

Advocate

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

Vol. 29 No. 3, Fall 2026



POWER TOOL

**MAKE YOUR VOTE
COUNT THIS OCTOBER**

**Remembering three
brilliant advocates**

**HIGHLIGHTS FROM
LABOUR DAY**

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THE ADVOCATE

In this edition

Mark your calendars for this October 17! It is municipal election day in British Columbia, and the time to make your voice heard through your vote. Find out who the labour endorsed candidates are with our handy endorsement insert! Take it with you to the polls.

With sadness we say goodbye to three amazing union and social justice activists, each who inspired through dedication and leadership. But also with joy, we celebrate Labour Day events across the province.

- From the president..... 3
- Seniors services under pressure..... 4
- Equitable funding for BC Ferries..... 4
- Remembering Amshen Joan Phillips 5
- Farewell to Greg Hatch..... 5
- Mourning Stephanie Smith, BCGEU..... 6
- Muni election endorsement insert..... 7
- Labour Day highlights..... 12
- Christmas tree safety 13
- From the Secretary of State
for Seniors 14
- Renew your membership and
sign up a friend today 15
- Last Word 16

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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Making your mark on October 17

By Sam Wiese, BC FORUM President

As comfortable as I am starting almost any conversation, I often struggle when I begin writing for *The Advocate*. Where do I want this to go? How can I move from one topic to another? Most importantly, how do I write something that connects with the articles in this edition?

Today was one of those days—until I glanced at the date: September 11, 2026.

Twenty-five years have passed since what many consider the most horrific attack ever carried out against U.S. citizens on their own soil. Twenty-five years since the world repeated the now familiar words “never again”, and gave renewed meaning to “never forget”. Twenty-five years since one of the world’s superpowers vowed to keep its citizens safe and created the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). That makes it even more troubling to see what DHS has become through its Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) branch.

My words are not intended to diminish the impact of the September 11 attacks. The tragedy touched people around the world. We lost loved ones and friends. Survivors, first responders, and bystanders, continue to face long term physical and mental health impacts. We grieve the loss of life, the erosion of our sense of safety, and the prejudice directed toward our Islamic neighbours that followed.

That said, I am confident many of you quietly said “kudos!” to New York City Mayor Mamdani for preventing the president of the United States from turning a solemn memorial into a side-show of division and bigotry.

From his first utterances of the word tariffs, the current U.S. president has bullied, demeaned, and openly attacked countries across the globe. He has waged an unarmed war against Canadian policy, ingenuity, culture, and sovereignty. I am no fan of the



Liberals, but I was genuinely proud when Prime Minister Carney ended CUSMA trade talks and called our negotiating team home.

Former NDP MP Charlie Angus may not have coined it, but the rallying cry “Elbows Up!” has gained renewed vigour since August 22. Canadians are pushing back against U.S. political and economic aggression, trade threats, and tariffs.

What the breakdown in trade relations will mean long term remains uncertain. What we do know is that costs will rise. Goods will be more expensive as we trade with countries farther afield. Services will cost more because providers face the same pressures we do.

But we must hold steady. Let us not give voice or strength to the bully.

This may be a first for me, but I am about to praise two Liberals in one article. Jean Chrétien’s remarks at the Gander commemorative ceremony stirred my Canadian pride:

“Never mistake our generosity for weakness.” “We bow to no one... and the more we are insulted and threatened and abused, the more we will stand up for ourselves and stand united.”

Let us keep those elbows up, and continue to support and buy Canadian. The Canadian Labour

Congress offers helpful tools for navigating these times. If you are uncertain about goods or services, visit canadianlabour.ca/buy-union.

In keeping with the Proud to Be Canadian theme, we sometimes forget the privilege and responsibility of voting. Municipal governments shape our daily lives, yet only 30–45 per cent of eligible voters cast ballots. In B.C., turnout is among the lowest in Canada.

Whether you own acres of land or rent a studio apartment, municipal councils, parks boards, and school boards make decisions that affect your neighbourhood every day. School boards, in particular, influence what happens in classrooms and on school grounds. Even if we no longer have children in the K–12 system, we must vote for trustees who protect public education, outdoor space, and access to diverse books.

B.C. seniors can—and do—vote.

As always, this edition includes municipal candidates endorsed by district labour councils. These endorsements reflect candidates’ positions on workers’ rights, affordable housing, transit, community infrastructure, environmental stewardship, and climate policy.

I hope you will join me in showing gratitude for the candidates’ time and sacrifice by voting on October 17 and marking every level of your ballot.

We have also lost several influential people since our summer edition. In this issue, we honour Sister Stephanie Smith, Brother Greg Hatch, and MLA Joan Phillip, Amshen—each of whom touched and inspired countless people.

On that note, friends, I will sign off before our editor faces the impossible task of finding space for all my words.

I hope you find this edition of *The Advocate* informative and enjoyable. Your feedback is always appreciated.

Happy ballot marking on October 17.

Seniors services under growing pressure

The following is from the BC Seniors Advocate news release of March 26, 2026.

The BC Seniors Advocate's 2026 Monitoring Seniors Services Report paints a concerning picture of the growing pressures facing older adults and the services they rely on.

British Columbia's senior population (65+) reached more than 1.1 million in 2024, increasing 19% in just six years and 44% over the past decade. While the demand for supports continues to rise, many essential services have not kept pace.

The report highlights declining availability of home support, long-term care, and affordable seniors' housing relative to population growth. The rate of publicly subsidized long-term care beds has fallen 16% over the past six years, while the number of people waiting for a care bed has nearly tripled, to more than 7,000. Average wait times have doubled to almost 10 months.

Affordable housing remains a challenge. Applications for subsidized seniors' housing have risen sharply, but only a small percentage of applicants receive a unit. At the same time, emergency department visits,

hospitalizations, and delayed hospital discharges involving seniors continue to increase.

Despite these concerns, the report identifies several encouraging developments. Life expectancy at age 65 has increased to 22.8 additional years. Adult Day Programs have expanded, health-care staffing levels have grown, and the Better at Home program continues to help thousands of older adults remain independent in their communities. The program now supports more than 20,000 seniors annually and has significantly expanded its services over the past six years.

Seniors Advocate Dan Levitt warns that the province is not adequately preparing for the rapidly growing demand for seniors' services. He continues to call for a comprehensive, cross-government seniors' strategy to identify future needs and establish a plan to expand services efficiently.

The message is clear: British Columbia's older population is growing quickly, and stronger planning and investment will be needed to ensure seniors and their families have access to the housing, care, and community supports they deserve.

Equitable funding for BC Ferries

By Barry Cunningham, Councilor, Prince Rupert

The following is regarding Motion M-35, a parliamentary private member's motion introduced by MP Gord Johns (Courtenay-Alberni) that calls for stable, long-term, federal operational funding for BC Ferries.

Like a lot of other Rupertites I use the ferry system, but that might be changing. BC Ferries has said that without additional support, we could be facing up to 30% fare increases in 2028. This service has already been priced out of reach for many British Columbians, and it has to stop. NDP Courtney – Alberni MP Gord Johns is leading a campaign to finally address the lack of federal funding for BC coast ferries by comparing it to the east coast.

BC Ferries users pay approximately 70% of our system's cost, the province 24%, and the federal government just 3%. But in Atlantic Canada 43% of operating costs are paid by the feds—that's \$291 per passenger, compared to \$1.63 per passengers on BC Ferries.

It's time for the feds to contribute more. Small governments, like our council, and other interested organizations can write to support Gord Johns's Motion M-35, but we can all contact our MP, Ellis Ross, and make sure he knows that this motion is important to us.

The question is not the level of support being received in Atlantic Canada—it's why we can't have fair, stable, long-term support for an essential marine highway.

Barry Cunningham is a retired Canada Coast Guard Environmental Response Specialist and former member of the Public Service Alliance of Canada who served in various local and regional union positions. Barry is a Prince Rupert City councilor and is currently seeking another term.



Northern Adventure at the Prince Rupert Ferry Terminal, Wikicommons

Remembering Amshen Joan Phillips

By Sam Wiese, BC FORUM President

It was with great sadness that I heard of Amshen Joan Phillip's passing. I did not know her well, but she first came to my attention in the late 1960s when friends encouraged me to attend a gathering of the Native Alliance for Red Power. Still somewhat naïve to the challenges facing many Indigenous people, I found Joan's message both powerful and educational. She was an activist, leader, and educator throughout her life.

I had long forgotten that early encounter until I realized that the Joan Phillip elected MLA for Vancouver-Mount Pleasant in 2023 was the same remarkable woman. Her election made her the second First Nations woman to serve in the British Columbia legislature, following Melanie Mark. Again, voters in Vancouver-Mount Pleasant showed their support for strong and principled advocates for social justice.

Tributes recognizing Joan's lifelong commitment to equity and justice have come from all who knew her or stood alongside her. The BC Assembly



of First Nations noted that she carried the legacy of her ancestors into provincial politics with strength and dignity while serving as a protector of lands, peoples, and future generations.

Jennifer Charlesworth, B.C.'s Representative for Children and Youth, described Joan as a woman of integ-

rity, generosity, wisdom, and courage whose deep commitment to young people, families, culture, and community enriched countless lives.

Premier David Eby also praised Joan's courage and determination, calling her one of the strongest people he had ever known and an incredible friend and colleague.

In remembering Amshen Joan Phillip, let us carry forward the words of Greg Gabriel, Chief of Penticton Indian Band, who recalled her unwavering commitment to Indigenous title, rights, land, environment, and future generations. Above all, he said, Joan wanted people to work together to build a better world.

She leaves behind a legacy as matriarch, champion, and tireless advocate for justice. Her son, Monty Joseph, shared what he described as his mother's most important message: "Whatever work we don't finish here and now, we pass on to our next generation."

Rest in Power, Amshen ("Dear One").

Farewell to Greg Hatch, union activist, BC FORUM member, friend

By Sam Wiese, BC FORUM President

Greg was a union man. A working man's working man.

Much of his career was travelling throughout the province with his mentor and friend, Lew Loftus. They were insulators, and their specialty was spraying asbestos. There was likely not a pulp mill in the province where they didn't work together.

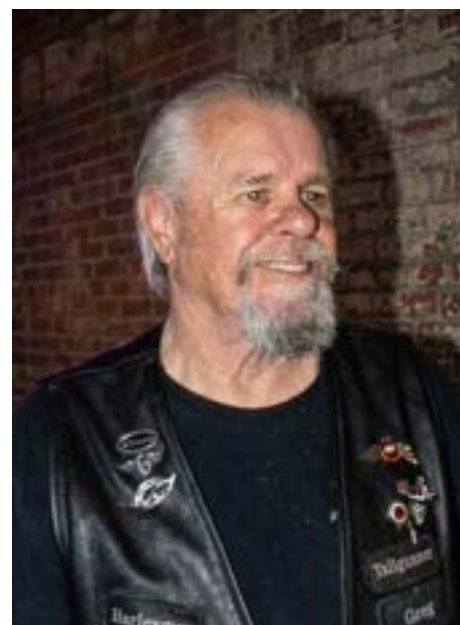
The work Greg and Lew performed exposed them to extraordinarily high levels of asbestos. That exposure eventually took Greg's health and shortened his life.

But Greg didn't accept that reality. He, Lew Loftus, and many others

were among the people who fought to change it. In 1972, during the construction of Pacific Centre in Vancouver, Greg and Lew helped lead what became the first wildcat strike over the use of sprayed asbestos after its dangers became known.

Those actions helped begin a movement that led to stronger regulations and, years later, the ban on asbestos in Canada. That legacy has protected countless workers whom Greg would never meet.

With years of asbestos exposure wreaking havoc on his body, Greg took
(cont. on page 11)



Mourning Stephanie Smith, former president of the BCGEU

The following is shared from the BCGEU new release of July 8, 2026, recognizing the passing of Stephanie Smith, former BCGEU president.

Born in Montreal but a proud New Zealander and 'kiwi by choice', Smith was the proud mother of two and made her home in Richmond, B.C. Smith made history as the first woman elected president of the BCGEU in its more than 100 year history. She took office in 2014 and served as president until 2024. Over a decade of leadership, she reshaped our union and left a lasting mark on the lives of working people across B.C.

An early childhood educator by training, Smith began her involvement in the labour movement in 1981, first in New Zealand, and later in B.C. with the Children's Services Employees' Union, which joined the BCGEU in the mid-1990s. For her, solidarity was not a slogan, but an everyday practice of working people standing with one another. She rose through our union as a steward and leader from the community social services sector, serving as first vice-chair of the community social services component, sitting on the Provincial Executive from 2008 and serving as BCGEU treasurer before her election as president.

Throughout her career, Smith was a fierce and tireless advocate for affordable, accessible, quality child care. This is a cause rooted in her own work as an early childhood educator and one she carried to provincial, national and international stages. Her advocacy helped elevate the child care sector and the workers within it.

Her leadership also advanced Reconciliation within our union and beyond. During her tenure, Smith strengthened relationships with Indigenous leaders and organizations, supported the Choose Children and Closing the Circle reports, participated



Photo of Stephanie Smith, by kind permission of the BCGEU

in the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, established the Provincial Executive Indigenous Advisory Committee and championed the adoption of the principles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

"Stephanie showed generations of members, especially women, what was possible," said Maria Middlemiss, BCGEU treasurer. "Like so many of us, she came up through our union as a steward and an activist. She was someone who saw injustice and used every bit of power she had to do something about it. She broke barriers as our first woman president, and she never stopped fighting for the workers who care for our children, our families and our communities. Her legacy lives in every member she inspired to lead."

"Behind the history she made was a warm, funny, relentless person who made everyone around her believe they could achieve real progress for working people," said BCGEU President Paul Finch. "That is how I will remember

Stephanie. Our thoughts are with her family and everyone who loved her."

Premier David Eby shared his condolences and memories of working with President Smith, "Stephanie was a tireless advocate for working people and a respected leader who always stood up for what she believed in. We worked closely together over the years, and I saw firsthand how deeply she cared about strong public services, safe workplaces, and the people who relied on them. Her roots in childcare shaped who she was, bringing a kindness, compassion and a genuine warmth to everything she did. But when it came time to stand up for workers, she was a determined and fearless advocate who never backed down."

The BCGEU extends its deepest condolences to Stephanie's family, friends and the many members and colleagues whose lives she touched.

The BCGEU is one of the largest and most diverse unions in British Columbia with over 100,000 members in 470 bargaining units in the public and private sector.

2026 Endorsed candidates by district council

Remove and take this handy insert with you to the polls and support the labour endorsed candidates in your communities who will work for working people - people like you!

Nanaimo, Duncan and District Labour Council

City of Nanaimo

Mayor

- ☐ Leonard Krog

Council

- ☐ Paul Chapman
- ☐ Andrea Coutu
- ☐ Hilary Eastmure
- ☐ Ben Geselbrecht
- ☐ Richard Harlow
- ☐ Cameron Leckenby
- ☐ Matthew Miller
- ☐ Ian Thorpe

Qualicum Beach

Council

- ☐ Mischa Oak

School Trustee (SD 69)

- ☐ Marina Gardiner

City of Duncan

Council

- ☐ Tom Duncan

Parksville

Council

- ☐ Amit Gaur

Nanaimo Regional District

Director

- ☐ Jessica Stanley

Nanaimo Ladysmith

School Trustee (SD 68)

- ☐ Tanis Brzovic
- ☐ Adrienne Cafariello
- ☐ Tim Harris
- ☐ Leanne Lee
- ☐ Zeni Martmann
- ☐ Chantelle Morvay
- ☐ Leana Pellegrin
- ☐ Mark Robinson
- ☐ Tom Rokeby

North Cowichan

Mayor

- ☐ Rob Douglas

Council

- ☐ Christopher Justice

Vancouver District LC

Vancouver

Mayor

- ☐ Pete Fry

Council

- ☐ Iona Bonamis
- ☐ Frances Bula
- ☐ Jarrett Haglund
- ☐ Chloe Leslie
- ☐ Lucy Maloney
- ☐ Sean Orr
- ☐ Annette Reilly
- ☐ Devyani Singh
- ☐ Caitlin Stockwell
- ☐ Solomon Yi-Kieran

School Trustee (SD 39)

- ☐ Sherry Breshears
- ☐ Rory Brown
- ☐ Steve Cardwell
- ☐ Melanie Cheng
- ☐ Gwen Giesbecht
- ☐ Christopher Lee
- ☐ Suzie Mah
- ☐ Derrick O'Keefe
- ☐ Krista Sigurdson

Park Board Commissioner

- ☐ Sacia Burton
- ☐ Dominic Denofrio
- ☐ Tom Digby
- ☐ Jamie Han
- ☐ John Irwin
- ☐ Tyler Petersen
- ☐ Cease Wyss

Richmond

Mayor

- ☐ Kash Heed

Council

- ☐ Alton Cheung
- ☐ Carol Day
- ☐ Laura Gillanders
- ☐ Vincent Li
- ☐ Bill McNulty
- ☐ Keefer Pelech
- ☐ Michael Wolfe
- ☐ Milly Yee

School Trustee (SD 38)

- ☐ Bill Mok
- ☐ Sandra Nixon
- ☐ Debbie Tablotney
- ☐ David Yang

Whistler

Council

- ☐ Jessie Morden

North Vancouver City

Mayor

- ☐ Linda Buchanan

Council

- ☐ Tammy Bentz
- ☐ Angela Girard
- ☐ Jessica McIlroy
- ☐ Krishna Raisinghani
- ☐ Shervin Shariari
- ☐ Tony Valente

North Vancouver District

Council

- ☐ Jordan Back
- ☐ Trey Bell
- ☐ Kulvir Mann
- ☐ Catherine Pope
- ☐ Stephanie Wilson
- ☐ Aidan Kyle

School Trustee (SD 44)

- ☐ Ethal Purugganan

Victoria Labour Council

Victoria

Mayor

- Marianne Alto

Council

- Jeremy Caradonna
- Matt Dell
- Peter Rose Gibbs
- Susan Kim
- Bella Lee
- Krista Loughton
- Jack Sandor
- Dave Thompson

School Trustee (SD61, Greater Victoria), Victoria (Area 5)

- James Le
- Ann Whiteaker

Central Saanich

Mayor

- Zeb King

Council

- Sarah Riddell

Colwood

Council

- Eugene Tsengd

Esquimalt

Mayor

- Duncan Cavens

Council

- Tim Morrison

Langford

Council

- Colby Harder
- Mary Wagner
- Keith Yacucha

Oak Bay

Mayor

- Samuel Holland

Council

- Karin Sweeney

School Trustee (SD61, Greater Victoria), Oak Bay (Area 7)

- Andrea Mears

Saanich

Mayor

- Zac De Vries

Council

- Teale Phelps Bondaroff
- Kathleen Burton
- Nathalie Chambers
- Mauricio Curbelo
- Garnett Humenick
- Colin Plant

School Trustee (SD61, Greater Victoria), Saanich (Area 6)

- Darren Companion
- Tracy Humphreys

School Trustee (SD63, Saanich Central Saanich (Area 3)

- Joseph (Joey) Martin

Sooke

Council

- Katherine Strongwind

School Trustee (SD62, Sooke), Belmont Zone (Area 1)

- Tom Davis
- Mattie McMillan

School Trustee (SD62 Sooke), Milne's Landing Zone (Area 2)

- Ed Berlando
- Amanda Dowhy
- Laurie Szadkowski

View Royal

Council

- Sacha Christensen

School Trustee (SD61, Greater Victoria), Highlands/View Royal (Area 1)

- Alexandra Bomphray

Campbell River, Courtney, and District Labour Council

Campbell River

Council

- Joelle Samson
- Lucas Schuller

School Trustee (SD 72, Campbell River)

- Linda Spetch
- Christian Stapff

Courtenay

Council

- Will Cole-Hamilton
- Evan Jollicoeur
- Wendy Morin

Comox Valley

Director

- Ariel Bercherer (Area C)

School Trustee (SD 71, Comox Valley)

- Shannon Aldinger
- Chelsea McCannel-Keene
- Michelle Waite

North Central LC

Mackenzie

Council

- Cassandra Jones
- Jesse Wright

Prince George

Mayor

- Garth Frizzell

Council

- Shawn Bortolon
- Cori Ramsey
- Brian Skakun

School Trustee (SD 57)

- Sarah Holland
- Shar McCrory
- Don Sabo

New Westminster and District Labour Council

Burnaby

Mayor

- ☐ Mike Hurley

Council

- ☐ Ryan Erwin
- ☐ Joe Keithley
- ☐ Cindy Lee
- ☐ Rea Park
- ☐ Maita Santiago
- ☐ Kiran Singh
- ☐ Daniel Tetrault
- ☐ James Wang

School Trustee (SD 41 - Burnaby)

- ☐ Hillary Bergshoeff
- ☐ Bill Brassington
- ☐ Paul Kwon
- ☐ Jen Mezei
- ☐ Jasmine Nicholsfigueiredo
- ☐ Kristin Schnider
- ☐ Colin Yafu Zuo

Coquitlam

Mayor

- ☐ Craig Hodge

Council

- ☐ Phillip Buchan
- ☐ Matt Djonlic
- ☐ Robert Mazzarolo
- ☐ Benjamin Perry
- ☐ Jane Thomsing

School Trustee (SD 43 - Coquitlam)

- ☐ Dana Ebtakar
- ☐ Candace Knoll
- ☐ Rosey Manhas
- ☐ Craig Woods

Delta

School Trustee (SD 37 - Delta)

- ☐ Tamara Bissett
- ☐ Ammen Dhillon
- ☐ Val Windsor

White Rock

School Trustee (SD 36 - Surrey)

- ☐ Laura Lattanzio

Surrey

Mayor

- ☐ Mike Starchuk

Council

- ☐ Yousef Aldabainah
- ☐ Perminder Chohan
- ☐ Narima Dela Cruz
- ☐ Margaret Mubanda
- ☐ Kevin Wilkie

School Trustee (SD 36 - Surrey)

- ☐ Kyle Jones
- ☐ Vick Karan
- ☐ Anne Whitmore

Langley City

Mayor

- ☐ Nathan Pachal

Council

- ☐ Paul Albrecht
- ☐ Shawn Caldera
- ☐ Jeff Jacobs
- ☐ Heather Jenkins
- ☐ Mike Solyom
- ☐ Rosemary Wallace

Langley Township

Council

- ☐ Lauren Chalus
- ☐ Resha Sabti

School Trustee (SD 35 - Langley)

- ☐ Candy Ashdown
- ☐ Kathie Dalziel
- ☐ Holly Dickinson
- ☐ Charlie Fox

Maple Ridge

Mayor

- ☐ Dan Ruimy

Council

- ☐ Korleen Carreras
- ☐ Bob D'Eith
- ☐ Leanne Koehn

School Trustee (SD 42 - Maple Ridge - Pitt Meadows)

- ☐ Paul Davidson
- ☐ Jeff Stromgren
- ☐ Crystal Warner
- ☐ Elaine Yamamoto

Pitt Meadows

Council

- ☐ Alison Evans

School Trustee (SD 42)

- ☐ James Rowley

New Westminster

Mayor

- ☐ Patrick Johnstone

Council

- ☐ Dalia Al Hussaini
- ☐ Tasha Henderson
- ☐ Peter Jorgensen
- ☐ Bereket Kebede
- ☐ Kane Tse

School Trustee (SD 40 - New Westminster)

- ☐ Junior Chuang
- ☐ Michelle Hak Hepburn
- ☐ Paul Romein
- ☐ Mary Trentadue

Port Coquitlam

Mayor

- ☐ Brad West

Council

- ☐ Solomon Etuk
- ☐ Nancy McCurrach
- ☐ Darrell Penner
- ☐ Paige Petriw
- ☐ Glenn Pollock
- ☐ Dean Washington

School Trustee (SD 43 - Coquitlam)

- ☐ Christine Pollock
- ☐ Michael Thomas

Port Moody

Mayor

- ☐ Meghan Lahti

Council

- ☐ Samantha Agtarap
- ☐ Kyla Knowles
- ☐ Amy Lubik
- ☐ Callan Morrison
- ☐ Tracey Schaeffer

School Trustee (SD 43 - Coquitlam)

- ☐ Tracy Green

Sunshine Coast Labour Council

Gibsons

Council

- Jager Rosenberg

Sechelt

Mayor

- Alton Toth

Council

- Mary Degan
- Darren Inkster

Sunshine Coast

School Trustee (SD 46) Area 2 (Central)

- Brenda Rowe
- Tina Joe
- Robin Hansen

School Trustee (SD 46) Area 3 (Lower)

- Amanda Amaral
- Tamara Hedden
- Ed Shapero

Fraser Valley LC

Abbotsford

Council

- Preet Rai

School Trustee (SD 34)

- Graeme Hutchison
- Freddy Latham
- Benjamin Mehrer
- Raj Patara
- Rhonda Pauls
- Willow Rechelt
- Shannon Rose

Chilliwack

Council

- Lisa Morry
- Ghazaleh Nozamani

School Trustee (SD 33)

- Katie Bartel
- Leah Kelley
- Margaret Reid
- David Swankey

Please note: The information compiled in this insert is current as of September 23, 2026. For the most up to date list of labour endorsed municipal candidates, please consult with your local labour council, or consult the CLC website at <https://canadianlabour.ca/sct/BC/>

You can learn more about each VDLC or NWDLC endorsed candidate by visiting voteforhere.ca

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(cont. from page 5)

early retirement, but his commitment to the union movement continued. He was a member and strong supporter of BC FORUM. He always acknowledged the work we do on behalf of seniors and encouraged others to get involved.

A short while ago, Greg contacted me to renew his BC FORUM membership. Though he could no longer fully participate, he still wanted to receive his copy of our magazine. Although assured he would not be removed from the mailing list, Greg said, while he still could, he would remain a union supporter. He renewed his membership for three years although we both knew that he had made the difficult decision to say his final farewells long before those three years would end.

Greg was a friend, an enthusiastic motorcyclist, and an old-car buff. As in life, there will be no auditory peace if he is in his version of heaven, where hot rods and Harleys abound.





HOME INSURANCE IN BC
Your home. Your memories. Our coverage.

WATERCRAFT & RV INSURANCE
Relax. Enjoy your time off without worries.

TRAVEL INSURANCE
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CELEBRATION



Christmas tree safety tips for the holiday season

By Working Ventures Insurance



Every year, Christmas trees start fires. While these fires aren't common, they can be serious, resulting in costly damage, property loss and even loss of life. Typically, the culprit is an electrical problem or a heat source too close to the tree. But these accidents are usually preventable when you take the proper precautions.

Minimize the chances of a Christmas tree fire in your home by following these 10 tips.

Select the safest tree possible. When you purchase a live tree, choose a fresh one with springy green needles that stay put when you touch or shake the tree. Look at the cut end of the trunk, too. It should be sticky and resinous, not dried out. If you're buying an artificial tree, make sure it comes with a label marked "fire-resistant." Even though this doesn't mean the tree is 100% fire-proof, it's still a worthwhile safety indicator.

Place the tree in a safe spot. Place your tree at least 3 feet away from fireplaces, radiators, candles, heat vents, TVs and hot lights. Don't block any exits.

Make sure the tree is topple-proof. Secure the tree in a sturdy tree stand with widely spaced feet for stability. Loop twine or fishing line around the trunk and tie it to screws in the wall. A well-secured tree is particularly important if you have pets or small children.

Water the tree regularly. Make sure your tree stand has a large water reservoir and add water daily. A driedout tree is a huge fire risk.

Light the tree safely. Use Underwriters Laboratories (UL)-approved lights, and don't overload your outlets or string together more lights than the manufacturer recommends.

(cont. from previous page)



Labour Day highlights

We're pleased to share photos of BC FORUM board directors and regional representatives celebrating Labour Day with community members, family, friends, elected officials, and municipal candidates across our great province. Whether participating in district labour council events, staffing BC FORUM displays, joining local festivities, or simply reflecting on the achievements of the labour movement, we proudly recognize the contributions organized labour has made, and continues to make, to the lives of working people and retirees alike. We hope these photos reflect the ongoing commitment of seniors to remain engaged, relevant, and active in helping build a stronger, fairer, and more compassionate society.

Opposite Page Top left: Nanaimo Ladysmith | School board 68 Trustee Tania Brzovic. Middle Left: Nanaimo Ladysmith | Iris Taylor & Christine Walker, BC FORUM reps to the NDDLC. Bottom left: Nanaimo Ladysmith | John Humphrey, NDDLC president; Lisa Marie Barron, former MP; Councilor Ian Thorpe; Mayor Leonard Krog. Top middle: Kamloops | BC FORUM reps to the KDLC Talitha Dekker and Tom Friedman. Middle: Burnaby | L-R, Andy Ross—MoveUP past president; Leslie Gaudet, President COSCO; Jim Sinclair, BCFED past president; Sam Wiese, BC FORUM president. Bottom middle: Craig McKay, retired BCGEU Component 5 chair & Sam Wiese, BCFORUM president. Top right: Kamloops | KDLC celebrates 70 years with a cake! Middle right: Merville | Anne Davis, BCFORUM regional rep, and Brian Charlton, lifetime CUPW member, at the CRCLC booth. Bottom right: Burnaby | Jennifer Whiteside, BC Minister of Labour, and Sam Wiese, BCFORUM president.

This page Top: Mill Lake | BC FORUM Board Secretary Michelle Laurie and BC FORUM 1st VP Gord Savard at FVDLC. Bottom: Chris Johns BC FORUM regional representative to EKDL



(cont. from previous page)

Check all light strings for signs of wear, blackened sockets or exposed wires. Throw away damaged strings. Make sure all bulb sockets have bulbs in them to prevent electrical shocks or a fire. And run lighting cords along walls, not under rugs. This helps prevent overheating.

Keep gifts away from heat. Wrapping paper and boxes are extremely flammable. Don't place gifts near open flames or electrical connections. Gift should not touch any lights or electrical ornaments.

Keep a fire extinguisher handy. Make sure every family member knows how to use it.

Check the batteries in your smoke detectors and replace them if necessary. Test your smoke alarms regularly, and run fire safety drills with your family.

Turn off the tree lights before you leave the house or go to bed. Even LED lights can overheat and cause a fire, especially if your tree is dry. To make it safer, purchase a timer for your tree lights. You can also buy a wireless control to shut off your lights through an app on your phone.

Dispose of your tree properly and promptly. Remove the tree from your home before it dries out. Carefully remove all decorations and find a tree recycling program near you. Don't leave the tree in your garage or lean it against your home.

Never burn any part of a Christmas tree in a wood stove or fireplace. Needles burn quickly and intensely, which can cause them to flare up and burn out of control.

Protect your home. In the excitement of the holiday season, it's easy to forget safety. Both real and artificial trees are susceptible to fires, especially when strung with lights. Keep these 10 simple tips in mind to protect your home and loved ones.

Call one of WV's experienced brokers to review your policy at wvins.ca

From the Secretary of State for Seniors

The following are excerpts from the September Newsletter for Seniors, for full details or to subscribe go to: www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/corporate/seniors-newsletter-subscription

Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS)

You may qualify for GIS if you receive OAS and have a low income.

If you receive the Old Age Security (OAS) pension and have a low income, you may be eligible for the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS)." Information and applications are available online, by phone, or at Service Canada.

Turning 71? RRSP deadline

December 31 of the year you turn 71 is your final day to contribute to your RRSP. After that, you must choose one of three options:

1. Withdraw the funds
2. Transfer to a RRIF
3. Buy an annuity

Cyber Security Awareness Month (October)

A reminder to stay safe online. getcybersafe.gc.ca website offers practical tips to protect your personal data.

Flu season: Protect yourself

Older adults and people with certain health conditions are at higher risk. Annual flu vaccination is strongly recommended.

Getting your annual flu vaccine (flu shot) is one of the best ways to protect yourself.

Additional protective steps include staying home when sick, masking when needed, improving ventilation, and cleaning hands/surfaces.

National Seniors Day – Oct 1

Oct 1 is National Seniors Day celebrating 15 years of honouring older adults and the 60th anniversary of the CPP. We encourage all to celebrate through connection, storytelling, and community events.

Ageism Awareness Day – October 9

This day is a call to challenge stereotypes and discrimination based on age. 63% of older adults reported being treated unfairly because of their age. Intergenerational connection is highlighted as a powerful tool to reduce ageism.

Fall Prevention Month (Nov)

Falls are the leading cause of injury-related hospital visits for older adults—but preventable. Six practical tips include:

- Exercise for balance and strength
- Regular hearing and vision checks
- Medication reviews
- Good lighting and hazard-free spaces; non-slip mats
- Safe, well-maintained walkways

Updates to the Disability Tax Credit (DTC)

CRA has changed how applications must be submitted:

- As of July 14, 2026, documents can no longer be sent through the "submit documents" section of CRA accounts.
- Use the digital application or the latest paper Form T2201 (2023 or later).

As of September 8, 2026, the CRA will no longer accept older versions of Form T2201."

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
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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:

* Required for Accidental Death & Dismemberment group insurance coverage to age 86.

* Credit card companies now require the CVV for payment to be processed.

.....
SIGNATURE

Date of application: DAY MONTH YEAR

When voting this October, vote for here

By Janet Andrews, FVLC & Stephen von Sychowski, VDLC

Vote for here. These three words are our call to action and our goal this election cycle. Our two labour councils represent more than 135,000 union members across Metro Vancouver and Sea-to-Sky, and through our campaign we hope to capture the imagination and will to vote of union members and retirees.

The struggles of working people have defended rights and made many improvements in our communities through time. Activists and leaders understand that our solidarity and our willingness to take action, even to the point of striking, make anything possible. And conservative forces, the rich and powerful, know it too. That is why increasingly they are taking aim at democracy itself, to take our gains away before we can even make them, using legislation to undermine the very tools we rely on: the labour code, employment standards, WCB coverage, and more.

Local government elections have the lowest turnout, and yet our cities do so much for us. Our cities are the front-line for affordability, through zoning, permitting and Official Community Plans. A strong public sector workforce can efficiently deliver the services we rely on like water, sewer, roads and transit, accessible park spaces, recreation centres, fields and pedestrian friendly shopping centres. Our cities have the power to change our lives, but only if we vote for it.

There is even lower turnout for school board elections. And yet they hold the key to our future. If we think, 'well, I don't have kids in the system', we miss the opportunity to build a strong, inclusive public education system that will create, innovate, activate and motivate the next generation. Without them, who will build, maintain, teach, care, and lead? When we ignore and neglect school board elections, we throw away opportunity and

possibility. Our schools have the power to change our future, but only if we vote for it.

Local elections can be a bewildering array of choices, a mix of parties and independent candidates, and it can be hard to know who to vote for. Who truly shares our values? It is easy for candidates to say the right thing, but what is the truth? Who is capable? Who has what it takes to deliver for working people?

The answer to these questions is why our labour councils have devoted time, effort and energy over the last four years to monitoring endorsed leaders and issues, listening to affiliates, members and retirees, and interviewing new candidates. Our process is deeply informed by the lived experience of grassroots members from every sector, and we do not give out our endorsement lightly. It is this commitment, time and the dedication of rank-and-file members that makes our process strong. Local governments in the care of labour endorsed candidates have the power to build resilient, affordable, livable communities, but only if we vote for them.

On the surface, this election looks like any other. But we know this could

be one of the most consequential votes we will take. As Canadians, we face economic attack both as a country in the form of Trump's tariffs, and more insidiously by the extremely wealthy who seek not just more money to add to their grossly swollen balance sheets, but power and control, over us, our families, our bodies, our communities and our modest incomes. We must make no mistake, this handful of privileged elites are anti-democratic and in thousands of ways, through bought legislation, corruption, apathy, fear, extremist ideologies, and social media algorithms, they seek control. The collective power of organised working people is the one thing that can stand in their way. And on October 17th our vote is our chance to use that power right here in our local communities.

All the challenges of our times are present in our cities and schools. The mental health crisis, violence, addictions, bullying, hate, poverty, homelessness, precarity and despair. But there are solutions to all of these, we see current leaders using the levers of government and advocacy to make improvements, gradually but steadily. And we are also part of the solution. Our cities can change our lives, by only if we vote for here.

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?
