

Advocate

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE B.C. FEDERATION OF RETIRED UNION MEMBERS

Vol. 15 No. 3 September, 2012

Working for a more decent society

THE NEXT PROVINCIAL election is an opportunity to start building a “fairer, more decent society,” where everyone has opportunities and pays a fair share of taxes, Jim Sinclair, President of the B.C. Federation of Labour told delegates to the BC FORUM 2012 Annual General Meeting.

“Stephen Harper is a little piece of the problem,” he said. “The challenge is to find a way to defeat the right wing.” Defeating the B.C. Liberals is a good place to start, because that would also send Harper a mes-

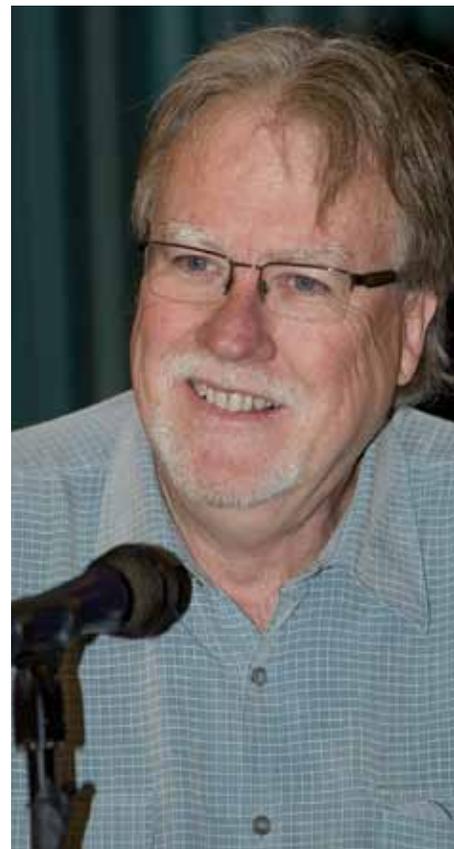
sage that British Columbians reject his agenda.

“The society you folks built was built on a struggle for an idea,” said Sinclair.

“What does freedom really mean for a working person?

“What it really means – the things that matter the most to working people – is the right to take your kid to the hospital and get the best care possible for the people you love. The freedom to go to work, and to say

See “Their loyalty...” Page 6



Jim Sinclair addresses delegates to the annual general meeting of BC FORUM.

THE NEW ADVOCATE

Shorter. Slimmer. Fatter.

WITH THIS EDITION, *The Advocate* moves to a new format. Some of the changes are small. Our newsletter is a little shorter and slimmer – we’ve taken a quarter inch off the top, and an eighth of an inch off the side. More importantly, *The Advocate* is fatter. We’ve added four pages of content. Each future edition will be 16 pages rather than 12.

These changes are the result of a review of printing options by the BC FORUM Board of Directors. By moving from a sheet-fed press to a web press (where the paper is fed from a large roll), we are able to both add extra pages and slightly reduce our printing costs. This step is part of our volunteer Board’s continuing

efforts to make the most of a very tight budget while simultaneously striving to improve services and communications with members.

We hope you enjoy the extra reading. These days, with governments slashing pensions and services to pay for corporate tax breaks, it’s more important than ever for us to have strong vehicles to share information.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to UFCW 1518. Always a strong supporter of retired workers, and workers nearing retirement, UFCW has taken the extra step of making a generous donation to pay for the printing costs of the September and December editions of *The Advocate*.

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Advocate

The Advocate is published by the B.C. Federation of Retired Union Members. BC FORUM is dedicated to representing the interests and well-being of members, their families and spouses, and continuing into retirement the relationship they enjoyed with the union movement. Supported by Working Enterprises and affiliated with the B.C. Federation of Labour, BC FORUM represents thousands of retired and soon to be retired union members.

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Together, we can be a powerful voice for retirees

By Diane Wood
President, BC FORUM

IT WAS THRILLING to see so many members – another record turnout – attend this year's annual general meeting of BC FORUM. The members brought great energy to the event. That's a good thing, because we have a lot of work ahead of us, and our success depends on the support and involvement of our members.

It seems that the attacks on retired workers and our families are getting worse and worse. There's the federal plan to raise the retirement age to pay for more corporate tax breaks. There are continuing provincial cuts in essential health services that help people to age with dignity in their own homes. We need to work together to ensure our voices are heard, and to ensure that seniors are treated with respect.

The work ahead of us is a little different from when we were active union members. We don't have a paycheque; we're all volunteers. On the other hand, we have skills gained through years of experience in organizing, lobbying, negotiating and campaigning. As a friend of mine has noted, we may not move quite as quickly as we used to, but we're a lot more fuel efficient.

There is great strength in our continuing relationship with our unions. In that respect, BC FORUM is unique. We are the only B.C. organization of older and retired workers which is directly affiliated to the labour movement. Our links to the movement, and to those who are working to build a better province, are deep and lasting. They are part of our structure and purpose. We are



strongest when we work together in solidarity, bringing our experience to bear for the benefit of workers both young and old.

Changes to our Board

I want to personally and publicly thank **Gerry Edwards** for his long and dedicated service to BC FORUM and our members. Gerry decided to step down as president due to health issues. His contribution as president, and as the Steelworkers' representative on the BC FORUM board since 1996, has been significant. We extend our best wishes for a full and speedy recovery.

I'm delighted to welcome a new member to our board. **Maureen Shaw** has served as both Secretary Treasurer and President of the College Institute Educators Association (now known as the Federation of Post-Secondary Educators). She was the first President of the Canadian Association of University Teachers, and a Vice-President of the Canadian Labour Congress. Last year, she was presented with CAUT's Sara Shorten award in recognition of her work to advance the rights of women.

Last word

Thank you for all you do, and especially for your participation in BC FORUM. Working together, we can be powerful advocates for retired workers, workers nearing retirement, and our families. As always, our strength is in our membership. If you know someone who should be a member, please ask them to fill out the form on page 16.

Don't let them tell you it can't be done

By Soren Bech

WHEN JACK LAYTON was elected as leader of Canada's New Democrats in 2003, things looked grim for the party. Stuck in third or fourth place. Little apparent room for growth. He was a rookie with no federal experience. Nobody could accuse him of jumping on the band-wagon of a winning team. Instead, he built one and changed the face of Canadian politics.

We all have personal memories of Jack. Mine include listening to him speak at labour conventions, an occasional personal meeting, and, once, driving him to media engagements in the Lower Mainland.

The revelation in his speeches, to me, was only partly what he said. What came across even more powerfully was his personality. He enjoyed being with us. He liked people. There were times when I wished all Canadians could have been in the room with us to see and hear the way he answered questions from the floor, the way he reached out to women and men struggling with difficult personal issues.

In the early years of his leadership, Jack often quoted Tommy Douglas' "Courage, my friends, it's not too late to build a better world." Later, he added a second thought: "Don't let them tell you it can't be done."

The phrase was created by Ron Johnson and Paul Degenstein of Now Communications as the tag for a series of TV ads. Jack loved it.

"I know it's a double negative, but it works. I want it to be part of everything we do," Jack told me as he was going over some speaking notes.

It was 8 am. He read three pages of background on B.C. housing issues while having breakfast at a downtown Vancouver hotel. Despite



Jack Layton at a Vancouver election rally during the 2011 campaign.

arriving on a late flight the night before, he was a lot more awake than I was. His enthusiasm was infectious.

"This is just the kind of local information we need (to promote a national housing strategy)," he said.

I beamed. Somehow I neglected to credit Gerry Scott, the legendary BC NDP campaign manager, for providing most of the ideas.

Jack folded the document, put it in an inside pocket, and never referred to it again. He had committed the points to memory.

As we walked to my car, I clutched a large umbrella under my arm. The first news conference was outdoors, at the Vancouver Convention Centre. Thankfully the rain held off.

Four or five reporters showed up. It's never easy for a federal NDP leader to get media attention. After all the work to set up the event, I was discouraged by the turnout. Jack was not.

He talked about the media outlets that were represented, and how they reached specific groups of people. The glass was definitely half full.

Then it was off to Surrey for a meeting with a dozen editors and reporters from the Indo-Canadian community. He discussed the issues affecting new Canadians as they work to make a new life for themselves and their families. He understood. And as they probed Jack with questions, they learned it was more than a surface understanding.

From there we went to the airport. While Jack worked his Blackberry, I managed to get lost in the depths of Surrey. I didn't interrupt him to explain this was the long way around.

We were still early for the flight that would take him to the next day of his relentless schedule. I dropped him at an airport hotel. I went home. Jack went to the gym to work out.

On Aug. 22, thousands of women and men gathered in communities across Canada to pay tribute to the man who led the NDP to 103 seats and official opposition status in the House of Commons, an achievement that was almost unimaginable for the 50 years that went before.

He was tireless, day after day, event after event, reaching out to people as individuals, and in groups both large and small.

With his message of hope, love and optimism, he inspired us.

With his focus on practical solutions for people, he convinced us it could be done.

Jack cared. He liked us. And we liked him.

NDP Leader promises “positive, serious agenda” to meet BC’s “profound desire” for change

A YOUNG MAN approached Adrian Dix as he was using public transit to get to his next meeting. “Are you going to win?” he said. “Yes, I think we can win if we work really hard,” said Dix.

“You have to win,” said the young man.

“No pressure,” thought Dix.

The BC NDP Leader shared that experience as he addressed the BC FORUM annual general meeting on June 13, the fifth year he has spoken directly with our members.

“The turnout here today is a sign of the determination of people to bring change to our province,” said Dix.

“Everywhere I go – after 11 years of Liberal government in B.C. and six years of Conservative government in Ottawa – there’s a profound desire for change, a desire to take back our democracy,” he said.

However, there is no guarantee of an NDP victory.

At the time he was speaking, 17 months before an election, the B.C. Liberals had launched a \$1.5 million advertising campaign to attack Dix and the party – an unprecedented attack at that stage in the electoral cycle. They’ve set up a business group to sponsor even more attacks.

Dix said the party could respond in kind, with more old-fashioned, nasty political attacks.

“We’re not going to do that. When you win by tearing down the other side, you have no mandate to implement the change that’s required. And secondly, fewer and fewer people want to be involved,” he said.

Dix noted that 1.7 million British Columbians did not vote in the last provincial election.



Despite the NDP’s strong showing in opinion polls, Leader Adrian Dix says there’s no guarantee of victory. He urged BC FORUM members to work hard to help elect a new government with a mandate for change.

“It’s not possible to bring those people back into the political process if we run personal attack ads. We’re going to hold the government accountable, but there will be no personal attacks,” he said.

The BC NDP Leader said that getting people involved requires putting forward an agenda that’s positive, and takes people seriously.

Speaking without notes, he discussed a wide range of issues and op-

tions to address inequality and build a sustainable future.

“It’s about us as a community. It’s about people,” he said.

“We’re saying what we’re going to do. We’re saying how we’re going to pay for it. We’re making practical suggestions. This is the hard road to victory. We really need your help. We need a little bit more help this time. And if we win, we’ll have a mandate for change,” said Dix.

Working to strengthen health care

DELEGATES TO the annual general meeting strongly supported a resolution calling on BC FORUM to work with the B.C. Federation of Labour and the Canadian Labour Congress to strengthen public health care.

Russ St. Eloi, BC FORUM director, said federal plans to cut transfer payments to provinces will ultimately cause health care services to deteriorate. He supported a national PharmaCare program.

“PharmaCare could save us millions of dollars. We don’t have to spend \$10 on a pill that’s made for 2.5 cents. We can’t just be sitting here crying. It’s our turn now to do what we have to do to get MPs and MLAs to pay attention.

“I hope you all support this resolution. It’s just a start to get to where we have to go,” said St. Eloi.

“By 2014, there’s going to be a severe cut in transfer payments,” added delegate Bill Zander.

“Costs will be downloaded once again to the provinces. The federal government will have gone from 50 percent funding to 15 percent. We need to be blunt, and much more audacious about the shortcomings of the federal government,” he said.

The resolution supported a series of recommendations made by the Canadian Health Coalition, in which BC FORUM is a member through the B.C. Health Coalition.

In a brief presented to a Senate standing committee in 2011, the coalition called for, among other things:

- Strong enforcement of the ban on queue jumping, user fees and extra-billing.



Bill Zander – never shy about telling it like it is – told delegates we need to be blunt, and more audacious, in speaking out on the short-comings of the federal government.



Russ St. Eloi, BC FORUM director, said a national PharmaCare program could save Canadians millions of dollars. “We don’t need to pay \$10 for a pill that’s made for 2.5 cents.”

- Full participation of aboriginal peoples in addressing urgent health problems.
- Implementation of a national pharmaceutical strategy.
- Canada-wide standards to ensure universal access, improved safety, and cost controls to ensure sustainability and value for money.
- Primary health care reform with an emphasis on addressing the complex care needs of those who face social barriers, including those with low incomes.

An active year for BC FORUM

THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS' report – outlining BC FORUM activities over the last year – was adopted unanimously by delegates to the annual general meeting.

"The board members and regional representatives are proud of what we've accomplished," said Diane Wood, President, as she introduced the report.

"We feel we've achieved a lot, but we know there's much more to be done over the next year, particularly in advance of the provincial election. We look forward to working with you to do so," she said.

The report outlines action BC FORUM has taken on issues such as Harper's decision to raise the age of retirement to 67, political action to support NDP by-election victories in the Coquitlam – Port Moody and Chilliwack – Hope by-elections, work with unions and Working Enterprises to build the movement, and participation in provincial and national organizations that work for retired workers and seniors. *The re-*



While the last year has been a busy one, the year ahead promises to be even more demanding as BC FORUM fights for retired workers and our families, says Diane Wood.

port is available at www.bcforum.ca.

"Over the years, BC FORUM has become a recognized force for senior union members and retirees," says the report. "We have the ability to do much more to increase our membership, and to help former union members remain active and aware

participants in promoting labour's agenda. In the year ahead, with the support of Working Enterprises, affiliated unions, our members and activists, we look forward to further expansion of our membership, activities, and even stronger advocacy on behalf of retired workers."

"Their loyalty is to money and power.."

From page 1

no to unsafe work. The freedom to look at your kids and say, 'You have the chance to be who you want to be, and the freedom to love who you want.'"

Sinclair said all of those freedoms were won through collective action. The other side, the billionaires who can buy anything, are all about individuals and the market place.

"The things we've fought for are the things they're trying to take away," he said.

"We have a set of values that we believe in. We have to build support for that in society. The right wing pushes harder and harder. We must

be out there to mobilize our members in support of doing the right thing, not letting the other side define every issue."

The B.C. Liberals have cut the share of the budget that we spend on taking care of each other by the equivalent of \$5.5 billion a year – money that could be used to improve health care, home care, education and other services.

"Their loyalty is to power and money," he said. "They are not concerned about child poverty, or polluting the environment, they're just concerned about corporations. They will attack us. There will be huge attacks on the NDP and the labour

movement."

Sinclair said if working people don't vote, it will be a loss for everyone who wants B.C. to be a decent, fair place to live.

"We must ensure our members come out and vote. That's the hard work ahead of us," he said.

Sinclair concluded by saying that BC FORUM needs to be stronger. "I want to get to the point where every union member in British Columbia who retires is automatically a member of BC FORUM for the first year. We need a lot more members in this organization. I'm committed to working with you to do that. We need to do that," he said.

Collective action is needed to win retirement security for all Canadian workers

Ken Georgetti, President of the Canadian Labour Congress, has called on BC FORUM members to help the CLC fight for a future where all Canadians can retire with dignity and security

BC FORUM MEMBERS are incredibly important to the ability of organized labour, seniors, community groups and concerned Canadians to fight back against the Conservative government," said Georgetti in remarks prepared for BC FORUM's annual general meeting. Georgetti was unable to attend in person due to a last minute emergency. His speech was presented by Amber Hockin, regional director of the CLC.

"You already know how bad things are in Ottawa under the Conservative majority government. It's a government that is determined to attack unions, silence environmental groups, push even more seniors into poverty and intimidate anyone who opposes its regressive plans. We in this room are made of sterner stuff than to be bullied by a Conservative government," said Georgetti.

"There's a good reason why unions are under attack by the Conservatives. They are not going after unions because we are weak. It's because (outside Parliament), we are the most powerful opposition in Canada to this government and its big business supporters and they fear our strength," he said.

"And perhaps nothing scares this government, the big banks and financial institutions more than this – the CLC's ongoing campaign to



Amber Hockin, CLC Regional Director, represented Ken Georgetti after he was called away by a last minute emergency.

win real retirement security for all Canadians by expanding the Canada Pension Plan. I firmly believe it is our responsibility to win retirement security for future generations, just as previous generations fought for Medicare, for employment insurance, and for the basic right to join a union."

Georgetti said Canadians have a stark choice to make.

On one hand, Stephen Harper is telling Canadians to work until they are 67, and to put all our faith into private sector "solutions" like RRSPs and Pooled Registered Pension Plans.

"They expect us to gamble our golden years on the stock market, and to turn our future earnings over to the big banks and mutual fund companies that have the dubious distinction of charging the world's highest management fees," he said. "Stephen Harper's so-called solution

would make the problem we are already facing even worse."

The CLC has been campaigning for six years to make retirement security a top of mind issue. The CLC's plan would phase in small contribution increases over seven years – about the cost of a cup of coffee and a donut a week – in order to double CPP benefits for the next generation.

About two-thirds of Canadian workers have no workplace pension coverage, and 1.6 million seniors live below the poverty line with incomes of less than \$16,000 a year.

Georgetti pointed out that Jim Shaw, CEO of Shaw Communications, retired last year at the age of 53 with a pension of \$16,000 a day – \$6 million a year. He collects the maximum annual CPP benefit every 17 hours.

"And yet, Shaw and his super-rich CEO friends have the nerve to tell the CLC to forget our plan to improve the CPP. How dare they, with their gold-plated pensions?"

Under pressure from those same CEOs, there's always money in Ottawa for more corporate tax cuts.

"The cumulative corporate tax cuts that Mr. Harper has introduced since taking office in 2006 will cost the government \$13 billion in lost revenue every year," said Georgetti.

"We urgently need to keep up the pressure, and we need your help. Please talk to your elected provincial representatives, talk to your federal MPs, get in the media. Let them know we want to improve the Canada Pension Plan and change retirement security for the better forever.

"We didn't win Medicare without a fight, and we can't get a better Canada Pension Plan without one either," he said.

Key political leaders attend annual meeting

A LARGE GROUP OF NDP MLAs attended the BC FORUM AGM.

In attendance were Kathy Corrigan, Bruce Ralston, Jenny Kwan, Shane Simpson, and party leader Adrian Dix. Their presence gave delegates a great opportunity to discuss the issues with key political leaders in our province.

In welcoming BC FORUM members to her constituency of Burnaby – Deer Lake, Corrigan thanked them for their continued involvement in the union movement.

“You recognize, all of you, that this is a life-long endeavour,” she said, noting that BC FORUM membership is a way for retired workers to work together to protect hard fought rights, and to resist the “unbelievable onslaught” by federal Conservatives and B.C. Liberals on unions and ordinary people.



Kathy Corrigan, MLA, welcomed BC FORUM delegates. The annual meeting was held in her constituency of Burnaby – Deer Lake.

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Outrageous lockout continues at Rocky Mountaineer Railtours

By Mike Hennessy
Trustee, Teamsters Local Union 31

THE ROCKY MOUNTAINEER Railtour Company locked out their On-Board Attendants (OBAs) who are members of Teamsters Local Union No. 31 on June 22, 2011. The OBAs are currently still locked out of their jobs. Like the ILWU, the Rocky Mountaineer is federally-regulated and has chosen the right to employ replacement workers (scabs) during this ongoing dispute.

On June 22, 2011 during a routine trip on the train to Alberta, the OBAs were told that the company was locking out their employees because of failed bargaining attempts and that they would be exiting the train to be bused home. The replacement workers, already on the train disguised as guests, immediately took over duties and apparently had previously been trained by the company to replace the on-boards. The OBAs who were not on the trip were informed shortly after that they were locked out. This was the start of the nightmare that is called the Rocky Mountaineer Lockout!

Since that fateful day in June, the company has added many security measures to the terminals and picket areas. This includes the use of private security guards who are video recording every movement made by the picketers; covering fences so that guests cannot see the picketers; hiring bagpipers so that guests cannot hear the picketers. The company has taken the union to court, and



Notorious union-buster Peter Armstrong – President of Vancouver’s Non-Partisan Association – locked out on-board attendants on the Rocky Mountaineer luxury train service more than a year ago. The workers, including many single parents and people with years of service, were told to get off the train and sent home on a bus. Operating under federal labour laws governing railways, Armstrong’s company replaced them with scabs recruited on Craigslist. Hundreds of people, including representatives of BC FORUM, marked the one year anniversary of the lockout by demanding the company return to the bargaining table.

injunctions were imposed against the picketers, and still the picketers march on. This year, June 22, 2012 marked the one year anniversary of the lockout. The picketers and Teamsters Local 31 organized a rally on June 22 to keep the momentum alive, and there was strong support from the labour and political community.

On behalf of the locked out On Board Attendants, Teamsters Local

31 President and International Vice President Stan Hennessy would like to thank all of our friends at the ILWU for their continued support shown for the OBAs since the start of the lockout.

For further information regarding the picket line, please contact me at 604-317-8530 or email me at mhennessy@teamsters31.ca.

Thank you for your continued support.

TAXI SAVER PROGRAM SAVED

Working together results in a significant victory for seniors

AFTER MASSIVE PROTESTS from seniors and people with disabilities, TransLink has decided to keep its Taxi Saver program. The TransLink Board was hit with phone calls, e-mails, letters and a public outcry after it decided in May to eliminate the service. That decision was officially reversed on July 12.

Nancy Olewiler said TransLink did not have a full understanding of the importance of the service in providing an accessible transit system.

“The Taxi Saver program is reinstated in its entirety,” said Olewiler. “I regret any angst we have caused for people who were fearful the program was not going to continue. That was not the intention. We actually thought we were going to make the system better.”

The Taxi Saver service – operated by TransLink in Metro Vancouver and by B.C. Transit in other communities – was started 20 years ago to complement HandyDart. Registered users can call a taxi and pay half price using pre-bought coupons.

TransLink had planned to shift the \$1.1 million savings from eliminating Taxi Saver into HandyDart which is unable to meet the demand. There were 18,000 occasions where users were unable to book a seat on HandyDart during 2011.

The Council of Senior Citizens’ Organizations of B.C. (COSCO), of which BC FORUM is an affiliate, and the Coalition of People with Disabilities pointed out that Taxi Saver is critical to the independence of many seniors. For example, people who must make an unplanned trip to a clinic, or stay later than expected at a doctor’s office, rely on the service.



Lorraine Logan (right), one of the key leaders in the fight for accessible transit services, discusses the issues in an informal meeting with Miriam Olney, BC FORUM Board Secretary, before the start of the BC FORUM annual general meeting.

HandyDart trips must be booked in advance for specific times.

In a joint statement, Lorraine Logan of COSCO and Jane Dyson, executive director of the Coalition of People with Disabilities, applauded the TransLink Board for its decision to maintain the Taxi Saver service.

“We would also like to congratulate the organizations and individuals who worked hard to show TransLink why Taxi Savers are so important to the dignity and independence of seniors and people with disabilities.

“By truly listening to the voices of people who use Taxi Savers and

acting on what it heard, the Board has demonstrated that it values community consultation. We are encouraged that going forward TransLink will continue to engage in true community consultation when it develops plans that impact people with disabilities and seniors,” they said.

Jill Weiss, Chair of Vancouver’s Persons with Disabilities advisory committee, said, “It was a real grass roots uprising. It is a good example of the community in action, and of people actually listening and showing the wisdom and courage of saying they were wrong and changing their minds.”

ENBRIDGE PIPELINE

Have you signed yet?

MORE THAN 35,000 people have signed a letter opposing the Enbridge pipeline. The pipeline would cross 800 streams and rivers, and bring 225 oil tankers a year into sensitive waters off the B.C. coast.

The risk of major oil spills, whether on the pipeline route or on the coast, is potentially catastrophic. B.C. would assume virtually all of the risks, and none of the economic benefits.

The B.C. Liberals, through an “equivalency agreement” have given the Harper government the final word on the pipeline, surrendering our province’s constitutional right to protect our environment.

Please sign the protest letter today at www.bcndp.ca.



Ken Isomura, Regional Representative, and Millie Canessa, Board member, made quick work of the long lines as members registered to participate in the BC FORUM annual general meeting – an opportunity to speak out on the issues and help improve the lives of retired workers and our families.



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Delegates strongly criticize Harper's plan to raise the retirement age to 67

THE HARPER government's plan to increase the retirement age came in for strong criticism at the BC FORUM annual general meeting. The government intends to force Canadians to work until they are 67, rather than 65, before they become eligible for Old Age Security and the Guaranteed Income Supplement, Canada's basic public pension plans for the most needy seniors.

"Harper's reasoning for increasing the age of eligibility is based on a big lie," said Sandy Bauer, BC FORUM delegate to the Vancouver and District Labour Council.

"The government's own actuarial reports show that OAS is sustainable.

"Like everything else Harper does, the burden will be carried mostly by low income people. Harper and his government should hang their heads in shame," she said.

"There's no reason to do what they're doing," said Russ St. Eloi, BC FORUM director.

"It's an insidious tax on older people," he said.

St. Eloi called on members to actively promote the solidly researched CLC proposal to improve the Canada Pension Plan.

Increasing the retirement age will download even more costs to the provinces, noted Linda Forsythe. She also condemned the federal government's cuts in transfer payments for health care.

A resolution adopted by delegates said raising the retirement age will increase the number of seniors forced to live in poverty, with a particularly adverse effect on single women and seniors who are physically unable to work.

The resolution noted that low and middle-income Canadians depend

on OAS benefits to enable them to have an adequate, stable and secure quality of living, while low-income retirees depend on the GIS for their basic livelihood.

Delegates committed BC FORUM to work with the B.C. Federation of Labour and the Canadian Labour Congress to demand that the federal government:

- Prevent any increase in the age of eligibility for OAS and GIS benefits.
- Strengthen the support provided to Canada's poorest seniors by increasing the GIS.
- Improve, rather than weaken, Canada's public pension system to bringing OAS and GIS levels up to at least the average of developed nations in the Organization of Economic Development and Co-operation.



"Like everything else Harper does, the burden will be carried mostly by low-income people," said Sandy Bauer, BC FORUM Regional Representative..



Working TV covered the major speeches delivered at the BC FORUM AGM. This was made possible by a generous contribution from the BCGEU. You can watch the speeches by following the links at www.bcforum.ca.

Family members struggle to care for seniors

BC FORUM HAS called on the provincial and federal governments to take action so more seniors can age in place in their own homes. Seniors in general are healthier and living longer, but there are 2.7 million family members providing care to seniors with long term health issues. Many caregivers are themselves seniors in distress.

Delegates supported universal home care and home support, and the construction of geared-to-income housing.

"We must increase affordable housing to eliminate homelessness, especially among seniors," said Art Kube, President of COSCO.



Alice West, Board member and former president of BC FORUM, called for action to allow more seniors to age in place, in their own homes, and their own community.

"It's women, more likely than men, who end up being the caregivers," said Alice West, BC FORUM director. "There are tons of reports sitting on shelves. I'm amazed the

library doesn't fall into the Ottawa River. This is not a question of reports or fancy speeches, it's a question of supporting individual caregivers."

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Black out, Speak out

Hundreds of Canadian websites – including www.bcforum.ca – were blacked out June 4 as part of a protest against the Harper’s unconscionable budget bill C-38

THE BLACK OUT, SPEAK OUT campaign was launched by an unlikely coalition of environmental groups, corporations, church groups, unions and others. Many of the participants had never taken such political action before.

The massive omnibus bill ran to almost 500 pages and included many items that would usually have been debated separately. Critics see the process as an effort to stifle debate in the House of Commons, and the bill itself as an effort to silence opposition to the government’s plans.

“Today, hundreds of organizations and individuals – representing millions of citizens – are speaking out in support of two core Canadian values: the protection of nature and democratic discussion,” said David Suzuki at a news conference in Vancouver.

“These values are the foundation of the peace, order and good government that define our nation, yet they are threatened by the federal government’s omnibus budget bill, C-38.”

The budget bill:

- Replaces the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act.
- Empowers the federal government to crack down on charities, including environmentalists and seniors’ groups that advocate for



Dr. David Suzuki, and former Conservative Fisheries Minister John Fraser (partially visible behind Suzuki) are among the thousands of Canadians who have spoken out against the Harper government’s attack on nature and democracy.

better laws and policies.

- Gives cabinet the power to override National Energy Board decisions.
- Rushes projects through a weakened environmental review process to speed up approvals.
- Shuts citizen groups out of environmental reviews for pipelines.

“The continued survival of B.C. icons like migratory salmon and steelhead are put at risk through this far-reaching omnibus bill. It’s bad policy and it’s bad democracy,” said John Fraser, Conservative fisheries minister in 1984-5.

“Over one-third of C-38’s text is devoted to short-circuiting Canada’s most important environmental laws,” said Rick Smith, executive director of Environmental Defence Canada. “The government did not run with this as part of its platform. There was no mention during the election campaign.”

The “Black Out, Speak Out” campaign organizers noted that the changes will slash environmental protection, concentrate decision making in the federal cabinet, and silence balanced policy advice from scientists and researchers.

Éric Hébert-Daly, the national executive director of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, said joining this campaign was “unusual” for his organization, but “you can’t just say nothing.”

Hébert-Daly noted that the government is planning for some \$500 billion in resource development over the next decade or so. “In that context, we need stronger environmental regulation, not weaker... you need to do more, not less.”

Gideon Forman, the executive director for the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment said “the Conservative government’s attack on democracy and the environment is unprecedented.”

Continued reductions in access to seniors' care lead to hospital overcrowding, longer wait times

SENIORS FACE continued reductions in access to key home and community care services, with serious consequences for hospital overcrowding and wait times. That's the central finding of a new study by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives B.C. Branch. The study includes new data, obtained from the Ministry of Health, on changes in access to seniors care in recent years.

The study finds that while cuts to residential care and home support were especially steep between 2001 and 2006, a downward trend in access continued through 2009/10.

Between 2001/02 and 2009/10, access to home support for seniors 75 and older dropped by 30%.

Access to residential care dropped by 21%. The provincial government did create new assisted living services (a less intensive type of long term care that does not include medical supervision) but even combined, residential care and assisted living show a 9% drop in access.

Reductions in access to home nursing of 3 per cent were more moderate, and in community rehabilitation there has actually been an increase of 14 per cent.

When all services are considered together, access to home and community care declined by 14 per cent.

The study demonstrates that declines in care for seniors are strongly linked to hospital overcrowding and wait times.

Between 2005/06 and 2010/11, there was a 35.5% increase in "Alternate Level of Care" (ALC) patients in B.C. hospitals. ALC patients are primarily elderly patients who no longer need acute care but continue to occupy a hospital bed because appropriate home and community care services are not available.

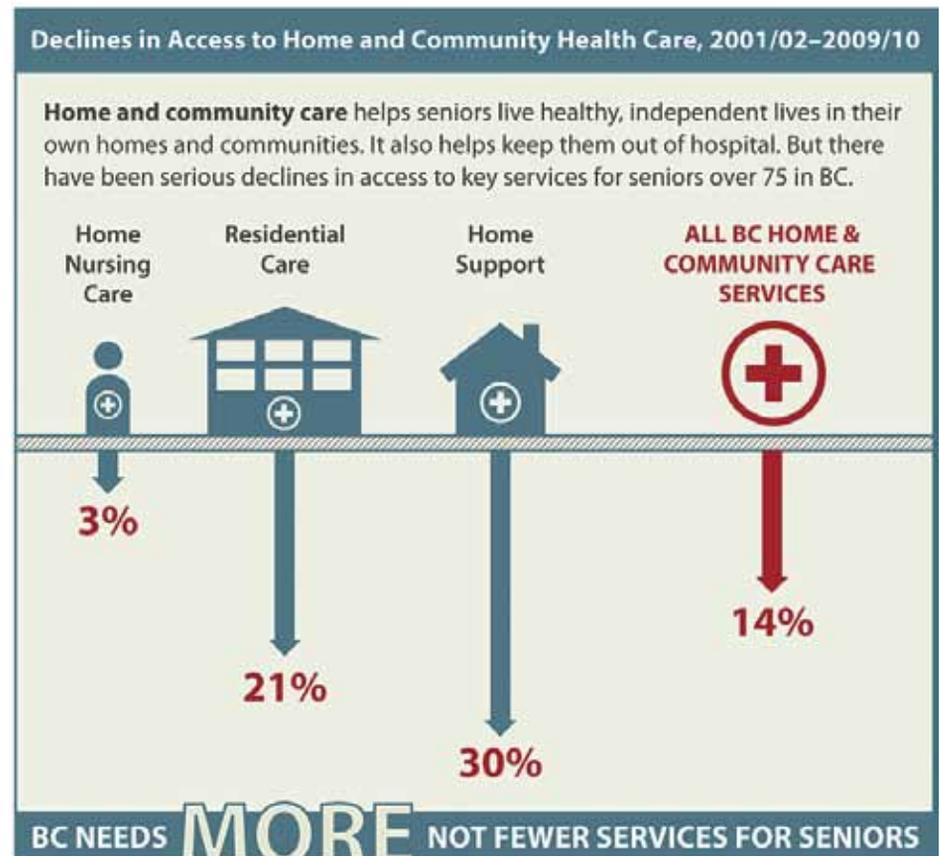
The study estimates the overall hospital occupancy rate is 97%, with many hospitals operating well above 100% capacity. The optimal rate for patient safety and management of surgical and emergency room wait times is 85% or lower.

"Given B.C.'s aging population, now is the time to increase access to home and community care," says study author Marcy Cohen. "These services can help seniors live healthy, independent lives in their own homes and communities, which reduces the need for expensive emergency visits and hospital stays. Home and community care also helps seniors get out of hospital quickly once they no longer need acute care."

"Seniors and people with disabili-

ties deserve high-quality and accessible public health care," says Rachel Tutte, co-chair of the B.C. Health Coalition, which co-published the report. "Unfortunately, B.C.'s home and community care services have suffered during ten years of restructuring, including massive closures to residential care beds and continuing reduction in access for home support clients."

"Emergency room overcrowding and wait times for surgeries affect all British Columbians," says Cohen. "The most cost-effective solution would be to improve access to home and community care services, and ensure they are better integrated within the broader health system. That will require strong provincial ... coordination and leadership."



For more information visit: www.policyalternatives.ca/hcc-for-seniors

