Advocate

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Advocate

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Mailing address:
110-4259 Canada Way
Burnaby BC V5G 1H1
Toll-free 1.800.896.5678
Tel. 604.688.4565
bcforum@bcfed.ca

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In this edition

We made it to the final edition of The Advocate for 2025, and through this tumultuous year. Featured in this edition is the BC public service strike that demonstrated the power of solidarity, the federal NDP leadership race and why the labour-NDP partnership is crucial to working people, and we share ways to keep you and your home safe this winter. As always, we hope you enjoy this edition of The Advocate. Have a wonderful holiday season, and see you in 2026!

We respectfully acknowledge that the BC FORUM office is located on unceded lands of the Coast Salish Peoples, including the territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), səl̓ílwətaʔɬ (Tsleil-Waututh), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) Nations.

Reflections on collective achievements, and future challenges

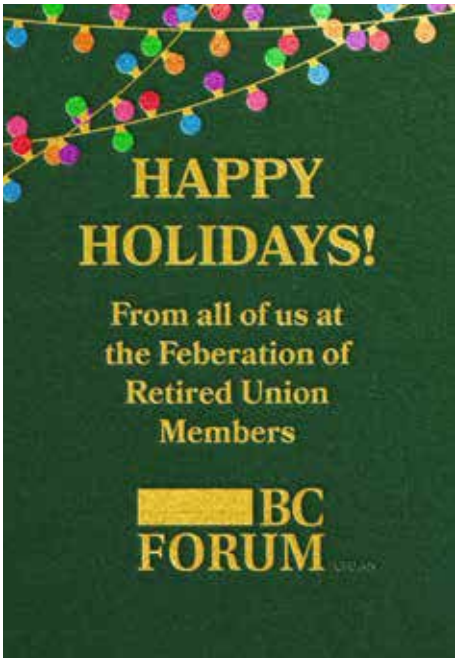
By Sam Wiese, BC FORUM President

As 2025 draws to a close, many of us are reflecting on a year that felt both hopeful and frustrating. For retired and older union members in British Columbia—people who spent decades on the shop floor, in classrooms, hospitals, docks, and countless other workplaces—this year underscored both the strength of our collective achievements and the challenges that remain.

Across Canada, working people, seniors, and families faced real pressures. Stubborn inflation, rising drug costs, and a health-care system still recovering from years of strain made it harder than ever to get needed care and medications. For retired members on fixed incomes, these pressures undermine dignity, stability, and health.

That's why disappointment around the federal government's pharmacare approach was so sharp. Its own advisory committee recommended a fully funded, national essential medicines list—without separate provincial deals—as a practical first step toward universal pharmacare. Evidence showed this was achievable and rooted in the principle that people should be able to access medications without worrying about cost.

Instead, federal Minister of Health Marjorie Michel dismissed that recommendation. By pursuing province by province agreements, the government risks fragmenting coverage, delaying implementation, and weakening universality. The Minister of Health, obviously supported by Prime Minister Carney, has further diminished the importance of the national Pharmacare Act by stating they will "wait and see how things go" on those agreements already in place. For many this felt like a retreat



from decades of advocacy. Universal pharmacare has been studied and recommended repeatedly—from the 1964 Hall Commission to the Hoskins report—always with the same conclusion: a national, publicly funded, single payer program is the most efficient and equitable way forward.

Retired members know how long this fight has been. Many marched, bargained, and organized for Medicare itself. National health programs aren't won overnight—they're built through persistent pressure, public demand, and political courage. That's why the advisory committee's recommendation mattered: it echoed what working people and seniors have said for years—pharmacare should be universal, not dependent on income or postal code.

But 2025 wasn't only about setbacks. It was also a year when solidarity proved powerful. The BCGEU/PEA strike brought thousands of public sector professionals together on picket lines across the province, reminding British Columbians that the services we rely on depend on the people who provide them. Their stand for fair wages, manageable workloads, and respect resonated far beyond public service. Retired members watched with pride as younger workers carried forward values we fought for: equity, stability, and a strong public sector.

We also witnessed the Unite Here! Local 40 lockout at the Coast Hotel Victoria, where hospitality workers—many long term, low wage, and disproportionately women and newcomers—were locked out for demanding job security and fair pay. Their struggle highlighted the widening gap between corporate profits and workers' ability to build stable lives. Retired union members joined those lines too, continuing the tradition of intergenerational solidarity that defines our movement. These disputes reminded us of both the challenges workers face today and the enduring power of collective action.

This solidarity will be even more important in 2026. As we enter a federal election year, retired members remain one of the most influential voting blocs. Politicians know this—but it's up to us to insist they listen. We must remind them that the people who kept this country running deserve more than patchwork programs.

Looking forward, there is reason for hope. Pharmacare is supported by a majority of Canadians, health care experts, labour unions, providers, and seniors' advocates. With continued pressure, the federal government can still course correct. The essential medicines list remains a powerful starting point, and years of study mean implementation could begin sooner than many think.

(cont. on page 6)

The labour-NDP partnership is crucial to working people… and to the NDP

by Sussanne Skidmore, BCFED President

Last month's BC NDP convention drove something home for me… literally.

As I was walking into the Victoria Convention Centre entrance, I saw a carload of delegates arriving by Uber.

And it occurred to me I was seeing something you don't see anywhere else in Canada: proudly unionized Uber drivers!

That's only possible because of the courage of Victoria Uber drivers… the relentless dedication of UFCW 1518's organizers…and single-step certification, brought in by the BC NDP government.

These are tremendously difficult times for a lot of working people in BC. Yet we're able to work with our government to make things better. And they are getting better.

There's a young mom in New Westminster who got up at dawn this morning to go to her job building the new Patullo Bridge — because we're investing in skilled trades.

There's a dad in Prince George who woke up sick and knew he could afford to stay home and get better — because he has five days of paid sick leave.

There's a retail worker in Duncan who has one good full-time job instead of stringing together three low-paid part-time jobs — because they got their union and a decent collective agreement.

These are tough times, but that only makes our partnership with the NDP more important than it's been in a long time… maybe ever.

True, we have frustrations when we want government to go further or faster. And we make that clear at every opportunity. We remind them progressive government is never just about managing: it's about showing working people you're fighting for them every moment of the day.

Sussanne Skidmore, BCFED President. By kind permission of the BCFED.

And it's about showing working people that, as tough as this moment is, we were made for it.

The answers working people need are progressive ones: delivered urgently, effectively and without apology.

That message came through loud and clear at the BC NDP's convention. And what was especially gratifying is that it didn't come just for labour (although we were shouting it from the rafters!)

It came from rank and file New Democrats. It came from MLAs and cabinet ministers. And it came from Premier David Eby himself.

So let's challenge each other and help each other to do more, and do it better, and move our province to ever greater heights of justice. Let's take every action large and small that we can find to make life better and easier for working people, and help them through these difficult times.

Federal NDP Leadership Contestant Profiles

The Advocate is including the following for information.

NDP federal party members will have the opportunity to elect their next leader through the party's one-member-one-vote system, using a ranked ballot. There are five officially approved contestants seeking the leadership of Canada's NDP— a B.C. dock worker, a climate activist, a seasoned Alberta MLA, a social worker, and an Ontario farmer—each bringing unique skills and experience.

Here are some excerpts from their official profiles posted on the federal NDP leadership website. Further information about every candidate, how to vote, and when to vote, can be found at: leadership.ndp.ca

Rob Ashton

I'm Rob, a dockworker and a union member for over 30 years.

Today, I'm the President of the International Longshore Workers Union Canada. I've fought for workers and my community. I've built coalitions across movements for fairness and equity.

Canadians want to be able to afford to put a roof over their heads and food on the table, look forward to a comfortable retirement, and still have enough left over to enjoy life with their loved ones.

I'm ready to fight back against the loopholes that let the ultra-rich and big corporations call the shots, and a system that treats housing like a casino for investors instead of homes for people.

It's time to put people before profits, every single time.

Avi Lewis

Avi Lewis is a veteran journalist, educator and activist who brings 35 years of movement-building experience to his campaign for NDP leadership

As a two-time federal NDP candidate (West Vancouver–Sunshine Coast–Sea-to-Sky 2021, Vancouver Centre 2025), Avi understands the challenges facing our party and the communities we serve.

Avi co-founded The Leap in 2017, mobilizing thousands of Canadians to confront the intersecting crises of climate, inequality, and racism through grassroots action.

This unique combination of electoral experience, movement leadership, media expertise, and educational commitment positions Avi to unite our party's diverse coalition while expanding our reach to new supporters.

Heather McPherson

Heather knows how to build and win. Elected in 2019, she and her team have made Edmonton Strathcona the strongest NDP seat in the country.

Before politics, Heather spent nearly 20 years working for human rights, sustainable development, and global justice. With a Master's degree in education focused on Indigenous knowledge and sustainability, she has always been grounded in service and fairness.

... she has advanced legislation to protect pensions, defend public health care, strengthen environmental reviews, and support people living with ADHD.

Heather is committed to making sure everyone has a place at the table – and to what Canadians want to believe again: in each other, in fairness, and in good people making a difference.

Tanille Johnston

Tanille Johnston (she/her) is a proud Liğʷiłdaxʷ woman from the WeWaiKai First Nation, a social worker, a mother, and a bold new voice for the future of the NDP.

Tanille's leadership has always been grounded in action, whether delivering frontline services, building healthier communities, or advancing change within institutions.

In 2025 she ran as the federal NDP candidate for North Island—Powell River.

Tanille knows that a stronger NDP starts with and will be upheld by listening, driving forward action through grassroots organizing, and stepping up in the House to fight for what's right. She's not here to play it safe; she's here to build a movement.

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Tony McQuail

Tony McQuail was born in 1952 in Pennsylvania, USA.

He emigrated to Canada in 1971. In 1973 he purchased a run down 100-acre farm in Huron County, Ontario. While farming, he went to university and graduated with a Bachelor of Environmental Studies from the University of Waterloo in 1976.

He has run 5 times federally and twice provincially for the NDP. In the early 90's he served as the Executive Assistant to the Hon. Elmer Buchanan, Ontario Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

McQuail has been extensively involved in community and volunteer organizations, including the Ecological Farmers Association of Ontario, the Huron Farmers Union and the Huron Federation of Agriculture.

(cont. from page 3)

Beyond pharmacare, 2026 offers opportunities to push for strong public health care, sustainable pensions, climate resilient jobs, and a fairer economy for younger generations. Retired union members have always been among the strongest voices for social progress—not just for ourselves but for those who follow. That solidarity is needed now more than ever.

As we publish the final edition of The Advocate for 2025, I thank every reader for your involvement. Retirement does not mean stepping back—it means stepping into a new role shaped by experience. Your voices carry weight, your stories carry history, and your determination continues to inspire.

Here's to a new year of advocacy, solidarity, and the fight for a Canada where health is never determined by the cost of a prescription. Let's make 2026 the year we push harder than ever to protect public healthcare and win the universal pharmacare system Canadians deserve.

Bring HandyDART into public service

By Stephen von Sychowski

The following are Stephen's comments to the BC NDP convention in November in support of Resolution C2. With thanks to Stephen, we are proud to share them in this edition of the Advocate.

HandyDART bus, courtesy of ATU Local 1724

We stand with our neighbors in NWDLC, with BCFED, with disability rights organizations and seniors groups, with HandyDART riders, with HandyDART workers,and with mayors representing over 73% of residents in our region in demanding that the provincial government and TransLink insource HandyDART!

This service has been contracted out for a long time, and both riders and workers have paid the price while private for-profit corporations siphon money out of our public service and our province and into their coffers.

We say enough!

TransLink's unaccountable appointed board held a secret meeting at the end of October, and they decided there to proceed with their decision on December 3.

No public consultation. No hearing from stakeholders.

We've been told we can register to speak at the meeting, well after the report and recommendation have already been written and placed in the hands of the Board.

This transit agency is out of control.

Now the BC NDP made insourcing HandyDART a PROMISE in it's 2024 election platform.

That promise lives up to the values we all share. Values of public services for people, not for profit.

After years of standing side-by-side decrying the privatization, contracting out, and P3's of the BC Liberals, we cannot watch the BC NDP become a contracting out government today.

And what about supporting our local economy during a trade war. The Buy Canadian slogan would be belied by contracting out this service again.

What about standing up for communities? What about working for working people?

The BC Liberals were happy to intervene in TransLink to get their way. Why is our government not so bold now that it's time to act to protect seniors, people living with disabilities, and the workers who serve them?

Contracting out would be a betrayal of the promise made to an entire community of people who saw hope in the BC NDP's election promise, and volunteers donated and voted based on that hope.

It would be a betrayal of our values, and of our trust.

This convention must send a strong, clear, decisive message. The BC NDP government must ensure that HandyDART services in Metro Vancouver, and across BC, and brought inhouse

And that all residents of BC have access to the safe, reliable public transportation that they deserve.

And I'll end on something we heard in the video from Premier Horgan yesterday – "we were successful because we did what we said we would do, and what we did was for the people."

Sadly, on December 3rd, the Translink Board voted 6-3 in favour of maintaining the current contracted-out system.

Standing together: The PEA and BCGEU strengthen public-sector solidarity

By Jordana Whetter, PEA

This past September and October, the Government Licensed Professionals (GLP) Chapter of the Professional Employees Association (PEA) stood shoulder to shoulder with BCGEU members on picket lines across the province in one of the most significant public service strikes in British Columbia's recent history. Although the BCGEU ratified their collective agreement on November 13, the GLP bargaining committee continues negotiations and had not yet reached a tentative agreement at the time of writing. However, the impact of this historic strike is clear. Solidarity wins.

All photos used by kind permission of the Public Employees Association (PEA).

The PEA was established in 1974 to represent Government Licensed Professionals in the BC public service and now also represents workers in education, legal, union, and health care sectors. GLP members are licensed experts who take an oath of office to serve the people of British Columbia and who are bound by the standards of their professions.

"Our GLP members include engineers who keep bridges and dams structurally sound, geoscientists who assess landslide and flood risks, psychologists who support vulnerable youth, and many other experts that the province relies on," said Melissa Moroz, PEA Executive Director and lead negotiator. "This job action highlighted the important work of these professionals within the public service."

The strike followed months of bargaining where the provincial government failed to address the union's key proposals. For the PEA, these included wages that keep pace with inflation, reimbursement of required professional licensing fees, compensation during provincial emergencies, and protection of career progression for government lawyers. Many of our proposals mirrored those of the BCGEU, and standing together made our messages stronger. Our two unions share pension and benefits, and progress at one table influences outcomes at the other. BCGEU and PEA members work side-by-side in most ministries of the public service.

Together, we escalated our strike strategically, choosing government ministries to target in coordination. This created a united front. Our shared picket lines, joint press conferences, and large-scale rallies demonstrated unity, resolve, and a commitment to protecting public services.

"Beyond what we achieved at the table, the strike's greatest gain was solidarity," said Moroz. "The rights in our contract were won decades ago by workers who are now retired, and this moment was a reminder that the fight must continue. Our union is defending what was built and pushing for what's needed now and in the future. We're truly grateful for the support of the wider labour movement."

The 2025 B.C. public service strike: A historic collective achievement

By Jocelyn Wagner, BCGEU

One of the longest and most consequential public service strikes in B.C. history took place this year. And the landscape of public sector bargaining in B.C. has been reshaped.

Between September 2 and October 26, 2025, nearly 28,000 members of the B.C. General Employees' Union (BCGEU) – all direct employees of B.C. government ministries, agencies, services and crown corporations – took part in eight weeks of job action. They stood in solidarity with members of the Professional Employees Association (PEA). Together, they fought for fair wages that address the affordability crisis facing public service workers and all working people in B.C.

For the BCGEU—who represents more than 90,000 workers across British Columbia—the strike and the final agreement represent an extraordinary demonstration of solidarity, determination, and democratic power. It also showed how much public service workers care about the people of British Columbia.

"Every picket shift and every act of support helped make this outcome possible," said BCGEU president Paul Finch. "We did not decide to strike easily. Our members care about the public and sustainable public services. That is why we kept essential services running while also making it clear that workers deserve respect and fair treatment."

The strike began after a long and challenging round of negotiations. The last agreement ended on March 31, 2025, and talks started on January 22. By July 18, the parties reached a dead end. Members responded with overwhelming clarity about what to do: on August 25, they voted 92.7% in favour of striking

All photos used by kind permission of the BCGEU.

Top right: Paul Finch, BCGEU President, addresses members and supporters; bottom left: Paul Finch Sussanne Skidmore, PEA Executive Director Melissa Moroz, and other labour leaders march in protest. Top left: rally at Canada Place; bottom right: union members march in protest.

86.4% of eligible members having voted. That same day, they filed strike notice. Job action started on September 2.

The strike grew stronger through September and early October. At first, only specific worksites walked off the job. Soon, entire ministries followed. In total, over 550 government worksites went on strike in 150 communities. It took more than 2,000 picket captains, plus thousands more people completing alternate duties like research, community outreach, emails to MLAs and social media content, to help sustain morale—marking the first public service strike to incorporate virtual picket lines. BCGEU members and their labour allies also held major rallies in Vancouver and Victoria that saw over 10,000 people in the streets calling on the provincial government to return to the bargaining table with a reasonable wage offer.

Behind the scenes, the work was huge. The BCGEU built new systems quickly to deliver supplies, track strike shifts, and send electronic strike pay to thousands of members. They made sure members' voices were heard in the media, online, and on the ground across B.C.

On October 16, after nearly seven weeks of striking, the BCGEU's bargaining committee agreed to enter non-binding mediation. It took eight intense days with the employer and respected mediators Vince Ready and Amanda Rogers to reach a tentative agreement and return-to-work plan. But it was sufficient – on November 13, members ratified the agreement with 89.3% support and a remarkable 79% voter turnout.

This collective agreement delivers important gains for BCGEU members: wage increases to address the affordability crisis, a pathway to a new and fairer classification system, a new and faster process to resolve simple grievances, the means to rein in unnecessary exclusions, and fair access to telework.

"These achievements were only possible because of the hard work, sacrifice and teamwork of BCGEU and PEA members. The legacy of this strike goes beyond the improvements we won in our new collective agreement – it marks a turning point for our union, and hopefully for working people across the province – showing that transformative change is possible when thousands get involved, stand together and refuse to back down."

At the time of writing, the PEA has not yet reached a tentative agreement.

Preparing for winter and staying safe

One of the traditions that has defined the labour movement is the way people look out for one another. Whether it's checking in during a cold snap, helping someone shovel a walkway, or keeping your emergency home and vehicle supplies in good shape, these small actions strengthen our sense of community.

Our strong community tradition to look out for one another includes good preparation! As we move into another B.C. winter, many of us—especially those of us who've lived through plenty of them—know that the season brings both beauty and challenges. Some years the weather is mild and other years we get deep freezes, heavy snow or endless rain, and when we least expect it, we get storms that knock out the power. Keeping these challenges in mind, it's a good time to take a few simple steps to stay safe and comfortable over the next few months. A little planning really does make a big difference, especially for seniors, people living alone, and folks in rural areas.

Nicole from WV Insurance has shares helpful advice about winterizing our homes (page 11). There are a few additional tips worth keeping in mind.

We can stay on top of weather alerts through Environment and Climate Change Canada, especially when cold snaps or storms are approaching. When temperatures plummet, even a quick check-in call to an older relative or neighbour can make a big difference.

It also helps to know the signs of cold-related illnesses like hypothermia and frostbite. Shivering, chattering teeth, decreased focus and motor skills are early signs that your body core temperature is dropping too low. Time to get that cozy blanket and a hot toddy started, and, while a good old fashioned snowball battle can be fun, if you notice a tingling sensation or discolouration of the skin consider it to be frostbite and start gentle warming of the area.

Away from home, winter driving in B.C. can be unpredictable when you are travelling along northern and rural roads, whether you're tackling Interior highways, mountain passes or visiting Vancouver Island. Before heading out, check DriveBC for current conditions and make sure your vehicle has proper winter tires, either the mountain snowflake symbol or M+S, which are required on many highways from October through April. This is definitely not the season to rush. It's a good idea to give yourself a little extra time when you're on the road.

On longer trips, pack a winter emergency kit for your vehicle. A good kit doesn't need to be complicated. It can include basics like a first aid kit, a flashlight, a portable phone charger, jumper cables or a booster pack, reflective triangles or flares, an ice scraper, a small shovel, and something for traction such as sand or kitty litter.

A few simple vehicle supplies can also come in handy, like tire chains (especially if they're required where you're going), tow rope, and windshield washer fluid rated for very cold temperatures.

For warmth, it's helpful to pack items like blankets or a sleeping bag, extra mitts, hats, socks sweaters or jackets and hand warmers. It may not be ideal to drive wearing heavy winter boots, but carrying a pair in the vehicle with you definitely is.

It's smart to include some water and non-perishable snacks. Little extras like a candle in a tin, matches, paper maps, and a note pad take up almost no space but can be extremely useful in unexpected situations. It's surprising how much peace of mind these items can provide when winter weather changes suddenly.

In extreme cold events B.C. communities open warming centres that provide safe indoor spaces available to anyone needing warmth. Locations differ from place to place, but they're easy to find through municipal websites, social media, and at EmergencyMapBC.ca or by calling or texting 211.

Think of this as a friendly reminder to check in on your own winter readiness and maybe share a few tips with neighbours, friends, and family. Winter can bring its challenges, but with a little planning and plenty of care for one another, we can get through the season safely and enjoy what it has to offer.

Winterizing your home when away

By Nicole Lychak-Smith, WV Insurance

When leaving your home for an extended period during the cold months, it's important to prepare it properly to avoid potential damage. Winterizing your home can help protect against issues like frozen pipes, water damage and costly repairs.

Here are some steps to help ensure your house remains safe and sound:

Key takeaways

- Shutting off the water supply and insulating pipes can prevent frozen pipes and costly repairs.
- Enlist help managing snow removal, monitoring heating systems and maintaining your home's safety while you're away.
- Use technology like water leak detectors, smart thermostats and security cameras to monitor your home remotely.

Prepare your home's heating system

Before you leave, check your heating system to prevent any issues during the cold weather.

Ensure your furnace is operating properly by scheduling a professional inspection and replacing air filters. If you have a gas fireplace, turn your gas line off to prevent gas leaks or other gas-related incidents.

A smart thermostat can also be a valuable tool. It allows you to monitor and adjust settings remotely, which can be particularly useful if unexpected power surges or other issues occur.

Protect your plumbing

One of the most important steps in winterizing your home is protecting your plumbing. Frozen pipes can burst which may cause significant water damage.

Here's how to prepare:

- Insulate pipes: Use pipe insulation or heat tape on exposed pipes. Pay special attention to water pipes in unheated areas like crawl spaces and outdoor faucets.
- Shut off the water supply: Turn off the water valve (mains) to prevent leaks. Open all the faucets and flush all the toilets to drain the remaining water from pipes and toilet tanks.
- Empty the pipes thoroughly: Run all your taps inside and outside to ensure they are emptied. Consider hiring a professional who can assist or show you how to ensure your pipes are free of water.
- Water heater: For extra precaution, consider draining your electric water heater. This step can help prevent any issues related to freezing temperatures.
- Leave cabinet doors open: Open the doors to cabinets in your kitchen, bathroom or any other areas that house pipes. This allows warm air to circulate around the pipes, helping to prevent freezing.

If you have a sprinkler system or washing machines, make sure to drain and winterize them as well. For additional protection, a licensed plumber can offer advice tailored to your home's plumbing system.

Secure your home

Even while away, maintaining security is important. Here are ways to keep your vacant property secure:

- Install security cameras: Set up security cameras to monitor your home remotely.
- Weather stripping and locks: Check weather stripping around doors and windows to ensure they are properly sealed. Make sure all entry points are locked securely.
- Simulate occupancy: Use timers or smart plugs to control lights, creating the appearance that someone is home.
- Activate your alarm: Make sure your home security system is working properly and engaged when you leave. Have a monitoring service to manage the situation if the alarm goes off in your absence.

Prepare for snow and ice

As all Canadians know, winter weather can be harsh, so, it's essential to be ready for snow and ice:

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- Clear roof and gutters: Remove leaves and debris to prevent ice dams that can cause water damage.
- Arrange for snow removal: Hire a service to clear snow and ice from driveways and walkways regularly. This helps prevent accidents and keeps your property accessible.
- Maintain snow removal equipment: Ensure necessary equipment, such as snow shovels and blowers, and other supplies, are available and in good working condition.

Other safety measures for extended absences

Taking additional safety measures can help protect your home:

- Notify a trusted neighbour: Arrange for someone to check on your home periodically. Provide a list of emergency contacts and instructions.
- Manage your mail: Pause your mail delivery while you're away, or ask a trusted neighbour to collect it during your absence.
- Unplug appliances: Unplugging appliances like microwave ovens can prevent potential fire hazards and save energy.
- Empty your fridge and cabinets. To avoid growing mould and attracting critters, dispose of open food or food that will spoil.
- Review your insurance coverage: Ensure your policy covers any issues that might arise while away.

Pro-tip: if your home is insured, there may be additional requirements for policyholders to meet to maintain coverage when leaving their properties for an extended period. Be sure to contact your insurance broker to check before you go.

Nicole Lychak-Smith is Branch Manager of Working Venture Insurance Solutions (WV) in Kelowna. For the right insurance products and great service that supports union members, reach out to WV: 1-800-663-4200 or wvins.ca.

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).

Healthy Aging volunteer training opportunity

CORE BC Healthy Aging: CORE BC is launching free digital training modules for volunteers in the Community-Based Seniors Services sector. These upcoming modules will cover a variety of topics to help volunteers gain the skills, knowledge, and insights they need to make an impact. Whether you're already volunteering or considering it, this is a great chance to grow your capacity and support seniors more effectively. Learn more at: bc.healthyagingcore.ca/volunteer-training

No commitment to action plan for LTC

Excerpts from Dan Levitt's media release of October 1, 2025:

"On the United Nations International Day of Older Persons, BC Seniors Advocate Dan Levitt says the provincial government has failed to develop an action plan to address the long-term care crisis. "Today, we celebrate seniors and their many contributions, as well as reaffirm their right to live with dignity. This year's theme is 'Older Persons Driving Local and Global Action: Our Aspirations, Our Well-Being, Our Rights' which recognizes the role seniors play in driving change both locally and globally. "Seniors in B.C. are incredibly active and give tirelessly to their communities through leadership, volunteerism and paid work. Yet as their need for care grows, they are met with ballooning waitlists and an escalating crisis in seniors' care."

"I had asked for assurance that government was acting on my recommendations by requesting an action plan be developed by October 1. However, I have received no confirmation that an action plan is being developed, or if there is even a plan to create a plan. The lack of long-term care in B.C. is a crisis in the making, and government must act now."

Ageing isn't the problem – ageism is!

Excerpts from Dan Levitt's media release of October 9, 2025:

"October 9 is Ageism Awareness Day and an opportunity to reflect how age discrimination manifests in our daily lives to reduce its prevalence. "Ageism refers to stereotypes (how we think), prejudices (how we feel), and discrimination (how we act) towards others and ourselves based on age. The World Health Organization says ageism affects people of all ages and it negatively impacts health, well-being and human rights."

"British Columbia can be a leader in advancing the rights of seniors by improving access to

health care; building more long-term care and seniors subsidized housing; strengthening rent subsidies and income supports; supporting reliable and affordable transportation services, and creating age-friendly communities throughout the province. "Ageing is good. Ageism is bad. When we embrace ageing, we combat ageism. By eliminating all forms of ageism, we create a better future for everyone."

Since the last edition of The Advocate, there have been several Government of BC news releases of interest to seniors. From announcing the start of a new long term care facility in Penticton, the opening of homes for Indigenous Peoples in Port Alberni to affordable housing in Vancouver, it appears our housing crisis is starting to be addressed. Full details of these and other media releases can be found at: news.gov.bc.ca

From the federal Minister of Seniors

Below are excerpts of recent posts by Stephanie McLean, Secretary of State for Seniors, via the Facebook page "Seniors in Canada", hosted by Service Canada.

Old Age Security

Old Age Security (OAS) is an important income stream for millions of Canadians each year.

However, there are a few things to keep in mind to ensure you get the benefits you deserve.

1. Make sure to report all income, including part-time work, rental income, or income from a hobby.

2. Be careful of aggressive deductions or tax credits. Some tax advisors might promise you big refunds using methods that may be questionable.

3. Be aware of the OAS recovery tax threshold. If your net world income exceeds the threshold amount ($90,997 for 2024), you must repay part or all of your OAS pension. Find out more:

canada.ca/en/services/benefits/publicpensions/old-age-security/recovery-tax

Housing for seniors

Affordable, safe and well-designed housing tailored to a person's needs is essential to thriving as they age.

A new report from the Federal/Provincial/Territorial Ministers Responsible for Seniors Forum examines the housing needs and challenges facing older Canadians to help inform future decisions. Read more here: canada.ca search housing-diverse-seniors.

The risks of falling

We all fall from time to time. As we age, both the number of falls and the likelihood of injury increase.

But do you know what to do if you fall or witness a fall? Save this post and share it with a loved one.

Learn how to prevent falls, visit: parachute.ca/en/injury-topic/fall-prevention-for-seniors/

Healthy aging

Aging is a antural part of life and Canada.ca has a wealth of great information to help support healthy aging. Check out:

canada.ca search healthy-aging; and canada.ca search services/health-promotion.

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.

BC FORUM

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: ☐ $20 - 1 year ☐ $49 - 3 years
With AD&D for spouse: ☐ $25 - 1 year ☐ $64 - 3 years
☐ Cheque ☐ Visa ☐ 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.*

Budget 2025 puts public services—and seniors—at risk

By Kristen Schnider, PSAC

The federal government's latest budget is one of the harshest rounds of austerity we've seen in a generation. At a time when Canada's population is both growing and aging, the Liberal government is choosing cuts. And these cuts, as the Liberal government has confirmed, will wipe out more than 40,000 federal public service jobs by 2028–29.

But let's be clear: these aren't "positions" on a spreadsheet. These are the people who help us access pensions, who keep our food safe, who protect our parks and waterways, who support veterans, families, and seniors. These are the workers who make public services work.

This year alone, the government plans to eliminate 16,000 jobs. This figure is roughly the same number of Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC) members in BC who are federal public service workers. Have no doubt, cuts of this scale will hit every province, every territory, and every community in Canada.

PSAC has raised the alarm, and rightly so. You can't build Carney's 'Canada Strong' by cutting the services people rely on. These cuts will mean:

- Longer waits for passports, EI, childcare benefits, and veterans' supports
- Delays in processing Old Age Security, CPP, and survivor benefits
- Fewer staff at the Canada Revenue Agency and at other federal call centres
- Reduced capacity in public health, environmental protection, and food inspection

The government plans to replace these frontline workers with automated systems and AI chatbots. But when someone has lost a spouse and is calling about death benefits, or when a senior is trying to sort out OAS issues, they do not need a bot. They need patience, compassion, and a human being who understands what they are going through. Canadians know this; PSAC polling shows that over half of people across the country outright oppose mass public-service layoffs and want real human support when navigating essential services.

For retirees, the stakes are especially high. Seniors depend on timely access to pensions, health supports, and federal benefits. When thousands of positions disappear, older Canadians will be the first to feel the consequences of the cuts through delays, reduced access, and a system stretched past its limits.

So, what do we do? Now is the moment for all of us, especially retired union members, to raise our voices. Reach out to your Member of Parliament and tell them what these cuts will mean for you, your neighbours, and your community. Share the real-world impact of slower processing, longer wait times, reduced service quality, and the need for strong, well-resourced public programs that protect seniors and support people at every stage of life. Austerity is not inevitable. It's a political choice, and it's the wrong one.

Together, we can demand better. Together, we can protect public services not just for the people who deliver them, but for the millions who rely on them and those who deserve nothing less.

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.

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