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Advocate

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

Vol. 29 No. 2, Summer 2026

BC FORUM AGM
HIGHLIGHTS

Indigenous
fire keepers
gather to share
knowledge

WILDLAND
FIREFIGHTERS:
THE FIGHT TO BE
FIREFIGHTERS



Sheresa Brown,
Lytton First Nation member.
Photo by Aaron Hemens

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Cover photo: Sheresa Brown, a 31-year-old Lytton First Nation member, is a field technician and archaeology monitor with the Nlaka'pamux Nation Tribal Council. She is pictured here on her ancestral homelands in Lytton First Nation on March 30. Photo by Aaron Hemens.

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THE ADVOCATE

In this edition

We are very pleased to share with you an article by kind permission of IndigiNews about an important Indigenous fire keepers gathering and one Lytton First Nation member's work with BC Wildfire Service to safeguard cultural heritage; learn about the BCGEU's fight to have wildland firefighters considered firefighters under Canada's National Occupational Classification; enjoy highlights from the BC FORUM AGM; understand how the changes to Property Tax Referral might affect you, and much more! We hope you enjoy this summer edition of The Advocate.

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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), səliwətaʔt (Tsleil-Waututh), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) Nations.

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No more talk, time to take action in support of seniors

By Sam Wiese, BC FORUM President

It was good to hear the joint statement from Josie Osborne, Minister of Health; Niki Sharma, Attorney General; and Dan Levitt, B.C.'s Seniors Advocate, on World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, June 15.

From Minister Osborne's words: "Every older adult deserves to feel safe, respected and supported in their community." She went on to highlight programs aimed at improving care at home, supporting caregivers, and investing in community-based services such as Better at Home and the Therapeutic Activation Program for Seniors.

Attorney General Sharma reminded us: "Seniors helped build our province to what it is today, and it is essential they are treated with dignity and respect as they age." She also acknowledged the need for clear pathways when abuse is reported, and for accountability when it occurs.

And Dan Levitt told it like it is, emphasizing that to reduce elder abuse, we must better understand how, why, and when it happens, improve coordination among agencies, and strengthen data collection and reporting. Without this, meaningful prevention is difficult.

I applaud these statements, but must also say, it is becoming increasingly hard to reconcile these words with reality.

The recent provincial budget did nothing to support seniors. In fact, for many of us, it makes things worse. While British Columbians were told to expect an "austerity" budget, seniors did not expect to feel as though we were being asked to carry the burden.

Changes to the Property Tax Deferral Program have left many feeling like targets rather than supported citizens. Those who rely on or provide care were already stretched thin, and then we were told that funding for



promised long-term care homes would be "reviewed," only to see projects suspended altogether.

So I ask: how do we square calls to eliminate elder abuse with decisions that reduce access to care?

When care spaces disappear.

When costs are pushed onto individuals and families.

When burned-out caregivers are told, in effect, "You're doing fine—just keep going."

When reports from our Seniors' Advocate are delayed, sidelined, or ignored until "later"... and too often, later is too late.

Our elected officials are just that—elected. And seniors vote. We helped put a government in place that promised to stand for workers and communities. Now it is time to hold every one of them accountable to the people they represent. That's us.

We are not looking for accolades or kind words. We are looking for action. Don't just talk the talk, walk the walk.

Speaking of walking the walk, I hope you have heard about the proposed United Nations Convention on the

Rights of Older Persons. This is a draft international treaty aimed at protecting older adults from ageism, violence, and discrimination, and is an important step toward addressing gaps in current human rights protections.

We explored the issue of seniors' abuse in depth in the Spring edition of *The Advocate*. While it is encouraging that Canada has endorsed the creation of a drafting group for this Convention, we need to be clear about what that means. It is a preliminary step, not a commitment to adopt or implement the final treaty.

Canada has a history of caution when it comes to binding international agreements. Signing such a convention would require governments at all levels to review and strengthen systems, from long-term care to healthcare access to human rights protections. That is a significant undertaking, but also a necessary one.

This is why seniors' organizations across the country are calling on the federal government to go further and fully commit.

I recently attended a webinar on this issue hosted by the Saskatchewan Seniors' Association, featuring Trish McAuliffe of the National Pensioners' Federation. There are still details to be worked out, but once they are, Trish has agreed to present for BC FORUM. I encourage you to keep an eye on our website and Facebook page for updates.

As always, I hope you find this edition of *The Advocate* both informative and useful. If you have ideas for future articles, or something you would like to contribute, please contact the BC FORUM office at bcbforum@bcfed.ca or leave a comment on our website at bcbforum.ca.

Stay informed, stay engaged, and, most importantly, let's keep holding decision-makers to account.

Before wildfire season begins again, Indigenous fire keepers gather to share knowledge

By Aaron Hemens, IndigiNews

The following was originally published as part of a larger article by IndigiNews on April 6, 2026. BC FORUM is thankful to be able to share this with you through the kind approval of Aaron Hemens, Journalist and author, Eden Fineday, Publisher of IndigiNews and Cara McKenna, Editor, IndigiNews. This is one part of extensive coverage on wildland fires and the battle to curb, extinguish and prevent them. For the full articles go to: indiginews.com/features/wildfire-season-indigenous-fire-keepers-gather/

In March, attendees of Salish Fire Keepers Society event in Tk'emlúps learned about working with blazes to protect the land, decolonizing fire management and more.

Aaron Hemens and Santana Dreaver, The Narwhal's 2026 Indigenous Journalism Fellow, attended the Salish Fire Keepers Gathering on March 17 and 18. This is the first of two stories about the gathering, published in partnership with The Narwhal (Part two in the series is [here](#) and indiginews.com)

In 2022, one year after wildfire tore through the Village of Lytton, a blaze broke out at the nearby Stein Valley Nlaka'pamux Heritage Provincial Park.

The site, co-managed by Lytton First Nation and the "B.C." government, contains pictographs, petroglyphs and culturally modified trees, along with more important cultural sites.

So the BC Wildfire Service called in Sheresa Brown, a 31-year-old Lytton First Nation member who works as a field technician and archaeology monitor with the Nlaka'pamux Nation Tribal Council.

When fires happen near registered archaeological sites, Brown works



Sheresa Brown, a field technician and archaeology monitor specializing in cultural values and site preservation with the Nlaka'pamux Nation Tribal Council, is pictured in Lytton First Nation territory on March 30, in an area impacted by the 2025 Izman Creek fire. Photo by Aaron Hemens

with BC Wildfire Service crews and structural protection specialists to safeguard cultural heritage.

"I was all for it," Brown says. "But I wanted to do it in the right way."

To avoid the pictographs washing away from firefighting efforts, Brown outlined a 75 to 100 metre buffer zone around the cultural site.

Sprinklers were set up around the buffer zone, and crews watched as the sprinklers stopped the flames from reaching the pictographs.

"That really helped me confirm that this was a good idea," she said.

In other wildfires, she has helped to determine which registered archaeological sites are within a fire's boundaries and are along its projected path, directing crews where to work.

For example, she will advise where heli-pads can be constructed to avoid cutting down culturally modified trees, and will guide where hoses can be laid to protect artifacts — such as arrowheads — on the ground.

"We make sure that everything is done in a very respectful way," she said.

Brown was one of more than a dozen experts and technicians drawn from the realm of Indigenous fire stewardship — from researchers to Indigenous land managers and fire practitioners — who gave panel talks at the Salish Fire Keepers Society "Reigniting The Land" spring assembly on March 17 and 18.

Around 100 people attended in-person in Tk'emlúps (Kamloops) in Secwepemcúl'ecw, with more tuning in virtually. (cont. on next page)

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The panel discussions ranged from protecting cultural heritage sites and values in the event of wildfire, to the experiences of Youth engaged in cultural burning and different approaches to land management post-wildfire.

While honouring the work of their ancestors and the efforts by Indigenous fire keepers in recent decades, the gathering also gave insight into the role that Indigenous Youth are having in the future of fire stewardship and emergency response.

Resources around building capacity for community-based fire stewardship and emergency response initiatives were also highlighted, and there was dialogue in bridging opportunity gaps between B.C. Wildfire Service and Indigenous communities.

“We need to collaborate with our people. We need to share. We gotta

look at those imaginary lines and get rid of those, and work together,” said George Campbell, a Nlaka’pamux Nation member from the Boothroyd Indian Band, who is a wildfire officer for the Fraser Fire Zone for B.C. Wildfire Service’s Coastal Fire Centre.

To access the full article and learn more about the Salish Fire Keepers Society and how Indigenous Fire Keepers are sharing knowledge to preserve sacred history, protect the land and decolonize fire management go to: indiginews.com/features/wildfire-season-indigenous-fire-keepers-gather/



Wildland firefighters are firefighters

By BCGEU Communications

In May of this year, Member of Parliament Gord Johns (Courtenay-Alberni), who serves as the NDP Critic for Emergency Preparedness, tabled motion M-33 in the House of Commons during Emergency Preparedness Week. The motion calls on the federal government to formally recognize wildland firefighters under Canada’s National Occupational Classification system.

Wildland firefighters in B.C. know all too well what proper recognition and support would mean for the dedicated professionals working to keep communities safe during wildfire season.

That’s why a team of BCGEU members that work at BC Wildfire Service brought their stories and photos from the frontlines of the hottest wildfire seasons on record to Ottawa in February. They pushed for all parties to remove barriers that prevent wildland firefighters from accessing the same recognition, protections, and benefits afforded to municipal firefighters.



Wildland firefighter Sebastian Kallos. Photo by kind permission of BCGEU Communications.

Their message was clear — wildfire seasons are getting longer and more complex. Wildland firefighters need recognition for their work as emergency responders, greater protections through presumptive health screenings, and coordination between the federal government and provincial government in wildfire response.

Currently, wildland firefighters are recognized as ‘silviculturalists’ and are excluded from the firefighter classification — a holdover from the days when wildfire season lasted weeks instead of months. Because wildland firefighters are classified as forestry workers rather than emergency response professionals, it directly impacts their compensation, pension benefits, and retirement age. This change would grant wildland crews the same federal pension and occupational health screening access as structural firefighters.

This classification also means that wildfire fighters’ work is not
(cont. on next page)

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Wildland firefighter Sebastian Kallos at work. Photo by kind permission of BCGEU Communications.

acknowledged as first responders. This fails to value the critical role they play in public safety.

Today, wildland firefighters are on the frontlines of a changing climate and longer, more intense fires, increased risks to health and safety and grueling, dangerous working conditions. In addition to fighting fires, they also carry out emergency response work including evacuations, wildfire suppression and community and infrastructure protections.

Wildfire fighters take immense risks and deserve fair compensation. In British Columbia, the almost 1,500 members of the BC General Employee's Union (BCGEU) that work in wildfire have been fighting tirelessly for a compensation and pension package that allows them to build sustainable careers. This change will help retain a stable, experienced workforce, ready to protect our communities when we need them most.

By recognizing wildland firefighters as firefighters, this means that wildfire professionals will be able to access greater protections, benefits and recognition. As more and more communities depend on wildfire fighters to see us through long and complex wildfire seasons, the time for proper recognition is now.

Health care is not for sale

By Alec Regino, Health Sciences Association of BC

On April 17, the anniversary of the signing of the Canada Health Act, Health Sciences Association members and allies from across the house of labour took to the streets of downtown Vancouver to send a clear message: health care is not for sale. The rally was a direct

response to Alberta's Bill 11, a sweeping piece of legislation that opens the door to a two-tiered, American-style health care system by allowing doctors to work in the public system while simultaneously charging patients for medically necessary services. This law is a threat not just to Albertans, but to the principle of universal health care that all Canadians depend on.

At the rally, HSA President Sarah Kooner walked alongside BCFED President Sussanne Skidmore and Agnes Jackman, BC Forum's HSA Director, representing a broad coalition of workers standing together in defence of our public system. When health care is treated as a commodity rather than a right, the most vulnerable in society pay the highest price, while front line health science and community social service professionals are left to manage the fallout. The rally was a reminder that solidarity is our greatest strength in these fights.



Top: Sussanne Skidmore, Agnes Jackman, and Sarah Kooner lead marchers. Bottom: Sarah Kooner addresses the crowd. Photos by kind permission of Alec Regino, HSA



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You must purchase a membership in BC Forum to be eligible for the BC Forum Benefit Plan

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\$500,000 per lifetime; 15 day Emergency only
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	Extended Only		With Dental	
	Under 70	70 +	Under 70	70 +
Single	\$88.42	\$118.31	N/A	N/A
Couple	\$135.71	\$195.47	N/A	N/A
Family	\$193.68	\$253.44	N/A	N/A

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Eye Exams up to \$50 every 24 months

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AUDIO: Hearing Aids plus Repairs or Replacement of Parts • \$400 max. every 4 years

PRIVATE DUTY NURSING: \$3,000 max. per year

MEDICAL ITEMS: \$1,500 max. per year

ACCIDENTAL DENTAL: \$2,500 max. per year

SEMI-PRIVATE HOSPITAL

\$200 per day; max. 25 days per year

OUT OF PROVINCE/COUNTRY TRAVEL MEDICAL

\$500,000 per lifetime; 30 day Emergency only
Age limit 85 years old

DENTAL

Combined max. per person, per year • \$500 first 12 months; \$750 next 12 months; \$1,000 every 12 months thereafter • Basic coverages 80% up to above limits • Basic Comprehensive coverages 80% up to above limits

	Extended Only		With Dental	
	Under 70	70 +	Under 70	70 +
Single	\$153.70	\$183.59	\$214.45	\$224.34
Couple	\$259.38	\$319.14	\$379.87	\$439.63
Family	\$303.77	\$363.53	\$473.19	\$532.95

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(The plan overviews in this brochure are intended for descriptive use only)

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DRUGS: Pay Direct Card Included

To age 85 • Prescription Drugs 80% to a max. of \$5,000 per year • Generic Drugs only, unless otherwise specified by physician • Includes Oral Contraceptives • No Lifestyle

VISION CARE

\$250 every 24 months
Eye Exams up to \$70 every 24 months

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

90% max. to \$400 per year, per practitioner, per person | Chiropractor • Physiotherapist • Foot Care Professionals • Speech Therapist • Psychologist • Massage Therapist • Acupuncturist • Osteopath • Naturopath

MEDICAL TRANSPORT: Air & Land included

AUDIO: Hearing Aids plus Repairs or Replacement of Parts • \$400 max. every 4 years

PRIVATE DUTY NURSING: \$5,000 max. per year

MEDICAL ITEMS: \$3,000 max. per year

ACCIDENTAL DENTAL: \$5,000 max. per year

SEMI-PRIVATE HOSPITAL

\$200 per day; max. 25 days per year

OUT OF PROVINCE/COUNTRY TRAVEL MEDICAL

\$5,000,000 per lifetime; 60 day Emergency only
Age limit 85 years old

DENTAL

Combined max. per person, per year • \$750 first 12 months; \$1,000 next 12 months; \$1,200 every 12 months thereafter • Basic coverages 80% up to above limits • Basic Comprehensive coverages 80% up to above limits

	Extended Only		With Dental	
	Under 70	70 +	Under 70	70 +
Single	\$238.11	\$278.56	\$304.26	\$344.71
Couple	\$415.88	\$496.78	\$543.12	\$624.02
Family	\$471.19	\$552.09	\$647.36	\$728.26

DRUGS: Pay Direct Card Included

To age 85
Prescription Drugs 80% to a max. of \$7,500 per year
Generic Drugs only, unless otherwise specified by physician
Includes Oral Contraceptives, No Lifestyle

VISION CARE

\$300 every 24 months per person
Eye Exams: \$75 every 24 months per person

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

90% max. to \$400 per year per practitioner, per person
Chiropractor
Physiotherapist
Massage Therapist
Psychologist
Osteopath
Dietitians
Podiatrists
Speech Therapist
Acupuncturist
Naturopath

MEDICAL TRANSPORT: Province of Residence only

AUDIO: \$400 max. every 4 years per person

PRIVATE DUTY NURSING: \$8,000 max. per year.

MEDICAL ITEMS: \$4,000 per year per person

ACCIDENTAL DENTAL

\$5,000 max. per year per person

SEMI-PRIVATE HOSPITAL

\$200 per day; max. 25 days per year

DENTAL

Combined max. per person, per year \$1,500.
Included: Basic, Basic Comprehensive and Restorative services coverages 80% up to the max. limit per person per year.

	Extended Only	With Dental
Single	\$275.36	\$349.61
Couple	\$499.63	\$637.67
Family	\$567.17	\$763.59

This brochure is an overview of coverages only. Wordings, limitations, and exclusions apply. E & OE

For more information on the product or service you are interested in, please contact your broker or agent. See policy wordings for coverages, liabilities and exclusions. E & OE



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EXTENDED HEALTH BENEFITS

DRUGS: NO Pay Direct Card: Prescription Drugs 80% up to \$1000 per year. After 100% of eligible expenses, subject to maximums based on Pharmacare's eligible drugs.
(The Extended Health maximum benefit is \$35,000. Life Time Limit)

MEDICAL ITEMS: In Province expenses 80% when prescribed by a Physician. Limitations and restrictions apply.

VISION CARE: Upon completion of 12 continuous months. Eyeglasses up to \$125 every 24 months.

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES: Total combined benefit \$500 per calendar year per person. Chiropractors, Naturopaths, Physiotherapists, Massage Therapists, Podiatrists: \$500 per calendar year per person.

MEDICAL TRANSPORT: In Province Ambulance Service Emergencies only. Emergency out-of-Province Eligible Expenses: when ordered by attending Physician maximum \$1000.

AUDIO (Hearing Aids): Up to \$500 per 5 year period per person.

PRIVATE DUTY NURSING: Registered Nurse (RN) up to 720 hours per calendar year for an acutely ill bed patient in hospital in BC. Up to \$1000 when acutely ill and bedridden at home. Lifetime maximum is \$5000 per person.

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FOUR DAY TRAVEL MEDICAL PLAN: Your \$35,000 lifetime EHB coverage will be automatically increased to \$500,000 whenever you leave BC on trips lasting NO more than 4 days. For longer trips call our office for rates on out-of-Province/Country Travel Medical.

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ACCIDENTAL DEATH & DISMEMBERMENT: The maximum benefit payable in the event of death or dismemberment resulting within 365 days of an accident is \$25,000. This coverage terminates at age 70.

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EXTENDED HEALTH BENEFITS

DRUGS: Pay Direct Card INCLUDED: Prescription Drugs 80% only. 8% drug markup limit and a \$10 Dispensing Fee Cap. Based on Pharmacare's list of eligible drugs.
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Couple	\$215.57	\$2,457.50	\$358.04	\$4,081.66
Family	\$254.71	\$2,903.70	\$487.97	\$5,562.86

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Insuring your home before fire season starts

By Working Ventures Insurance

Fire season brings enough stress on its own — your insurance coverage shouldn't be one of them. Taking a little time now to review and update your home insurance can make a massive difference if the worst happens. Here's how to get prepared before fire danger ramps up.

Review your coverage limits. Many homeowners are underinsured without realizing it. Construction costs rise, building codes change, and the amount it would take to rebuild your home today may be very different from when you first bought your policy. Check that your dwelling coverage reflects current replacement costs — not market value — and ask your insurer about inflation or extended replacement cost coverage for extra protection.

Document what you own. If you ever need to file a claim, proof matters. Create a home inventory that lists major belongings, including furniture, electronics, appliances, and valuables. Photos or videos taken on your phone work well, especially if you capture serial numbers or receipts. Store copies digitally in the cloud or off-site so they're safe if your home isn't.

Understand what's covered — and what isn't. Not all policies are the same. Contact your insurance broker to review coverage for smoke damage, debris removal, and temporary living expenses if you're forced to evacuate. If you live in a high-risk area, ask whether any special deductibles or exclusions apply.

Check additional living expenses (ALE). If a fire makes your home uninhabitable, ALE coverage helps pay for hotels, rentals, meals, and other daily costs. Make sure the limits are realistic for your area, where post-fire housing shortages can drive prices way up.

Be proactive. Safeguard your home by removing flammable materials away from your buildings. Plant fire-resistant plants. Check local government programs for more information. These small steps can protect your home and your wallet.

Fire season preparedness isn't just about hoses and evacuation plans — it's about financial peace of mind. A careful insurance checkup now can save you time, money, and heartbreak later, when it matters most.

Make sure you are prepared for this year's fire season and call one of our experienced Brokers to review your options.

From the Office of the Seniors Advocate

The following are a few highlights from the Office of the Seniors Advocate. For full details search Seniors' Advocate-Government of B.C.-newsletters. Included are Provincial Government News Releases of interest to seniors. For complete media release content go to news.gov.bc.ca/releases.

Campaign launch to remove home support co-payments

A coalition of seniors' organizations, caregivers, health providers and system advocates is calling on the Government of B.C. to eliminate co-payments for publicly-subsidized home support for seniors. Please visit the campaign website to send a letter of support to your MLA.

Learn more about this campaign at: www.healthcareneedshomecare.ca/



The Road Ahead

Are you approaching age 80 or 85 and wondering what to expect when it comes to driver assessments? The Seniors Health and Wellness Institute provides informative virtual work-

shops designed to help older adults understand the driver assessment process in B.C.

Learn about RoadSafetyBC medical assessments and ICBC enhanced road assessments, what they involve and how they may impact your driving. Learn more at: seniorshelpingseniors.ca

Advancing made-in-B.C. health technology to strengthen patient care

May 13, 2026 From Ministry of Jobs and Economic Growth

Funding will help homegrown companies pilot new technology to strengthen economic resilience in B.C.: (cont. on next page)

BC FORUM Health & Dental Plans

Exclusively for BC FORUM members and their families

- If you are thinking of retiring
- If you are retired with few or no retiree benefits
- If you are still working but need benefits

Plans cover pre-existing conditions if converting from a previous group plan within 60 days. Some plans cover out of country medical if you are medically stable as per the policy wording. E&OE

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(cont. from previous page)

- B.C. companies are receiving more than \$5.3 million to test first-of-their-kind innovation to strengthen health care.
- Projects range from AI to robotics, supported through B.C.'s Integrated Marketplace Health Testbed.
- It supports the Look West strategy, which includes a focus on growing B.C.'s AI and technology sectors.

Opening more seniors' housing in Langley

May 11, 2026 From Ministry of Housing and Municipal Affairs

More than 100 new homes available for independent seniors:

- The Maple provides 101 homes for independent seniors in downtown Langley City
- The development replaces a building damaged by fire in 2017, bringing back 66 homes and adding 35 net-new homes to the community
- Through the Province's Community Housing Fund, homes are prioritized for adults 55+ with low to moderate incomes

Opening seniors' homes atop new Foundry centre in Terrace

May 11, 2026 from Ministry of Housing and Municipal Affairs

Inter-generational development provides affordable homes alongside inclusive services for youth:

- Seniors and young people in Terrace will benefit from a new mixed-use development that includes 43 affordable rental homes and an expanded Foundry centre.
- The project is a unique partnership between the Province, through BC Housing, the Terrace & District Community Services Society, and Foundry.

Property Tax Deferral

By Linda Forsythe, and Leslie Gaudet

The following is republished with permission of the authors, from COSCO News edition Number 136, June 2026.

BC's Property Tax Deferral Program managed by the provincial government allows eligible homeowners to defer annual property taxes that are repaid with interest when the property is sold. The groups eligible to use this program include seniors over 55, surviving spouses, persons with disabilities and families with children under 18.

In the latest budget, the government has changed the program significantly. The old deferment interest rate was Prime minus 2%, simple interest. The new rate, starting in 2026, is Prime plus 2%, with interest compounding monthly. This change, combined with monthly compounding, will result in a much larger deferment interest repayment. After 15 years, under the new rate, a homeowner could be paying back the principal itself plus up to 4x the interest they would have paid with the previous rate. Understandably, many seniors are alarmed by this prospect.

COSCO is collaborating with a team of financial professionals who have done in-depth analyses of the changes to the program. We are looking into what you can do and what we can do.

What you need to know

First, please understand that your existing deferrals are grandfathered at the previous rates, so there is no need for you to repay any existing deferment balances. The new interest rate regime will apply only to new deferred taxes for 2026 and onward.

Second, if you do not have the funds to meet your basic needs or to deal with other cash flow concerns, COSCO BC agrees with the BC Seniors Advocate who observed that "the program still provides significant support for seniors needing extra money." You

may also wish to consult a trusted financial advisor for advice for more complex decisions.

The third point is to be assured that a decision to defer your taxes this year will not cause you to lose your home.

What COSCO BC is doing

COSCO BC will work with our collaborators on an open letter to the BC government calling for a reversal of the program's changes. We will be posting this open letter on our website, for all to use, or to copy and be reaching out to other groups to join with us in this campaign. We are looking at a media campaign to let everyone know how this will mainly impact those who can least afford it.

How you can help

We suggest you speak with your MLA about the changes in the program. Write a letter to your local newspaper. Bring up this topic at any meeting you attend. We need a groundswell of people to make the government drop these changes. Ask your group to support the open letter.

More on opting out

Note that if you want to opt out of the program altogether and have not done so by June 1, you will be automatically renewed for 2026 and will have to wait until next year to opt out. Opting out does not mean you need to repay the existing balance immediately. As stated previously existing balances will retain the grandfathered interest rate. Repayment is done when the property is sold.

Linda Forsythe and Leslie Gaudet are COSCO communications chair COSCO president respectively. More information about this and other issues impacting seniors is available at Council of Senior Citizens Organizations of BC (COSCO): Planning with seniors, not for them: coscobc.org.

Highlights of BC FORUM 2026 AGM

By Sam Wiese, BC FORUM President

BC FORUM's 2026 Annual General Meeting (AGM), held June 17 at the USW Hall in Langley, was lively and successful. From guest speakers who provided important updates on issues affecting retirees and working seniors to the presentation of 2025 year end finances and the discussion of resolutions, members were fully engaged.

Members and guests expressed something we all know; seniors are engaged and are acting not just for themselves, they are acting for and with their communities.

Five resolutions calling for improvements to long-term care, universal pharmacare, property tax deferral, and enhanced CPP benefits were adopted unanimously and commitment was given to host an online session on ageing and ageism.

These pictures represent some of the vibrant activity that was evident in the hall and on the zoom link.

A full report of the AGM including the adopted resolutions and commitments is available on the BC FORUM website at bcforum.ca/2026/06/agm-2026-report.



Top: Nathan Davidowicz on affordability — he wants it now! Top right: Terri Van Steinburg speaks to a resolution. Middle right: Hermender Singh Kailley, BCFED Secretary Treasurer, addresses the delegates. Bottom right: Rosalind Kellett, BC FORUM Director for BCTF, shares information from COSCO Bottom: Irma Mohammed and Sam Wiese, BC FORUM President, share a hug. Below Left: Marion Pollack, BC FORUM Director for CUPW, checks the list! All photos courtesy of BC FORUM members.



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
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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.

Time to increase CPP: Put money in the pockets of the people

By Ken Georgetti

This opinion piece was originally published in the Vancouver Sun on May 9, 2026 and republished in The Advocate through the kind permission of Brother Georgetti.

For decades there was an assumption that the Canada Pension Plan would act as an adjunct to workplace pension plans. If you weren't fortunate to have a union in your workplace, you were unlikely to have a pension plan and you relied largely on meagre CPP and OAS benefits for your retirement. For a decade, the Canadian Labour Congress pressed the federal government to double the Canada Pension Plan from 25 per cent to 50 per cent of earnings after a lifetime of work.

In 2016, the provincial and federal finance ministers finally agreed to a modest 33 per cent increase to the CPP benefit. The CPP is funded by premiums split evenly between employees and employers, and it invests our deferred earnings prudently so we can rely on the actuarial assumptions that our pension will be there in retirement.

Last week for the first time in CPP history, the federal government announced a premium cut from 9.9 per cent to 9.5 per cent. For a person earning the average wage of \$54,600 a year, the premium reduction is \$109 a year, or \$4.20 every two weeks.

By contrast, the Big Five banks will save an estimated \$40 million, telecoms an estimated \$19 million, Walmart an estimated \$14 million, Amazon \$6 million, etc.

In total, \$3 billion a year will be lost to the plan, money which is meant to secure retirement benefits for Canadians. Actuarial reports today suggest that CPP is adequately funded for some decades, so now is the time to increase the benefit to 50 per cent for future retirees.



Instead, Prime Minister Mark Carney feels comfortable cutting premiums for all these profitable corporations. This is the banker Carney acting, not the prime minister who should be looking out for our future retirees who right now are working hard every day, many in

multiple precarious jobs, keeping our economy running.

Putting money back in the pockets of the already rich is risky and wrong-headed.

Ken Georgetti, president emeritus of the Canadian Labour Congress, and past President of the BC Federation of Labour.

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?
