did Mr. Rennie know about the new tax exactly? Who told him? And why? Was it in relation to his role as a major fundraiser for the B.C. Liberal party, or his role as a major real estate developer, or both?”

British Columbians learned about the new foreign national buyer tax on July 25, but according to the *Globe and Mail*, Bob Rennie learned

about it “about three weeks ago.”

“There’s an affordability crisis in Metro Vancouver that is spreading across the province. British Columbians need a government that puts them before their political party’s fundraising efforts, not after,” said Eby.

Christy Clark backtracks on climate change

TAKING MEANINGFUL action on climate change to protect British Columbia’s environment and the economy from its effects doesn’t matter to Christy Clark, says New Democrat environment spokesperson George Heyman.

“She has announced a plan that will do less, more slowly than British Columbia’s formerly world-leading strategy,” said Heyman, “Christy Clark went to the Paris climate change negotiations with a personal videographer but as soon as the photo opportunity passed, so did her interest.”

“The premier set up a very promising Climate Leadership Team, staffed with serious people who made serious recommendations on how she could get back on track, then ignored all of their most important recommendations. This is not climate leadership. This is stalling on taking real action against climate change.”

Heyman pointed out that the government has missed two emissions reduction targets already, and emissions have actually risen since Clark became premier. Christy Clark’s updated plan announced removes all targets for the next 34 years.

“The updated plan replaces targets with vague positive-sounding language. It asks British Columbians

to trust this premier who has already failed to meet her own goals. It does little but pay lip service to the important recommendations made by her personally appointed climate experts. It is a cop-out,” said Heyman.

“With this plan, released on a Friday in the middle of summer on one of the hottest days of one of the hottest years on record, Christy Clark has abandoned British Columbia’s position as a climate leader,” said Heyman.

Heyman noted that he and New Democrat Leader John Horgan met with members of the Climate Leadership Team. They were impressed with their thoughtful and balanced approach to both the economic and environmental issues involved in a climate change plan, and said New Democrats will release a real plan to address climate change before the provincial election.

More massive Hydro hikes predicted

FAMILIES WILL face massive hydro rate hikes after the Christy Clark government secretly added more than \$1 billion to BC Hydro’s debt last year.

“Just after the last election, Premier Christy Clark surprised families across B.C. with a staggering 28 per cent hydro rate hike,” said New Democrat Leader John Horgan.

“By missing their debt reduction plan by more than \$1 billion, BC Hydro and the Christy Clark government could saddle ratepayers with another \$500 hike each right after the next election.”

According to BC Hydro’s latest annual report, the crown corporation was \$1.1 billion off target for a major debt, primarily due to a huge overestimation of domestic revenue for power.

BC FORUM stands in solidarity with postal workers

IN PROTRACTED negotiations with the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW), Canada Post has handed its employees the same menu it has offered its customers – a steady diet of takeaways.

Packed with appointees of the former Harper government, Canada Post cut home delivery and dramatically increased the price charged to customers for less service.

In talks with its own employees it steadfastly refused to recognize the need for pay equity for rural postal workers, most of whom are women, and proposed significant cuts in pension coverage.

In July, shortly after the government pressured Canada Post to rescind lockout notice, BC FORUM made its position clear in a letter to Deepak Chopra, President and Chief Executive Officer of Canada Post.

“BC FORUM is so disappointed that Canada Post is attempting to change current and future Canada Post workers to a Defined Contribution pension plan. We are urging you in the strongest possible of terms, to take immediate steps to ensure that all CUPW members are in a Defined Benefit pension plan and to immediately drop any demand to place current or future Canada Post employees in a Defined Contribution pension plan,” wrote Diane Wood, President.

In addition, she said, “BC FORUM is a strong advocate of pay equity as we believe this is fair and just. In addition, BC FORUM recognizes that paying women workers less, means that these women will have less money and a less secure retirement.

“BC FORUM is therefore asking you in the strongest possible terms

to ensure that Rural and Suburban Mail Carriers achieve pay and benefit equity with letter carriers.”

BC FORUM also strongly sup-

ported postal banking, especially in areas that are underserved, and maintaining at least the current number of retail outlets.

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More rights for corporations at the expense of everyone else

By Hassan Yussuff, President,
Canadian Labour Congress

THE TRANS-PACIFIC Partnership Agreement (TPP) negotiated under the previous administration is a deeply flawed agreement. Our view is the costs of the TPP outweigh the limited benefits that *might* arise from the deal.

A key study from Tufts University predicts workers in all 12 TPP countries would lose out because the TPP would increase income inequality.

This flawed agreement is about protecting multinational corporations' rights.

It does nothing to help workers or the environment.

Automotive sector

The automotive sector is centrally important to Canada's research and development, high value-added production and manufacturing exports.

In 2014, approximately 40,000 Canadians worked in motor vehicle manufacturing. And another 70,000 in parts manufacturing.

A five-year phase-out of tariffs on Canadian imports of Japanese vehicles will quickly eliminate the incentive to manufacture in Canada.

Unifor has estimated the TPP could lead to the loss of 20,000 jobs in the auto sector alone.

The dairy sector

The Canadian dairy sector provides high-quality, locally-produced food while supporting small family farms and rural communities.

Under the TPP agreement, foreign dairy producers will be able to access an additional 3.25% of Canada's 2016 dairy milk production.

This comes at a time when the dairy industry is already under con-

siderable stress... 250 million litres of milk and subsequent production jobs are at risk annually.

Labour Mobility

The TPP makes unprecedented changes to Canada's policy for the use of temporary workers.

Under the TPP there is no limit to the number of temporary workers from TPP nations that can get temporary work permits, and no ability to set economic needs tests for specific sectors.

There are currently no mechanisms to enforce fair wages and labour rights for temporary migrant workers in Canada.

This change to labour mobility policy will immediately impact workers in the Building Trades.

Dispute Settlement

We have many concerns with the model of Investor State Dispute Settlement (ISDS).

By now, the problems with this model of dispute settlement are well-known: the unaccountable and ad hoc nature of the arbitral panels; their expansive definition of what constitutes an investment; the fact they do not operate in subsidiarity to national court systems, but above them; and the apparent lack of deference to the prerogatives of governments, or even to national jurisprudence on any given issue.

Public Services

The TPP chapter on public services locks in the current level of privatization with so-called 'ratchet' and 'standstill' clauses.

This makes it more difficult for governments to introduce new public services, such as pharmacare or

childcare, without subjecting themselves to an ISDS claim.

Canada already has the second highest per capita drug costs in the world. The TPP will further constrain efforts to reform prescription drug purchasing and provision in Canada.

Environment

The TPP also contains broad prohibitions on economic or environmental performance requirements such as requiring technology transfer or local sourcing to foster green industry.

Such restrictions will serve as a "chill" on governments contemplating steps required to make the transition toward a low-carbon and climate-resilient economy.

It is time to come back to more reasonable forms of investor protection.

These protections which should be subsidiary to national judicial processes, privilege state-to-state settlements, and emphasize investors' responsibilities just as much as the protection of their assets.

Conclusion

We have called on the federal government to conduct its own impact analysis of the TPP and to make this analysis public.

Given the high economic and political stakes, Canadians deserve no less than a full and substantive discussion on the potential consequences of this draft agreement.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Edited from a presentation by the Canadian Labour Congress to the House of Commons Standing Committee on International Trade. The full text is available online at canadianlabour.ca

National Pharmacare is long overdue

BC FORUM and allies in the labour movement and seniors groups are hopeful that the decades-long push for a national Pharmacare program may finally be nearing a successful conclusion.

“The devil is in the details as to what form it will take, but I truly believe it’s going to happen,” says Diane Wood, President of BC FORUM.

Wood, Lorraine Logan, President of the Council of Senior Citizens Organizations of BC (COSCO), and BC FORUM board member Barb Mikulec recently met with Don Davies, NDP MP and Co-Chair of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Health to emphasize the immediate need for action on Pharmacare.

BC FORUM has been monitoring the committee’s deliberations, as well as other political developments.

“Support for Pharmacare is growing significantly,” said Wood.

“Nine in ten Canadians support a national program. More and more provinces are coming on board, as are health care professionals. The Canadian Medical Association called for national Pharmacare at its AGM last year. Nurses have fought for it for years and years. The labour movement is solidly in support. Large corporations and the BC Chamber of Commerce now say yes. And the last federal Liberal convention did likewise,” said Wood.

“With so many influential groups and decision-makers catching up with public opinion on this urgent issue, I’m optimistic that Pharmacare will finally happen.”



Diane Wood, President of BC FORUM, Lorraine Logan, President of COSCO, and Barb Mikulec, BC FORUM board member, presented the compelling case for a national Pharmacare program during a recent meeting with Don Davies, Co-Chair of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Health.

Quick facts about the need for national Pharmacare

THE CASE for Pharmacare is currently being studied by the House of Commons Standing Committee on health. Pharmacare is also a key component of negotiations towards a new federal-provincial Health Accord. The evidence in favour of a national Pharmacare program is overwhelming:

- Canada is the only country in the world that has excluded prescription drugs from its public health care system. Universal public drug coverage is the rule among OECD nations.
- Canada has the second lowest percentage of the people covered by a public drug insurance plan in all OECD countries, after the US.
- We have the second highest expenditure per capita on pharmaceuticals.
- Prescription drug costs are growing faster in Canada than any other developed nation, including the US.
- If Canada paid the same official price for prescriptions as the OECD median, Canadians would save about 25 percent on patented drugs.

Prescription drugs are an essential part of quality public health care – and patients who can’t afford to fill prescriptions frequently end up making hospital visits that could have been avoided.

BC FORUM Board elects new treasurer

DAN BRADFORD, who represents the BC Government and Service Employees Union on the BC FORUM Board of Directors, has been acclaimed to the executive position of Treasurer.



Dan Bradford

Gord Westrand, who decided to step down as treasurer, will remain active on the volunteer Board representing the International Longshore and Warehouse Union.

A call to action on poverty

OVER 160 groups throughout the province – including BC FORUM – have signed an open letter calling on the provincial government to *Raise the Rates* and *Leave our Bus Pass Alone*.

The BC Poverty Reduction Coalition calls it “an incredible show of

solidarity and commitment to addressing poverty for some of BC’s most vulnerable citizens.”

The groups call on the provincial government to:

- Bring back the \$45 per year bus pass for people with disabilities;
- Eliminate the new \$52/month bus pass fee;
- Allow everyone receiving Person With Disability benefits to keep the \$77 a month increase;
- Bring back the Special Transportation Subsidy, and introduce a rural transportation subsidy for those living outside the areas where the Bus Pass Program and Special Transportation Subsidy operate; and
- Raise income and disability assistance significantly by October 1, 2016 to reflect the cost of living, and then index to inflation.

New regional rep appointed

RAYMOND RAJ was recently appointed as a BC FORUM Regional Representative and Delegate to the



Raymond Raj

Kitimat, Terrace & District Labour Council.

Ray is also Chairperson, Unifor Local 2301 Retired Workers Chapter, Kitimat, and a former President of the Kitimat, Terrace & District Labour Council.

Ray joined with other BC FORUM activists at the Fight for \$15 National Day of Action Rally in Vancouver where the accompanying photo was taken.

Young Canadians need more opportunities

THE CANADIAN Labour Congress is asking the federal government and employers to invest more in job training and employment opportunities to help young Canadians break away from the ongoing cycle of precarious work and unemployment.

“Young workers are dealing with exceptionally high rates of unemployment or underemployment, and have been for many years.

“They are also carrying unbelievably high levels of student debt; the average student graduates owing over \$25,000.

“We are not setting young people up for success,” said CLC president Hassan Yussuff.

“This perfectly demonstrates the importance of a national jobs strategy, a \$15 minimum wage and the expansion of the CPP.

“Young workers will benefit from these measures,” Yussuff said.

Diving without a parachute, released in August by the CLC, breaks down some of the challenges and opportunities facing young workers in Canada.

The report also celebrates millennials as one of the most civic-minded and activist generations in history, and shows that union density among young workers is on the rise.

Strengthening BC FORUM has never been more important

Please encourage your friends to join our team

THROUGH OUR UNIONS, before we retired, we've all seen the benefits of collective action. Our voices are strongest when we stand together in solidarity.

That's where BC FORUM comes in. We are the only provincial organization that represents union members who have retired or are nearing retirement. We are an integral part of the labour movement, with formal representation in leadership bodies, and maintain strong links with provincial and national seniors' groups.

Together, we can make a difference for ourselves and our families. Please encourage friends, colleagues and family members to join us using the form below, or on-line at www.bcforum.ca.

Renew your membership – and sign up a friend

PLEASE HAVE A LOOK at the mailing label on this edition of *The Advocate* to check whether your membership is now due for renewal. If your membership is about to expire, you can renew by mailing the coupon below to BC FORUM, #200 - 5118 Joyce St., Vancouver, B.C. V5R 4H1.

You can also renew your membership on-line at www.bcforum.ca.

We also ask for your help in reaching out to people who are nearing retirement or have already retired. Like all membership-based organizations, we are all stronger when as many people as possible work together.

Remember that BC FORUM actively welcomes workers who are 50 and older, so don't be shy about encouraging your friends and family members to join us, even if they are still in the workforce.

Solidarity makes us strong.



BC FORUM has always provided free \$2,500 Accidental Death and Dismemberment insurance coverage to members.

We are proud to now extend this coverage to members' spouses at the low cost of \$5 per year. All you have to do is check the appropriate box when you apply or renew your membership. BC FORUM's AD&D coverage is valid until you reach age 86, the maximum age we were able to negotiate.



Please check your expiry date on the mailing label. BCGEU, HSA, MoveUp, CEU, CUPE 386, UFCW, Heat and Frost, UNIFOR 2301 and LiUNA 1611 pay first year dues for qualified members.



B.C. Federation of Retired Union Members • #200 - 5118 Joyce St., Vancouver, V5R 4H1
604 688-4565 • 1 800 896-5678 • Fax: 604 430-5917 • bcforum@bcfed.ca • www.bcforum.ca

Membership: Application Renewal New address

Name: _____
LAST FIRST INITIAL

Address: _____
STREET ADDRESS CITY POSTAL CODE

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

Union: _____ Date of birth:* _____
DAY MONTH YEAR

Spouse's name: _____ Spouse's birth date:* _____
DAY MONTH YEAR

\$20 - 1 year \$49 - 3 years (free \$2,500 AD&D for member)

\$25 - 1 year \$64 - 3 years (adds \$2,500 AD&D for spouse)

Payment: Cheque Visa MC Expiry: ____ / ____

Card number: _____

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SIGNATURE

Date of application: _____
DAY MONTH YEAR

* Required for AD&D group insurance coverage to age 86.

MSP fees must be eliminated

Replacing regressive Medical Services Plan premiums with fair taxes would mean savings for most

THE MAJORITY of British Columbians would come out ahead under a plan to scrap MSP and replace the \$2.5 billion in public revenues it currently brings in with fair taxes scaled to income.

Iglika Ivanova, a Senior Economist with Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, crunched the numbers on two options for getting rid of the unpopular head tax.

One calls for small increases to existing provincial income tax rates, along with new brackets at the top end of the income ladder. The second option combines small income tax increases with a new business tax, roughly in proportion to the share of MSP currently paid by individuals and employers.

Most households would see net savings under both scenarios, but Ivanova recommends moving ahead with the combined personal and business tax option.

Under this plan:

- A family of four with household income of \$60,000 would save \$1,725 each year.
- A family of four with income of \$90,000 would save \$1,450.
- An individual with income of \$80,000 would save \$263.
- Families currently receiving MSP premium assistance would see modest savings or be unaffected by the change (since they already pay reduced MSP or no MSP).
- Only the top 6% of families would pay more in net taxes.

All businesses would pay a per-

centage of gross wages and salaries, with lower rates for smaller businesses.

The rate would depend on how the tax is structured but should be set to raise about \$1.1 billion in 2017, or 40 percent of total MSP revenues. This is the approximate share currently contributed by those employers who cover MSP for their employees.

“Businesses already pay a significant portion of MSP,” says Ivanova.

“Our plan would share costs more fairly, resulting in net savings for the ‘good’ employers who now cover MSP for their staff and forcing those who are currently free riding to pay their share.”

“MSP is an unfair and unnecessary tax,” says Ivanova. “A two-parent family with \$40,000 income currently pays \$1,800 per year – the same as a family making \$400,000. The amount is inconsequential for well-off families but takes a significant bite out of the family budget for those with modest resources.”

“BC is the only province left in Canada to charge a head tax like MSP,” says Ivanova. “It’s time to eliminate MSP and replace it with fair taxes.”



Iglika Ivanova

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 or e-mail: 1.800.896.5678 (toll free), 604.688.4565, bcforum@bcfed.ca



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