

Advocate

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



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CAMPAIGN FOR PHARMACARE

What good is “free” health care if you *can't* afford the treatment?

We need a public national drug plan

TWO ROYAL Commissions – in 1964 and 2002 – and countless studies have recommended that prescription drugs be covered under Medicare.

It just makes sense. A ‘free’ visit to a doctor or hospital is of no value if the patient can’t afford the prescribed cure of treatment.

“All of us must communicate on this,” said Diane Wood, President of BC FORUM.

“Over and above meeting with our MPs and MLAs, Canadians need to join the discussion and give the government the full picture in the consultation that’s now underway,” she said.

Online consultation

YOU CAN participate by making a written submission or completing the Advisory Council on Pharmacare’s questionnaire at www.letstalkhealth.ca/pharmacare. Do it today. The deadline is Sept. 28.

Labour speaks out

THE CANADIAN Labour Congress and the BC Federation of Labour have both campaigned for a universal,



Representatives of BC FORUM and the Council of Senior Citizens’ Organizations – including BC FORUM President Diane Wood (left) and Chair Irene Lanzinger (right) – were among the early arrivals at a community consultation with the federal Advisory Council on Pharmacare, held Aug. 15 in Vancouver.

single-payer pharmacare plan.

“With millions of Canadians unable to afford to pay for vital prescription drugs to keep them alive and healthy, it’s time for concerted national action through the cooperation of all federal, provincial and territorial governments to address a growing crisis,” said Irene Lanzinger, Chair of BC FORUM and President of the BCFED.

“Canada is the only developed country in the world with a universal health care program that doesn’t include universal prescription drug coverage,” she said. “And everyone

here knows someone who isn’t able to afford to take their medication as prescribed.

“The facts are clear about the magnitude of the problem,” said Lanzinger. “About one out of three working British Columbians—close to 800,000 people—lack employer-funded prescription drug coverage.

“BC also has the highest percentage of precarious, low-paying part-time workers of the major provinces. The inequality gap here between the rich and the poor is staggering, and it puts the high cost of many prescription

Please see “Our drug costs...” Page 4

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Advocate

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Remembering the lessons of the past as we fight for a better future

ON A nice sunny day 35 years ago, John Shields and I, both vice presidents of the BCGEU, were among 1,600 members of the union targeted by the provincial government to be fired without cause.

It was an awful feeling. But giving public sector employers the unfettered right to fire anyone at all was only one small part of Premier Bill Bennett's assault on unions, basic human rights and public services.

Labour fought back through Operation Solidarity. Civic society fought back through the Solidarity Coalition, with 65 Solidarity committees at the regional and local levels.

"It was the broadest social movement, not just the largest, but also the broadest that the province has ever known," said Father Jim Roberts, one of the co-chairs of the Coalition.

As outlined on page 10 in this issue, those remarkable weeks and months in 1983 are being highlighted in a special Solidarity 35 project launched by the BC Labour Heritage Centre.

Three tasks ahead

I KNOW many members of BC FORUM were active participants and will remember what we achieved, as well as areas where we fell short of our goals. I also know that we will never walk away from the continuing struggle for a more civil society, and that standing together in solidarity is the way we will succeed.

In the next little while, there are at least three areas where each and every member of BC FORUM can have a

significant impact: the decades long fight for Pharmacare, local elections, and proportional representation.

Pharmacare

THIS MAY be our moment on Pharmacare – provided we keep up the pressure on the federal government and persuade it to do the right thing.

BC FORUM participated in the community consultation in Vancouver, but I encourage you to make your views known. You can complete the federal Advisory Council on Pharmacare's questionnaire at www.letstalkhealth.ca/pharmacare. The deadline is Sept. 28 so do it today.

Local elections

LOCAL ELECTIONS really help define the character of our communities. Civic governments make the decisions on everything from garbage collection to what development can take place on your street. School boards make decisions that affect the education of our children and grandchildren.

I urge you to help elect candidates who will put the needs of people ahead of the greed of developers and speculators.

Make every vote count

FINALLY, FOR a positive improvement in the way we govern ourselves, I urge you to vote "Yes" for proportional representation in the referendum that will be conducted by



Diane Wood

mail this fall. As the BC CCPA has pointed out (see page 11), when every vote counts, every voter counts.

With proportional representation, parties can no longer pander to their 40 percent core vote – like Trump does every day – and win 100 percent of the power of government.

Politicians would have to work together to pass legislation. Public policy would evolve with consideration and compromise, not swing wildly back and forth whenever a new government is elected.

First past the post is the antiquated darling of a privileged few. Most democracies in the world have scrapped it to make every vote count. We should do the same.

Our drug costs are the second highest in the world

Continued from page 1

drugs beyond the financial reach of hundreds of thousands more workers.”

Lanzinger said the BC labour movement believes one option stands out as the best path for change.

“A single-payer, universal prescription drug plan would ensure that no matter where Canadians live and work, everyone with a health card would have coverage for their prescription medications” she said.

CLC PRESIDENT Hassan Yussuff said “Canada’s unions are ready and willing to work with the advisory council to make sure that we get pharmacare right for everyone.

“Pharmacare is the unfinished business of medicare and Canadians have been waiting since 1966 for publicly administered universal prescription drug coverage,” said Yussuff.

“As I travelled the country, I heard from Canadians who are struggling with insufficient coverage, increasing co-payments, restrictions and limitations that make every day a struggle. We hope this council will give voice to those people and inspire confidence that the health of their families will no longer be a financial burden.”

In fall 2017, the CLC launched “Pharmacare: A Plan for Everyone”, a national campaign that included a cross-country tour to highlight the failures of Canada’s inefficient patchwork system of prescription drug coverage. Studies show that 3.5 million people are unable to afford to fill their prescriptions. Many are splitting their pills or skipping days to stretch the prescriptions they do fill.

THE CANADIAN Health Coalition says a national drug plan should cover everyone equally. “Right now

there are 113,000 private plans and 70 public plans that cover people differently, depending where they work and where they live,” says the Coalition.

That’s one of the reasons why drug prices in Canada – already the second highest in the world – are the fastest growing health care cost.

STEVE MORGAN, a UBC professor who specializes in drug policy says Canada’s multi-payer system leads to a fragmentation of our purchasing power.

He said the best solution is a national pharmacare program that would determine what treatments are covered and at what price, which would allow for tougher negotiations with global drug companies.

“That drug plan suddenly becomes one of the biggest purchasers of medicine in the world and it begins to exercise a power with manufacturers that we don’t have in Canada,” he said.

THE BC Health Coalition says “medicine is health care.” However, one study reported that 29 percent of British Columbians – the highest level in Canada – said they or someone



Community consultation on pharmacare photos by Carlos Carvalho

else in their household hadn’t taken medication as prescribed because they couldn’t afford to.

For the health of all Canadians that must change. National pharmacare is in everyone’s best interests, both socially and financially.

Estimates show we could save anywhere from \$4 billion to \$11 billion a year through a universal drug plan.

“That’s billions of dollars that could be used to provide Canadians with medicines and better health care if we go with a universal drug plan,” says the BC Health Coalition.

WE NEED MORE RAGING GRANNIES

After more than 30 years, the Vancouver Raging Grannies are eager to pass the torch to younger ‘Grannies’ to continue the fight for social justice.

Contact Robyn Smith 604 922-4714.

Why Canada needs a single-payer, universal prescription drug program

By Hassan Yussuff
President,
Canadian Labour Congress

PATRICIA IS a 61-year-old woman who takes medication for some fairly common health issues including arthritis, high cholesterol, a thyroid condition and chronic pain management. She retired three years ago after a 35-year career in a unionized job with prescription drug coverage.

In retirement, Patricia's drug coverage has a cap of \$2,000 per year, so her coverage maxes out just before Thanksgiving. Since she is not yet a senior, she isn't eligible for government assistance. Patricia spends the remainder of each year juggling prescriptions and deciding which ailment to treat and which to "endure".

Rod pays over \$100 out of pocket every month for his asthma inhalers and has done so for his entire adult life. If Rod can't afford to use his inhalers as prescribed, he could wind up in hospital, at far greater expense to our health care system.

I've heard hundreds of stories like Patricia and Rod's. They are among the millions of people in Canada who are falling through the cracks of the current patchwork system of private prescription coverage with only limited public support.

THE LACK of universal pharmacare in Canada can impact anyone and it's most likely to affect us in our most desperate time of need.

Here in British Columbia, individuals and families receive income-based coverage under the Fair Pharmacare Plan. Deductibles and maximums are based on household annual income. Once the deductible amount has been reached, the

province's pharmacare plan contributes to any additional eligible costs for the rest of the year.

Earlier this year, people from every corner of Canada showed up at town hall meetings on pharmacare hosted by the Canadian Labour Congress, to share personal struggles about paying for medication. They were angry and discouraged. Their stories often left us in tears.

WHY SHOULD YOU or someone you love be forced to skip doses, go into debt, or jeopardize their health because their prescriptions are too costly?

Failure to take medication as prescribed can greatly reduce health outcomes and put lives at risk. It also adds strain and cost to a health care system that is already overburdened. Canada's current patchwork system means different coverage in every province and territory, while everyone overpays for their prescriptions and pharmaceutical companies make a killing. Private insurance companies benefit by charging employers, unions and employees to administer private drug insurance plans.

Canada is the only developed country in the world with a universal health care program that doesn't include universal drug coverage. It just doesn't make sense.

Imagine how much more efficient health care could be if people had coverage for the medications they need. Common conditions like asthma could be better controlled, and people with chronic and complicated conditions wouldn't be financially burdened. They would have fewer visits to emergency rooms and doctors' offices, and they would never have to choose between taking medication and buying groceries. Quality of life would increase

significantly.

Earlier this year, the federal government took an important step forward with the creation of the Advisory Council on the Implementation of National Pharmacare.

Shortly after, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Health recommended a single-payer, universal prescription drug program for Canada.

In response, the pharmaceutical and insurance companies — who together make billions from our inefficient system — began aggressively campaigning against a universal pharmacare plan that allows the government to drive down costs through bulk-buying.

They want the government to simply "fill in the gaps" for people without coverage. But this will ignore all those who are being charged copayments and deductibles, and those whose plan restrictions and limitations are failing them. Most of all, this approach ignores the incredibly inflated prices we all pay for prescription medication.

THIS IS our moment. We have an opportunity to shape the pharmacare we want for Canada. Universal pharmacare would mean that everyone with a health card in Canada would have coverage for the prescriptions they need and a single-payer system would deliver big savings.

It is up to each of us to let our provincial and federal members of parliament know that band-aid solutions won't work on a broken system. Public opinion overwhelmingly supports universal pharmacare, so let's get it right.

This commentary originally appeared in the Vancouver Sun.

From buses to HandyDART, something needs to be done

IN THE wake of Greyhound's decision to stop bus service in many areas, BC FORUM has called on the federal government to take action to close this "massive gap" in transit services.

"Many communities and especially retirees will be stranded," said Diane Wood, President of BC FORUM.

"Those who rely on bus services as their sole means of transportation will be cut off from employment, education, family, health care and other critical public services.

"It's also a grave risk to public safety. People will be forced to turn to less safe modes of transportation. You only have to look to the Highway of Tears to realize the horrific effects," she said.

A resolution sent to the Congress of Union Retirees of Canada and the National Pensioners Federation conventions by BC FORUM calls on Ottawa "to ensure communities across Canada have access to basic transportation services and immediately act to develop a federal funding plan that will stop the cancellation of several crucial bus routes in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, Northwestern Ontario and rural British Columbia."

New services needed

EARLIER THIS year, Seniors Advocate Isobel Mackenzie recommended new programs and service improvements to meet the transportation challenges facing seniors.

Her report – Seniors Transportation: Affordable, Appropriate and Available – is the result of more than a year of consultation and research.

"At the age of 65 approximately 90 percent of BC seniors have a driver's



licence but this drops to approximately 44 percent by the age of 85," said Mackenzie.

The report said public transportation services support some seniors some of the time, but none can fill all transportation needs for all seniors.

For example, many seniors may have the physical ability to take a bus or use HandyDART, but they have cognitive challenges that require someone to accompany them, or their physical frailty requires someone to assist them.

To fill this gap, Mackenzie recommended a new "Community Drives" program administered under the existing home support program.

Along with helping seniors get bathed, dressed and ensuring they take their medications, the program could easily schedule someone to take a senior to a medical appointment. Using the existing infrastructure of home support would allow the program to get up and running quickly and reduce duplication. A round trip on Translink's HandyDART costs the province about \$80, while an hour of home support can cost less

than \$38.

Mackenzie also called for other improvements:

- A provincial "Seniors Bus Buddies" program to support older seniors who may be trying to navigate the public bus system for the first time in 60 years.
- Expansion of HandyDART to more transit systems – it's currently offered in 25 out of 31 – and an increase in night time and weekend routes, which are currently offered in only a quarter of the systems.
- Tax deductions for fuel and parking to recognize the contribution made by family and friends who drive seniors who are no longer able to drive themselves.

"The biggest thing we need to recognize is that transportation for frail seniors is a complex problem, and solving it will require many different solutions. But if everyone works together with a view of what is going to help seniors the most, we can make improvements," said Mackenzie. Her full report is available at www.seniorsadvocatebc.ca.

Now the truth comes out: BC Liberals really wanted to privatize health care

FORMER BC Premier Gordon Campbell – leader of the government that illegally ripped up the contracts of health care workers and teachers – has made it clear in a sworn affidavit that he really wanted to open the door to American style health care in BC.

Campbell volunteered his BC Supreme Court affidavit in support of the infamous health care privateer Dr. Brian Day. The affidavit confirms that his government passed the Medicare Protection Act (MPA) in 2003 as a ruse designed to mislead voters and the federal government.

“While the government considered formally eliminating the restrictions on access to private health care in the MPA, we did not take steps to do so

because of the possible loss of health transfer payments from the Federal Government,” he swore.

“It was this same concern about the loss of health transfer payments that caused the Government to introduce amendments to the MPA in 2003.”

However, his government did not proclaim the legislation and “continued to be pressured by the Federal Government to make changes or lose health transfer payments.”

In a final effort “to satisfy the concerns of the Federal Government” that BC was violating the Canada Health Act, the Campbell government proclaimed amendments which empowered the Medical Services Commission to audit private clinics

and to obtain an injunction.

Notably, neither his government nor that of Christy Clark ever proclaimed the section on financial penalties to enforce the act.

And unsurprisingly, Ottawa was not fooled. After an audit of private for-profit clinics, the federal government imposed a fine of \$16 million on BC.

B.C. Health Coalition co-chair Edith MacHattie says both Campbell and Day are “defending the inexcusable: breaking a law to make money and painting it like they’re concerned about choice.”

Day is in court trying to avoid fines now that the Horgan government has proclaimed the sections of the act that deal with enforcement.

Steelworkers Organization of Active Retirees

Who we are?

10,000 strong, retired steelworkers and partners, organized in 34 local chapters across Canada.

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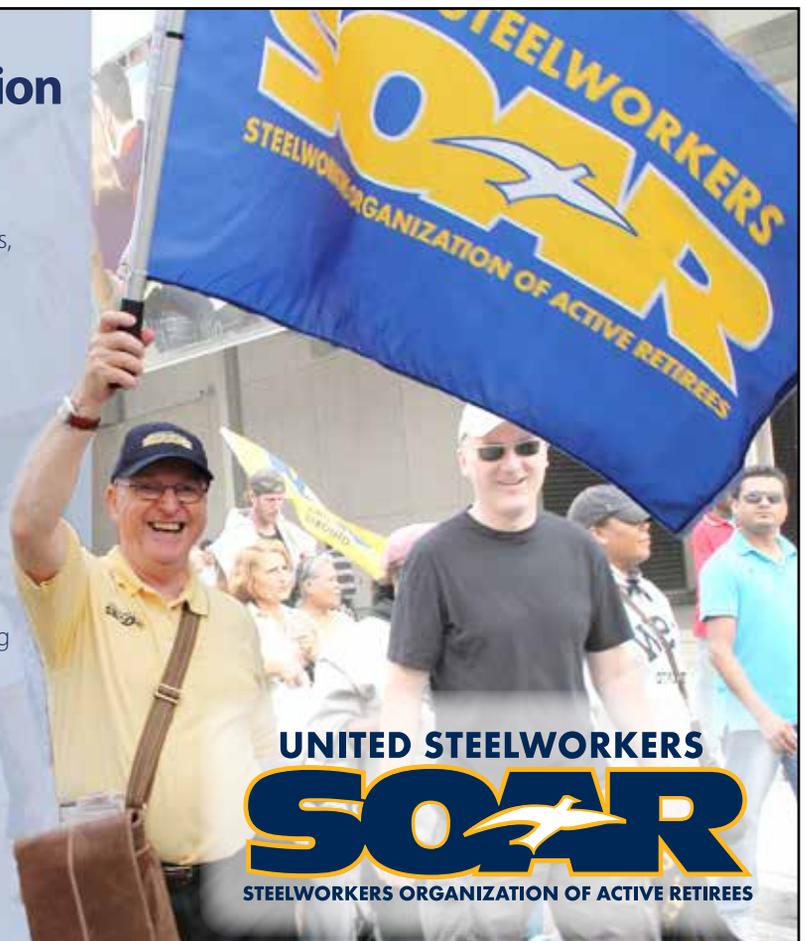
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Contact: Doug Macpherson dmacpherson@usw.ca or Fred Girling fredgirling@shaw.ca
www.usw.ca/soar



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Pensions must be secure

MARION POLLACK, a member of BC FORUM's volunteer board of directors, spoke out on pension issues at a pension town-hall meeting hosted by Vancouver East NDP MP Jenny Kwan in August.

"There was a small but enthusiastic crowd in attendance. They included several people who retired and were worried about the future of their pensions and two people from Catalyst Paper Corporation, which has filed for bankruptcy," said Pollack.

The keynote speaker was Hamilton Mountain MP Scott Duvall, the NDP pension critic who has introduced a private member's bill to end what he calls pension theft.

After introductions by Kwan, Pollack was the first speaker.

She gave an overview of BC FORUM and affirmed that we support Duvall's private member's bill.

"Many seniors are very worried about the future of their pensions. Pensions are our deferred wages," said Pollack.

"Another distressing pension issue is BILL C-27, which aims at changing defined benefit pensions into less secure target benefit pensions.

"This allows employers to go to current and retired workers one by one to try and convince them to give up their defined benefit pension," she said.

Duvall said it's a serious problem that pension obligations are at the very bottom, along with unsecured creditors, when a company goes bankrupt.

He discussed the Sears bankruptcy, and the major problems with pensions for Sears employees, pointing out that some Board members are still getting a large sum of money monthly for doing nothing, while



Marion Pollack of BC FORUM addressed a pension townhall sponsored by Vancouver East MP Jenny Kwan. NDP pension critic Scott Duvall was the featured speaker.

pensioners get little if anything.

The Liberals have repeatedly promised consultation on the issue of pensions and bankruptcy, but it has not happened, he said.

Jenny Kwan urged everyone who is concerned about protecting their pensions and retirement security to write the government, and to be sure to copy their MP.

Horgan government boosts rent assistance for seniors

THE PROVINCIAL government has increased benefits under the Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters (SAFER) program. The increase is part of the government's 30-point housing plan which is investing \$7 billion in affordable housing initiatives over ten years.

Support for low-income families under the Rental Assistance Program was also increased effective Sept. 1.

"Too many people aren't able to enjoy the peace of mind that comes with having secure rental housing," said Selina Robinson, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

"They worry each month about how to pay their rent, feed their families and meet their needs. With this change, we are making housing more affordable for low-income families and seniors in communities throughout the province."

The average monthly payment for SAFER recipients will increase by approximately \$78, or 42 percent, from \$187 to \$265.

The average monthly subsidy for Rental Assistance Program recipients increased by approximately \$67, or 17 percent, from \$405 to \$472.

Understanding water coverage insurance

If the worst happens will you be covered or will you be all wet?

**By Sherry Patterson
Working Ventures
Insurance Solutions**

TALK TO your insurance representative to make sure you have appropriate coverage.

As outlined by the Insurance Bureau of Canada, you need to be aware that:

- Damage to your home caused by the sudden and accidental bursting of plumbing pipes and appliances is usually covered by all home insurance policies.
- Historically in Canada, home insurance policies haven't covered loss or damage caused by overland flood damage, which occurs when bodies of water, such as rivers or dams overflow onto dry land. This has begun to change. Some Canadian insurers have started to offer overland flood coverage for policyholders but this type of coverage is new on the market and not all insurers are offering it. Check with yours to see if it is available and if you qualify for the coverage because if you live in a known flood plain, the coverage may not be available.
- Water damage in a basement that backs up through sewers, floor drains, toilets and showers may be covered if your policy covers sewer back up or you may have purchased the coverage as an optional endorsement. So, speak to your insurance representative to understand what coverage and limits you have.
- Damage to homes caused by hail or wind is usually covered. This includes damage caused by flying debris or falling branches or

trees, or damage caused by water entering through sudden openings caused by wind or hail.

- In certain circumstances, homeowners who must leave their home due to insurable damage are usually entitled to additional

living expenses (ALE). Speak to your insurance representative to understand the coverage you purchased.

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Marking 35 years since the enormous Solidarity movement

THE BC Labour Heritage Centre – fresh from publishing Rod Mickleburgh’s definitive *“On the Line: a history of the British Columbia labour movement”* – is undertaking several projects to ensure we remember and learn from the massive Solidarity movement that swept through our province 35 years ago.

“In 1983, labour and activist organizations across the province, including unions, environmental, religious, social justice and women’s rights groups, came together over the course of several weeks through escalating actions in what would effectively become the largest political protest in BC’s history,” says the Centre.

“This project explores the diverse experiences and recollections of workers involved in this moment in history through archival photos, videos, objects, and oral history interviews, to help us learn from the past and work towards the future.”

Operation Solidarity and the Solidarity Coalition arose in response to a sweeping assault on basic rights and public services by the Social Credit government.

As part of its Solidarity 35 project, the Labour Heritage Centre is sponsoring two public events this fall:

- October 4, “It Seemed Anything Was Possible” Common Cause video (1984) screening and panel discussion, Anvil Centre, New Westminster, 7 pm.
- November 8, “A Time to Act” presentation and panel discussion, Anvil Centre, New Westminster, 7 pm.

The Centre is also preparing an exhibit for the Canadian Museum



Pacific Tribune photo collection, SFU Library

A mass rally in Victoria drew 25,000 people to the Legislature in a dramatic show of opposition to the government’s 26 pieces of legislation stripping away labour rights and cutting social programs.



Pacific Tribune photo collection, SFU Library

50,000 people voiced their anger at the government’s actions in a huge demonstration at Empire Stadium in Vancouver.

of History’s Virtual Museum. This exhibit will document the story of Operation Solidarity and the Solidarity Coalition. Work on the exhibit is expected to be complete by the Fall of next year.



The way we currently elect governments sucks, actually

By Seth Klein and Vyas Saran

OUR CURRENT electoral system is broken. It severely distorts our political choices, prevents us from working together with the long-term in mind, and hands total governing power to politicians who often fail to win even half of our votes.

As well, our votes go to waste far too often, with most of us living in “safe ridings” where the outcome is a foregone conclusion. This means that a large portion of voters are left with a representative who does not share their political values, and thus can’t effectively represent their views or concerns in the Legislature.

It is worth appreciating that our current first-past-the-post (FPTP) electoral system is actually the exception – not the norm – among democratic countries. Most democracies employ some form of pro rep. There are really only four democracies that still use exclusively FPTP: the USA, the UK, India and, of course, Canada. These four countries have also been more apt to elect hard right governments with false majorities that impose radical right-wing agendas.

IF THE promise of our democracy is that our votes count and our politicians rule by our consent, then our existing first-past-the-post (FPTP) electoral system leaves much to be desired. Surely, we can do better.

This is why voting ‘Yes’ to pro rep in the upcoming fall referendum is so crucial. Pro rep helps to solve many of the problems of our current system by making every vote count, tying election outcomes to the popular vote, and giving politicians only the power they deserve.

We deserve a democracy where we vote for the representatives we want, not strategically against those we most dislike.

We deserve to be liberated to vote our values, and feel safe knowing it made a difference. Under pro rep, this will be the new normal.

PRO REP means that your vote always leads to representation in the BC Legislature, regardless of whether your preferred local candidate wins. How? Because as long as your choice is not extremely unpopular (meaning, as long as the party secures at least 5 percent of province-wide support), your vote counts beyond your riding, ensuring a legislature that fairly reflects the diversity of our preferences across BC.

This means that if a party wins 30% of the vote, they get 30% of the seats. It’s that simple.

When every vote matters, our politicians have to pay serious attention to each of our votes if they want to get anything done. Under pro rep, candidates can’t rely on winning a small but consistent fraction of the public’s support; they can’t focus on a minority of voters and comfortably assume this is enough to win majority power. Rather, they have to act in a way that secures majority support. That’s why pro rep means great accountability.

Voter turnout in countries with pro rep is 5 to 7 percent higher than in counties with “winner-takes-all” systems like ours. That is important, because a huge number of people are not voting (and the long-term trends are disturbing), and are thus left unrepresented. And can you blame them? Politicians are endlessly focused on catering to their base or

voters in swing ridings, leaving out huge swaths of our population. And people understandably often feel FPTP wastes their votes. Pro rep means a more healthy and vibrant democracy. That’s worth supporting.

In the end, a move to pro rep means that your vote does what it is supposed to do: it makes a difference in how we’re governed.

THE COMBATIVE nature of pure FPTP politics ends up wasting an immense amount of time and public resources. That’s because of a problem inherent in FPTP known as “policy lurch.” As power and false majorities swing between two parties, each new government spends a chunk of its first years essentially undoing the policies of the previous government, and so on the pendulum goes. This seesaw of single-party majorities leads us nowhere, even if decisions do get made “decisively” each time, as the proponents of the status quo contend.

Pro rep, in contrast, incentivizes parties to make decisions together, gathering the input and expertise of one another to build long-lasting policies that cannot simply be rolled back for partisan purposes, especially when they’re designed with the majority in mind.

THIS is the kind of shift that our province needs. When every vote counts, every voter matters.

British Columbians deserve better than single-party governments ruling by decree and politicians who are too stubborn to work together.

Edited for space from a series of articles published by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives BC office at www.policyalternatives.ca/offices/bc.

Clues about aging healthily

By David Porteous

A NEW study funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research found that more than 90% of participants in the Canadian Longitudinal Study (CLSA) described their health as good, very good or excellent. The numbers are a refreshing counterpoint to all the “grey tsunami” fearmongering we hear all too often.

We tend to lose sight of the fact that, while the population is aging, seniors are healthier than any time in history: 85 is the new 65. Too often we see aging strictly through the lens of decline, loss and illness.

According to the CLSA, 34% of respondents have high blood pressure, 15.9% depression, 15.3% diabetes, 13.2% cancer, 11.8% asthma, 10.9% hypothyroidism, 9% heart disease, 8.5% osteoarthritis, and 5.5% chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. (Interesting. Where do you fit in?) While growing older entails new aches and pains, we forget that most are manageable.



David Porteous

Already a few little clues are emerging about key determinants of health. Among the CLSA participants, 33% have family incomes between \$50,000 and \$100,000, and most of the rest reported that they are managing well financially. It's interesting to note that only 6% of respondents have annual incomes of less than \$20,000.

Not surprising to me, the new report shows that 20% of women and 30% of men retirees “unretired” because they needed the money. You can't age well if you can't make ends meet at the end of each month.

The CLSA study also features some disturbing numbers on the growing problems of loneliness: 1 in 3 women and 1 in 5 men over the age of 75 are socially isolated, which can have the same negative effect on an individual's life span as smoking. A whopping 38% of the CLSA participants provide care to loved ones. This unpaid work takes its toll on many, especially older women taking care of their elderly spouses.

As the population ages, we must make sure these extra years are worth living: More time to work, play and contribute wealth and wisdom to society, as well spending more time to enjoy with family and friends.

David Porteous is a charter member of the Canadian Initiative for Elder Planning Studies and holds an Elder Planning Councilor Designation.

Government increases support for caregivers

THE PROVINCIAL government is investing \$75 million to expand respite care and adult day programs.

“Many B.C. seniors count on their spouses, children and close friends to help them stay at home, and cope and manage chronic conditions,” said Health Minister Adrian Dix.

“Caregiving without adequate supports can impact the whole family, particularly a person's ability to live at home, which is what most seniors and their loved ones want. Giving seniors better options and supporting unpaid caregivers to take time for themselves is a necessity.”

Over the next three years, the

province will improve support to seniors and their family-and-friend caregivers. The number of respite beds will be increased, and overnight care at home will be made more accessible.

In addition, the number of adult day program spaces will be increased, and the hours of operation will be expanded to provide services on evenings and weekends. As part of the work, health authorities are developing plans to meet localized needs of family-and-friend caregivers and seniors in their regions.

“The August 2017 report from the Office of the Seniors Advocate

estimates that 31 percent of seniors had a primary caregiver in distress,” Dix said.

“According to the report, the number of clients accessing adult day programs and the number of hours per client decreased in recent years. Over the past five years, there was also a significant cut in the number of respite beds. Under the direction of Premier Horgan, we are changing direction by expanding respite care and adult day programs. This plan will provide more direct care for seniors and afford family-and-friend caregivers time for themselves to reduce stress and exhaustion.”

SATURDAY, OCT. 20

You have the power. Take a stand. Make your mark.

IF YOU want to make your community a better place, you have the power to elect candidates who will put people first in local elections being held Saturday, Oct. 20.

This year's elections are the first to be held under new rules that ban corporations, developers and unions from making political donations. And that means your vote and your contribution to the candidate(s) of your choice will make an even bigger difference.

Yes, with sometimes dozens of candidates running for Mayor, council, school board and regional district

positions, it can be a challenge to figure out who deserves your support.

BC's Labour Councils tackle that task with analysis of past records, as well as comprehensive candidate questionnaires and interviews.

Before you cast your ballot, be sure to check the endorsements made by your local Labour Council, or speak with your BC FORUM regional representative / Labour Council delegate listed on Page 2.



With thanks to Dennis McGann

Vote Oct. 20

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BC FORUM elects new officers

SAM WIESE (PSAC) and Gordon Savard (CUPE) were acclaimed as first and second vice-presidents, respectively, at the election of officers at a BC FORUM board of directors meeting over the summer.

Wiese had previously been second vice president while Savard has served on the board for a number of years. Bill Silvester announced earlier that he would not seek re-election as first vice president in order to spend more time with his family.

Dan Bradford (BCGEU) was re-elected as treasurer by acclamation.

Officers elections for two year terms are held on an alternating basis, with the president and secretary positions up for election next year.

Information for retired workers

- Protect yourself against scam artists with info from the Canadian Centre for Elder Law. Google "Be a Savvy Senior Fraud Protection."
- The People's Law School has summarized benefits available to BC seniors. Search the web for "When I'm 64: Benefits for Seniors" to download or order a free copy.
- The Council of Senior Citizens' Organizations of B.C. (COSCO) offers free workshops to seniors groups. Visit www.coscobc.org for a complete list of topics.
- The Deprescribing Network – deprescribing.org – offers information about safely reducing medications that may no longer be needed.



Gwenne Farrell

Gwenne Farrell joins the board

GWENNE FARRELL of MoveUP has joined the BC FORUM Board of Directors.

Farrell has held many elected positions in her union, including national secretary treasurer for nearly a decade. She is currently National Vice-President for Region 4, and chairs several MoveUP committees.

At BC FORUM, she takes over from Andy Ross who retired from the board to take a job.



Mogens Jorgensen, regional representative for Kamloops, laid flowers at Ginger Goodwin's grave on behalf of BC FORUM during Ginger Goodwin Memorial events in Cumberland.

We welcome two new regional reps

EDNA PARK has been appointed as a BC FORUM regional representative and delegate to the Kamloops and District Labour Council, joining Mogens Jorgensen in that role.

And John Hooker joins Gerry Townsend as regional representative and delegate to the New Westminster and District Labour Council.

Senior Citizens' Repair Service

We provide low-cost minor house repairs, renovations and maintenance for seniors 55 years and over and for people with disabilities.

Services include plumbing, carpentry, electrical work, gas fitting, painting, yard work and general handyman services.

All services are guaranteed for 30 days and offered by retired or semi-retired experienced tradespeople.

Sponsored by the Plumbers and Pipefitters Union Local 170.

Office hours are 9 AM to 12 Noon, Monday to Friday.

Serves Metro Vancouver. Phone: 604 529-1100



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 better, 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 1518, 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
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DAY MONTH YEAR

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

Single membership: \$20 - 1 year \$49 - 3 years
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* Required for AD&D group insurance coverage to age 86.

Vote to make your vote count

By Irene Lanzinger
President, BC Federation of Labour
Chair, BC FORUM

I THINK we can all agree that government matters. And which political party controls the government affects the lives of working people dramatically.

Just look back at the 16 years of the BC Liberal government – stripping of collective agreements, erosion of employment standards and labour code protections, stagnant wages and the rise of precarious work, underfunded schools and oversized classrooms, hallway medicine and privatized seniors care, weakened health and safety rules.... the list could go on and on.

THE ACTIONS and choices of the BC Liberal government hurt working people.

But what also hurts is the fact that the BC Liberals could govern unchecked for 16 years, despite tens of thousands of British Columbians never voting for them.

That is because our current voting system – First Past the Post – allows a minority of voters to give 100% of the power to one political party. It just isn't fair.

So while government matters, how we elect our government also matters.

This fall we have a chance to change how we vote. And it's an opportunity we can't waste.

British Columbians are being asked if they want to move to a Proportional Representation (Pro Rep) model of electing our representatives.

Pro Rep is pretty simple at its core. The basic idea is that every vote counts--so if a political party gets 40% of the vote, they get 40% of the seats. Essentially, you get what you vote for!

Most democracies around the

world use a Pro Rep model of electing representatives. Because the outcome reflects the actual will of the voters, political parties must be more accountable and cooperative on the issues that matter to people. No more governing for a powerful minority.

THE REFERENDUM ballot you receive in late October will ask you if you want to replace the status quo model of electing representatives with proportional representation. Then it offers three Pro Rep models for consideration: Dual Member, Mixed Member, Rural-Urban.

I encourage you to learn about and explore the three models – they are each slightly different in how they account for local representation and regional breakdown.

What I want to stress – the outcome is what matters.

NO MATTER what Pro Rep system you prefer, the end result is a proportional breakdown based on how people cast their ballot.

All three made-in-BC Pro Rep models will strengthen our democracy, make political parties more accountable, and put people back in the driver's seat when it comes to electing our government.

Working people, like you and me, have a lot at stake when it comes to electing our government. Our current voting system works against us, no matter how hard we organize.

When votes don't count, people are discouraged. It's no wonder voter turnout is so low--people don't believe that their vote counts. And under the First Past the Post model, that is often true.

BY MOVING to a Pro Rep system, we are strengthening our voices-- as engaged individuals and as a collective movement. The issues we care about can no longer be pushed aside. Our rights cannot be undermined and eroded without consequence.

This is our chance to make a significant change to how we do politics in this province. A change for the better.

You should receive your ballot package in the mail by late October. Ask questions, get the information you need, and mail in your ballot by November 30.

You can learn more about proportional representation voting systems and join the campaign for change at www.VotePRBC.ca.

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, bforum@bcfed.ca



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