

Advocate

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

Vol. 28 No. 1, Spring 2025

**Getting to work on
tackling the tariff threat**

**CELEBRATING
FIRSTS FOR BLACK
HISTORY MONTH**

**Health care's
hidden heroes**

**THE SAFE LONG-TERM
CARE ACT: DOING
RIGHT BY SENIORS
& WORKERS**

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THE ADVOCATE

In this edition

In this first edition we bring the fighting spirit, whether it be in solidarity against the tyranny of Trump, mobilizing for the rights of racialized and senior workers, or advocating for dignity in long-term care. We profile health care workers that quietly provide critical support, a trailblazing woman in the labour movement, and a former mayor who just won't quit giving back to his community. We hope you enjoy this edition, in solidarity.

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Solidarity for sovereignty

By Sam Wiese, BC FORUM President

The transition into spring, a time symbolizing renewal and growth, often invites a sense of hope and positive change. The disrespect from officials in the Oval Office shown to President Zelensky in the face of Ukraine's ongoing struggle for sovereignty and peace is troubling. When you add to that President Trump's continued support of Putin, it creates a narrative that feels counter to the values of democracy, justice, and global cooperation.

It's a challenging time when so many of the ideals associated with the "season of rebirth" — hope, unity, and growth — seem overshadowed by these political tensions. The language and behavior coming from Trump and his supporters can be deeply divisive, undermining global solidarity and the values of democracy.

The idea of democratic nations uniting against rising right-wing forces is a powerful one. When global alliances come together, they can exert significant pressure. The push for accountability and removal of harmful leadership can be a unifying cause. Trump's "demagoguery," has certainly amplified divisions in the U.S., and beyond, yet thousands are standing strong in the shift away from that.

Here in Canada we are witness to a resurgence in national pride and unity, seldom seen since our win of the 1972 Summit Series. That moment

of national identity and triumph for Canada, is being rekindled today. The timing of Canada's win against the U.S. in the final game of the 4 Nations Face-Off couldn't be more symbolic. We all know hockey isn't just a sport to us — it's a cornerstone of national pride. That victory, particularly against the U.S. team, became a powerful rallying point for the majority of Canadians, uniting us in a way that transcends the ice rink.

It's truly powerful to see such a unified front in Canada — from all levels of government to labour unions and citizens — standing up against threats to democracy and human rights, especially in the face of rising right-wing ideologies. Canada has always prided itself on being a beacon of inclusivity, tolerance, and progressive values. When those values are at risk, the collective commitment of diverse groups to safeguard them is deeply commendable.

The battle against foreign authoritarianism is already uniting Canadians in a way that reflects our resilience. Standing firm against authoritarianism abroad is just one piece of the puzzle — protecting Canada's progressive values and democratic ideals within our own borders is equally important.

When figures like Pierre Poilievre echo the rhetoric and policies of right-wing movements, such as those in U.S.



under Trump, it's a concerning sign of where they might lead our country. This isn't simply criticizing political figures; it's about safeguarding the very essence of the Canadian identity, built on values of equity, social justice, and respect for all people. The challenge now is to ensure that the national conversation doesn't get swayed by those who seek to undermine the principles that have made our country a beacon of hope. We must stand firm against these regressive movements and work to maintain the unity and progressive vision for Canada's future.

Thank you for your support of BC FORUM in 2025.

This edition of The Advocate is made possible through the generous donations from affiliates of the BC Federation of Labour. At this time in particular, we wish to thank BCGEU, HEU, and CUPE BC.

We also acknowledge, and greatly appreciate, the ongoing sponsorship from WE CAUS & Benefits and WV Insurance.

Correction to winter of 2024 edition of The Advocate

In the photos from BC Fed convention we incorrectly named Grand Chief Stewart Phillip and MLA Joan Phillip standing with HEU Treasurer Betty Valenzuela; our sincerest apologies.

BC FORUM is inviting members to the
2025 Annual General Meeting

June 18, 2025

Location and agenda TBD.

9:30 in person registration commences.

Zoom registration available May 12-26, 2025 at bcforum.ca.

Check for updates on our website at bcforum.ca and our Facebook page at facebook.com/BCRetiredUnionMembersForum.

SAVE THE DATE

Trump's tariffs: Defend every job, then build an economy he can't threaten

by Sussanne Skidmore and Hermender Singh Kailley

Donald Trump's 25-percent tariff is a huge danger to our economy. The impact of across-the-board tariffs would be devastating, with 124,000 workers potentially losing their jobs in the next four years, and many more caught up in the ripple effects.

Defending our workers and our economy requires immediate action. But our vulnerability to the whims of one man signals the need for deeper, more far-reaching change.

Right now, we're telling our governments their first priority must be to defend jobs. Working people are the backbone of our economy, driving all the wealth our province creates. Good incomes allow them to raise their families, shop in their communities, support local businesses, and build a better future for themselves and all of B.C.

Any measures the government takes to support business, then, must be tied to preserving jobs. Job protection is the most important measure of success. Income support, like Employment Insurance, will unfortunately be necessary, but our best and first line of defence is avoiding job loss in the first place.

You can help join our call for government action to protect workers! Add your voice at action.bcfed.ca.

And we can take action as governments, businesses and organizations as well as individuals by buying B.C.- and Canadian-made products, especially the union-made products that sustain stable, quality jobs.

But as urgent as these actions are, these are also short-term, defensive solutions.

We need to address the more basic problem: our dependence on a single trading partner proven to be not only unreliable, but downright hostile.



Tackling that vulnerability will require us to take bold, concerted action. The opportunity is now here to do just that.

If Trump was hoping his threats and "51st state" rhetoric would divide Canada or intimidate us, it has backfired. Instead, we now have a remarkable spirit of unity and determination right across the country.

This gives us a chance to refocus our industries. A huge portion of our economy and many B.C. communities still rely on sending raw materials south of the border and elsewhere for processing. Very often, we then buy those resources back as processed goods.

Now's the time to shift our efforts at diversification and value-added production into high gear. Let's patriate far more of the processing and manufacturing we've left to others, especially the US: B.C. workers can and should be doing that work.

And we can diversify not just what we produce, but who we sell it to. We can open up new global markets, expand our relationships with existing partners and make it easier for Canada's provinces and territories to trade with each other. And we can do

that without deregulating in a race to the bottom; our aim should be strong labour standards and good, secure jobs.

But we also need to recognize just how much the ground has shifted. For decades, we've relied on international treaties and enforcement to ensure stable, reliable trade.

Now, though, it's clear that treaties alone won't rein in authoritarians and bullies. We have to forge stronger partnerships with democratic forces throughout the world. Together, we need to strengthen the civil institutions — especially labour unions! — that can help keep authoritarians in check.

Because the same authoritarian nationalist forces that brought Trump to power are at work here in Canada. A disturbing number of politicians have echoed Trump's rhetoric and even called on Canada to knuckle under to his demands.

We have to challenge those forces at work in our own backyard, and refuse to let the ambition of cynical politicians — looking at you here, Pierre Poilievre — divide us. We're better than that as a country.

Our relationship with the United States has been ruptured, possibly for a very long time. We have a lot of work to do in response: diversifying trade, strengthening our economy, bolstering democracy here and abroad and, most urgently, supporting the workers our country relies on. Those are economic imperatives, but even more, they're essential to our sovereignty.

The time to act is now. British Columbian workers, families and communities are depending on it.

Sussanne Skidmore and Hermender Singh Kailley are the President and Secretary-Treasurer of the British Columbia Federation of Labour.

The hidden heroes of health care

Kane Tse, President, Health Sciences Association of BC

Every day across B.C., health care professionals deliver hundreds of thousands of hours of treatment to patients and clients in a variety of settings in hospitals, long-term care facilities, child development centres and mental health and addictions clinics. While most will associate the professions of doctors and nurses with health care, in reality, our system is also supported by an entire team of specialized professionals, working together to deliver prevention, diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation.

Many of these people are health care professionals that you will never see nor interact with. But they're there. They may be the MRI technologist who scans your body; the pharmacist who carefully monitors and provides your medication; the physiotherapist that helps you recover from surgery, or the respiratory therapist who manages your ventilator to help you breathe.

But these health care professionals work outside of hospitals as well. From PET technologists who scan every tumour, to radiation therapists who deliver cancer treatment, and the psychologists and family counselors who help patients and their loved ones adjust to the new reality of post-cancer life.

And in long-term care, recreation therapists and music therapists keep our seniors' minds active and stimulated, while dietitians and occupational therapists ensure that their physical needs are met.

These people provide care for the youngest patients in our province, too. From the child life specialists and audiologists at the Children's Hospital, to the speech language pathologists, and child development consultants at child development centres across the province, these professionals ensure



Kane Tse, President, HSA BC; by kind permission of HSA.



that our children can start off their lives with the best support to become whatever they dream of, and most importantly, to be kids, just like every other child on the playground.

This list includes only a small number of the occupations throughout the system, and while the total number of workers in each one may be small in number, they have a huge impact. Without the work that they do, wait lists get longer, treatment is delayed, and treatment beds are occupied for longer than they need to be. Occupying each one of these roles is a caring person, who has studied for years to become proficient in the specialized field where they seamlessly deliver their expertise every day.

But the truth is, these workers are overworked and burning out. After decades of stagnant funding that hasn't kept up with demand, and wage increases that have not kept pace with inflation, health care professionals are in dire shortage. There are many open positions that aren't being filled, and frontline staff are pulling double shifts, working overtime, and then having to go on-call when their extended day is done. It's an all too familiar story that I've heard all across B.C. These problems are present in rural and populated urban centres too, where the highly specialized procedures delivered by electroneurophysiology technologists and cardiology technologists tell of waitlists and cancelled surgeries. Increasingly, the void is being filled by private for-profit services, whether it is cancer patients being sent to the USA, or resorting to staffing agencies to bring in temporary workers in the laboratory or diagnostic imaging.

Privatization is not the solution. Study after study has shown that it is more expensive to the health care system, and through the pandemic, there were abundant examples of health outcomes that were far worse in private long-term care facilities.

The solution is continued investment in the public workforce we have. We need to make jobs in health care a profession that people can build a lifelong career around. In a time of increasing inflationary pressure and high housing prices, this means ensuring wages are competitive with the rest of Canada; and we need retention incentives to keep our strained and overworked professionals within the public system. We need more post-secondary education training seats to build the next generation of our health care work force. And we need loan forgiveness to ensure that graduates stay in B.C.

(cont. on next page)

(cont. from page 5)

As our population ages, and care needs become more complex, a strong and robust system ensures that when we need medical care, in any form, it's there for us, so that we can all live in this beautiful province with dignity and good health.

When I opened this piece, I mentioned all the specialized health care professionals that work alongside doctors and nurses as part of your healthcare team. How many did you recognize? How many do you remember? We've always been an integral part of your care, but we need your help or there will be fewer of us in the future. Don't forget about us now.

Kane Tse has served as president of HSA since 2021. As a member of HSA he worked as an Assistant Bioinformatics Coordinator at the BC Cancer Agency, leading a team who perform analysis on DNA sequence data.

Find your free tax clinic

Free tax clinics are places or services where eligible people can get their tax returns done for free by volunteers. They are hosted by community organizations across Canada through the Community Volunteer Income Tax Program (CVITP) and the Income Tax Assistance - Volunteer Program (ITAVP) in Quebec.

To find a tax clinic near you search "free tax clinics" on the CRA website, call the CRA at 1-800-959-8281, or visit your local library, community centre or Service Canada Centre to get assistance in finding a free clinic.

There are different types of free tax clinics.

- Walk-in: your tax return is completed during advertised hours on a first-come, first-served basis. No appointment needed.

- Drop-off: documents are dropped off during advertised hours. You will pick it up at a later time, with ID.
- By appointment: a clinic where an appointment is needed to file your tax return. Appointments can be scheduled as in person or virtual.
 - In person: a volunteer will do your tax return at a scheduled time.
 - Virtual: a volunteer within your province/territory will do your tax return at a scheduled time by videoconference or by phone.
 - Virtual – Northern communities: for residents in a prescribed zone, a volunteer within or out of your province or territory will do your tax return at a scheduled time by videoconference or by phone.



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Leading the charge: Celebrating firsts as a Black woman in the labour movement

By Irma Mohammed

I, Irma Ingrid Nicholson Mohammed, was born on the island of Trinidad and Tobago, the second child of seven — six girls and one boy.

I am the daughter of Ashton Nicholson and Nella O’Neill George Nicholson. My father died when he was thirty-five years old and my only brother died one year later, aged ten. My grandfather who lived with us died another year later. In three years we lost all the male members of our family, my mother’s parents having died before I was born. As a single mother raising six daughters, my mother taught us to be respectful to our elders but always stand up for our rights.

I attended San Fernando Girls EC School and Beacon College in Trinidad. I married Adrian Hosein Mohammed, had two sons, and migrated to Vancouver, B.C., Canada. My third child, a daughter, and fourth child, another son, were born in Vancouver. I am now the proud grandmother of three grandsons and a granddaughter.

After studying pharmacy at King Edward Community College in Vancouver, I began working at Shaughnessy Hospital in various capacities, including in food services, as unit coordinator, and as a pharmacy technician. It was at Shaughnessy that I attended my first union meeting and became inspired by worker, community, and human rights issues. I was elected to the executive, and subsequently chair of my Hospital Employees Union (HEU) local. It was especially important to me that women who looked like me were visible in the union structure.

HEU offered members the opportunity to take education programs at Capilano College on evenings and weekends, paid for by the union. I took advantage and attended and completed the Capilano labour studies program.



Irma Mohammed; courtesy of Irma Mohammed.

I deepened my labour education at the CLC labour college, offered through the University of Ottawa. Courses included labour law, labour history, and economics. One year later I completed an international program in human rights at the University of Ottawa.

I started attending my union conventions and was the first woman of colour elected to the position of Lower Mainland Regional Vice President and consequently the Third Vice President of HEU. I went on to apply for a staff position and worked as the first Black labour relations officer for HEU.

I was also the first Black woman to be employed as temporary Director of Women’s Rights and Education at the British Columbia Federation of Labour. The position was later made permanent. This work provided many participation and learning opportunities.

As a part of the CLC National Education committee and Women’s Rights committee I taught and facilitated leadership workshops both for CLC (Canadian Labour Congress) and AFLCIO (American Federation of Labour, Congress of Industrial Organi-

zations). These opportunities provided access to many other workers of colour and marginalized workers, especially women bringing voice and visibility to these underrepresented groups.

As a member of the Women in Post Secondary Education of British Columbia, I participated in advancing women in leadership roles in B.C. colleges and universities. I was appointed to the B.C. Multicultural Advisory Council, 1993-1995. From 1997-2002 I was an appointed member, then Vice Chair of the Board of Governors of BCIT (British Columbia Institute of Technology). As a committee we held meetings throughout the province advocating for racial inclusion in government services and agencies.

I served as the Secretary-Treasurer of the Congress of Black Women of Western Canada where we worked to throw a spotlight on issues faced by people of colour. We recognized and celebrated people who made a difference in the building of the Canadian diaspora.

As a member of the Committee for Racial Justice, we worked with church communities, labour organizations and various community organizations, providing community services to ensure that voices of marginalized and racialized people were heard, and issues addressed. As a member of the British Columbia Literacy Advisory Council I helped ensure that marginalized people were provided with opportunities and education for advancement. I also served as Vice Chair of the Coalition of Visible Minority People of BC, where we advocated for the advancement and inclusion of visible minority people in all aspects of training and apprenticeship programs. I am honoured to be the recipient of the Commemorative

(cont. on page 11)

From: Diane Wood
Sent: Sunday, December 15, 2024 5:26 PM
To: Julian, Peter - M.P. <peter.julian@parl.gc.ca>
Subject: Get the Safe Long-Term Care Act right.

Peter Julian,

We need to get the Safe Long-Term Care Act right. The pandemic exposed serious problems in LTC, and we need to do everything we can to protect seniors and support health care workers. The Act is a chance to make real change.

Please ensure the Act includes:

Enforceable National Standards: Ensure the Act adopts mandatory standards based on the Health Standards Organization (HSO) and Canadian Standards Association (CSA) guidelines, including a minimum of 4.5 hours of direct care per resident daily.

Workforce Strategy: Develop a national LTC workforce strategy aligned with the International Labour Organization's 5R Framework to address precarious employment, improve wages, and attract skilled caregivers.

Accountability and Transparency: Tie federal funding to compliance with these standards, and require annual reporting from provinces and territories on key metrics, such as staffing levels and quality of care.

Phase Out For-Profit LTC: Transition funding away from for-profit facilities and private staffing agencies to public and non-profit care models that prioritize residents' well-being over profit.

Seniors in our community deserve safe, high-quality care, and workers deserve fair conditions. The Safe Long-Term Care Act can fix this—but only if it's strong and enforceable.

Thank you for taking action on this critical issue. Peter, I'd love to hear how you plan to support it.

Diane Wood





Dear Diane,

Thank you for writing to me about Safe Long-Term Care Act. As your parliamentary representative, feedback from my constituents is important. Your comments are important. We receive tens of thousands of letters and e-mails each year, so I apologize for the delay in responding. As you may be aware, our small team in our constituency office has helped over 20,000 families and individuals over the last few years, and helping constituents with emergency issues is my top priority.

I agree with you wholeheartedly that we urgently need to fix our long-term care system. Canada's experience during the pandemic has underscored the critical need for long-term care that is truly safe. More than 17,000 seniors died in long-term care homes during the pandemic—twice as many as in other OECD nations. Tragically, half of all Canadians now say they “dread” the day they might have to rely on a nursing home. This fear existed before the pandemic and continues to this day. After a lifetime of contributing to our country, no Canadian senior should live in fear. We have a duty to improve both living and working conditions in long-term care.

This is why the NDP has been working tirelessly, and will continue to fight, for a safe long-term care system for those who need it. Last year, my colleague, Health Critic MP Peter Julian, wrote a letter to the Prime Minister highlighting the urgent need for a Safe Long-Term Care Act. The Liberal government has repeatedly promised to table such an Act to “ensure that seniors are guaranteed the care they deserve, no matter where they live.” However, they have been slow to take action.

Care can't wait. Seniors can't wait. And the often exploited workers—personal support workers and nurses—can't wait either.

We've heard from both families and unions that the current state of long-term care more closely resembles the deplorable conditions described by the Canadian Armed Forces when they intervened in long-term care facilities during the Pandemic, than the misleading portrayals on the websites and brochures of for-profit nursing home corporations. Much of this suffering is directly linked to the for-profit model, where companies prioritize their bottom line over the well-being of seniors. Without proper care standards, these companies can understaff their facilities and underpay the workers who are trying their best to help seniors live with dignity.

The government promised to set standards for long-term care homes to ensure that seniors can age with comfort and safety. Recently, Health Canada has stated that the “legislation will be respectful of provincial-territorial jurisdiction.” However, provincial standards of care vary significantly, as do working conditions. Canada can—and must—do better.

Regardless of where seniors live or their financial situation, the government must guarantee that they receive a high standard of care, and that the workers who care for our families are properly supported and compensated.

Thank you again for writing to me about this important issue. The NDP and I will continue to fight for a Safe Long-Term Care Act so that no more seniors have to suffer. Please don't hesitate to reach out if you have any further questions.

Thank you again for important correspondence and your interest in so many topics. I look forward to seeing you in our terrific community soon.

Sincerely,

Peter

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The future of Canada's public service: Embracing remote work

By Jamey Mills, PSAC BC Regional Executive Vice-President

The future of Canada's federal public service demands more than political posturing—it requires a focus on what really matters: delivering fast, effective, and inclusive services. Remote work has already proven to enhance productivity, reduce costs, and improve sustainability, but it also expands access to government jobs for those in remote and Indigenous communities.

Since the pandemic, remote work has transformed the way Canadians work, with nearly 90% of both public and private sector employees preferring flexible arrangements that improve work-life balance and efficiency. Statistics Canada data confirms



that productivity in the federal public service increased by 4.5% between 2019 and 2023 while workers were largely remote—outpacing private sector productivity.

Beyond efficiency, remote work addresses one of Canada's biggest challenges: affordability. In major urban centres like Vancouver and Victoria, where housing costs are among the highest in Canada, remote work helps avoid daily commuting costs for fuel, meals, and childcare. This financial relief is critical as many households struggle with rising expenses. Meanwhile, the federal government has identified \$6 billion in potential savings by reducing office space by nearly 50%. These underutilized buildings could be repurposed for affordable housing, childcare centres, or other vital community services.

(cont. on next page)



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Every worker's job and situation are unique, and a cookie cutter approach to telework can't be applied to Canada's diverse public service.

We know there's a better way. The outlook for Canada's public service is bright and we're ready to embrace a new future of work because **remote works**.

Join our campaign: remoteworks.ca

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(cont. from previous page)

Reducing unnecessary commutes also alleviates traffic congestion. Metro Vancouver and Victoria rank among Canada’s most gridlocked regions, with workers losing an average of 8.5 hours per week to commuting. Remote work eases this burden, freeing up roads for first responders, transit users, and essential workers. The environmental benefits are equally significant. Research from Carleton University found that pandemic-era remote work led to a 25% reduction in carbon emissions in Ottawa and a 64% reduction in Quebec. Applying similar policies in B.C. could help the province and the country meet ambitious emissions targets.

Crucially, remote work also enhances inclusivity by ensuring that geography is no longer a barrier to employment. Many talented individuals in smaller B.C. communities

—including Indigenous and rural populations—have historically been excluded from federal jobs based in urban centres. By embracing remote work, the government can build a more representative public service that reflects the diversity of the people it serves.

Countries like Australia and the U.K. have already adopted flexible work models. It’s time for Canada’s federal government—the country’s largest employer—to do the same, leading by example and building a modern, diverse, and effective public service for all. Recognizing the significance of remote work, federal unions, including PSAC, representing over 330,000 workers, have launched a national campaign promoting remote work as the future of work in Canada. Join the movement and support remote work by visiting www.remoteworks.ca.

(cont. from page 7)

Medal for the 125th Anniversary Canadian Federation for Community

As a Black woman I have faced many barriers, but was supported by the sisters and a few brothers I’ve met in the labour movement and the broader community. It is this support, countered with my dedication to equal rights for all in every aspect of society, that has enabled me to continue on my path.

My wish as we celebrate Black History Month and International Women’s Day is to continue to be a positive role model with a commitment to volunteer service and to being an inspiration to all.

Irma Mohammed is a long-time union and human rights activist, and is the Congress of Union Retirees of Canada Executive Member representing Workers of Colour & Indigenous Peoples.

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Darryl Walker: Working for community

By Gord Savard, BC FORUM 2nd VP

You can retire, but you don't have to quit. Just ask Darryl Walker, who, after a long career as a union activist, continues to give back to his community.

Darryl was born in Nanaimo, and grew up in Port Coquitlam, where, during his school years, he became a spokesperson for issues involving the working class. After moving to White Rock Darryl became actively involved with the White Rock Theatre, and in coaching and playing soccer and baseball, all while maintaining his union and political activism.

Beginning in the early 1970s, Darryl worked at the Riverview and Forensic Institute for over 40 years. Continuing with his passion for workers' rights, Darryl became active in the BC



Darryl Walker; courtesy of Darryl Walker

Government Employees Union, now the BC General Employees Union. He was elected as Vice President in 1999 and President in 2008, retiring in 2014.

Retirement didn't slow Darryl down for long. He returned to the political

scene in 2018 as the elected Mayor of White Rock serving for four years. During this period, he was involved in TransLink and Metro Vancouver, as well as many community organizations in the area. A major achievement during his time in office was getting the iconic White Rock pier rebuilt after a windstorm caused its destruction in 2018. Standing strong in the knowledge that the pier could not simply be "pieced together", Darryl employed innovative funding options to ensure the pier was rebuilt to the highest standards of safety, and for the enjoyment of the citizens of White Rock and all who visit there.

Post mayorship, Darryl continues to participate, organize, and provide
(cont. on next page)

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(cont. from previous page)

leadership through volunteering in homeless shelters, food programs, the New Years swim, and as a member of the White Rock Rotary executive.

In 2024 Darryl ran as a BC NDP candidate for Surrey White Rock and was narrowly defeated by the Conservative candidate. Last year he was elected president of the South Surrey White Rock Provincial NDP Riding Association. Darryl continues his forward thinking by engaging members and supporters to become more involved with BC NDP, and holding forums on topics of importance to the community. Those who work with Darryl are excited to see what he has in store for the future.

Darryl still makes time for his three grown children and six grandchildren, gardening, travel and live theatre. He is proof that retiring from the shop floor does not mean retiring from the fight.

Bill Brassington: A legacy

By Sam Wiese, BC FORUM President

Anyone who knew him will agree that Bill Brassington was one of a kind. He was the epitome of a soft spoken, gentle man, until he came across an inequity or injustice. In battles he maintained such poise that antagonists were left thanking him for his annihilation of their bias. I was so very fortunate to have called him brother, mentor, but most of all, friend.

From playing a key role in the formation of the Public Service Alliance of Canada and bringing activism and solidarity to the Canada Employment and Immigration Union, to recognizing the need of a permanent labour focused non-governmental organization, Bill walked the walk every step he took. His help in the creation of, and continued



devotion to, Co-Development Canada is testament to Bill's quest for international solidarity.

There are only so many people who come into your life who have a huge impact, Bill was such a person. He will be greatly missed.

From the Office of the Seniors Advocate

The following are a few highlights from the Seniors Advocate, Dan Levitt. For full details search Seniors Advocate – Government of British Columbia – newsletters (seniorsadvocatebc.ca).

Monitoring seniors services

The 2024 report revealed B.C. seniors enjoying longer, healthier lives, but increasing waitlists for vital services raised significant concerns:

- Waitlists for knee and hip replacements for people 65+ increased 53% and 59% respectively.
- There were 6,500 people waiting for a publicly-subsidized long-term care (LTC) bed in 2023/24, a 150% increase from five years ago (2,600).
- Applications for seniors subsidized housing increased 59% over five years; just 6% of total applicants received a unit last year.
- The number of unfulfilled Handy-Dart ride requests increased 44%, while the number of rides provided decreased 15%.

Chronic Disease Self Management Program

Self-Management BC offers free health programs for adults of all ages with one or more ongoing health conditions. Check out their website to learn more: www.selfmanagementbc.ca. Their toll free telephone number is 1-866-902-3767

Campaign in support of UN Resolution on Rights of Older Persons

To show support go to the International Longevity Centre of Canada website www.ilccanada.org to find a copy of a letter we hope you will send to Minister Thompson. All you need to do is insert your name where Kathleen's is. You should also cc the NDP Critic for Seniors: Rachel.blaney@gc.ca. www.ilccanada.org/whats-new/letter-for-the-honourable-joanne-thompson-minister-of-seniors

From Dan Levitt's March 2025 message to seniors

At the end of February, I had the opportunity to join with Newfoundland and Labrador Seniors' Advocate Susan Walsh to meet with many organizations advocating for seniors at the national level including the Canadian Centre for Caregiving Excellence and National Institute on Ageing. We have jointly presented on the impact of age discrimination on important issues affecting seniors across the country, including lack of appropriate and affordable housing, wait lists for seniors' services such as long-term care and home support, and income challenges.

March is Fraud Prevention Month. Cases of fraud have been steadily rising over the past few years and are becoming increasingly sophisticated. It is more important than ever for seniors to increase their awareness of current scams and learn how to protect themselves and their loved ones.

From the federal Minister of Seniors

The following are from Minister Joanne Thompson's January newsletter of pertinence to BC FORUM members. For complete and regular updates sign up at Canada.ca and search for updates from the Minister of Seniors.

In her January Message to Seniors Minister Thompson said "As your new Minister of Seniors, I am both honoured and eager to make a difference for you. My commitment to supporting Canada's aging population is unwavering. I strongly believe that we must continue to work together so that every senior has the programs and services needed to live with dignity, independence and security."

Here are some highlights from the past few weeks. Like the past Minister for Seniors, MP Thompson is continuing to use the Facebook page "Seniors in Canada" to reach us. We have writ-

ten a letter to the Minister advising that until every senior in Canada is provided with free access to the internet, along with the tools required to use it, her messages are only reaching a pitifully small number of seniors.

Foiling fraudsters

Fraudsters are getting sneakier—but we're here to uncover their tricks! To help expose different tactics scammers use, this year's activities are:

- Week 1: The disguises fraudsters create.
- Week 2: Lifting the lid off the fraudster's toolbox.
- Week 3: Facing the victims of fraud.
- Week 4: The fight against fraud.

To find out more you can visit: <https://ow.ly/PMzp50V7YRW>

Filing taxes online

Roughly 83% of Canadians successfully filed their tax returns electronically last year. NETFILE is a fast and convenient way to file your income tax return.

Find out about online tax filing at <https://ow.ly/7AqT50V7Zkh>.

National Seniors Council

Canada's Minister of Seniors and Canada's Minister of Health have new members on the National Seniors Council which will advise the Government of Canada on issues related to the health, well-being and quality of life of Canadian seniors.

To learn more about how the National Seniors Council works go to <https://ow.ly/A8ev50V5mWSI>

UNITED STEELWORKERS SOAR STEELWORKERS ORGANIZATION OF ACTIVE RETIREES

Who are we?

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

What do we do?

We work collaboratively with other seniors' groups to improve our communities and engage in political and educational activities to enhance the well-being of our members.

Can you join?

Yes, if you can agree with and support the guiding principles and programs of SOAR. Annual dues are reasonable at \$12 for individual membership and \$15 for a couple.

Ready to join?

Contact District 3 SOAR Coordinator Brian Harder at 604-341-6382 or visit usw.ca/soar.



Supporting BC FORUM has never been so important

Through our unions we saw the benefits of collective action. We know our voices are strongest when we stand 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 we maintain strong links with provincial and national seniors' groups. Here's how you can support and benefit from BC FORUM:

Renew your membership

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, 110 - 4295 Canada Way, Burnaby, BC V5G 1H1; or renew online at www.bcforum.ca.

Encourage your friends to join!

Together, we can make a difference for ourselves and our families. Please encourage friends, colleagues and family members to join!

Many unions cover first year dues

BC FORUM actively welcomes union members who are 50 and better, working or retired, and the list of unions that cover the first (and some up to three years!) membership for their qualified members keeps growing! If you're not yet a member, contact your union for details. Solidarity makes us strong!



Extend the benefits of membership to your spouse

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

We are proud to 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.



Your expiry date is on the mailing label. BCGEU, BCFMW, HSA, MoveUp, CEU, CUPE Locals 386, 402 and 7000; UFCW 1518, Heat and Frost, and LiUNA 1611 pay first year dues for qualified members.



B.C. Federation of Retired Union Members • #110- 4259 Canada Way, Burnaby, BC V5G 1H1
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

Single membership:	<input type="checkbox"/> \$20 - 1 year	<input type="checkbox"/> \$49 - 3 years
With AD&D for spouse:	<input type="checkbox"/> \$25 - 1 year	<input type="checkbox"/> \$64 - 3 years
<input type="checkbox"/> Cheque	<input type="checkbox"/> Visa	<input type="checkbox"/> MC Expiry __ / __ CVV* __
Card number:	__ __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __	

.....
SIGNATURE

Date of application: _____
DAY MONTH YEAR

* Required for Accidental Death & Dismemberment group insurance coverage to age 86.
 * Credit card companies now require the CVV for payment to be processed.

Joining together to support older workers

By Barb Nederpel, President, HEU

We all know the health care system is struggling to attract and retain workers. When I meet with our members, I frequently hear stories of workers in their 70s who are still on the job caring for patients and residents.

Many of these workers keep going out of necessity. They struggle with affordability and debt, continue to support children and dependent family members, and don't have enough retirement income. Many Hospital Employee Union (HEU) members have been denied a pension due to years of privatization and cuts by the BC Liberals.

Older workers face age discrimination and have unique needs and issues. They deserve a voice in our union.

So at our recent convention in October 2024, 800-plus HEU delegates voted to create an older persons committee and diversity vice-president seat on our executive board, to represent members aged 55 and over.

This new committee will join six other equity-seeking groups with constitutional standing, including members of colour, Indigenous members, members with disabilities, members who identify as LGBTQIA+, members who identify as Two-Spirit, women or non-binary, and young workers (aged 35 and under).

HEU has a long history of fighting racism and discrimination, including right wing government attacks that disproportionately affect women and racialized workers.

HEU has fought for pay equity for health care workers and championed same-sex benefits for members.

Our equity standing committees, first established in 1996, are of paramount importance in identifying and tackling discrimination within our union and workplaces.

The committees are governed by the HEU Constitution & By-Laws and



Barb Nederpel, President, HEU. Used with kind permission of HEU.

support equity-seeking members to connect, identify shared concerns, and take action through our convention and bargaining. Committee members are also engaged in local and community activism and outreach.

In 2021, we made the historic move to create an additional six seats on our Provincial Executive – our governing board – corresponding to each equity standing committee.

These Diversity Vice-Presidents (DVPs) serve as a direct voice for

equity-seeking members and their issues at key decision-making tables.

The first Older Persons Equity Standing Committee will be elected at a meeting in March, and the first Older Persons DVP will be elected at our 2026 convention.

Committee members will serve a two-year term and join other equity standing committee members in tackling issues of discrimination. We can't wait to see what issues this group will tackle.

New address? New e-mail address?

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



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