

Advocate

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



Vol. 23 No. 1 Spring, 2020

ON OUR 25TH ANNIVERSARY

We've only just begun

By Ken Georgetti

TWENTY FIVE years ago the baby boom generation started to retire from our ranks. All these great union activists, staff and elected officers took their considerable experience and skills with them into retirement.

I spoke to the heads of unions, about an idea to “re-organize” our retiree activists and use their considerable skills for political activities and campaigns. After all, what a benefit it would be to have experienced organizers available (without the distraction of their workplace) for our campaigns.

The BC Federation officers agreed wholeheartedly, and to kick it off their unions would give a gift to retiring activists: their first year membership in BC Forum. Many of the BCFed affiliates still do that to this day. Working Enterprises provided the seed funding and an annual operating grant and still does through Working Enterprises



Consulting and Benefits.

Obviously the “experiment” worked. BC Forum has been actively campaigning to improve the lives of all British Columbians. They also provide group benefits to those members who have either lost them

in their retirement or need extra coverage.

I knew the day would come when I too would be a member of BC Forum and I enjoy reading the Advocate and the great work the Board is doing stepping up and organizing on the key issues of the day. Advocating for social justice is in our blood, it's a way of life and it doesn't go away when we retire from our workplaces. BC Forum has proven that after twenty five years. I am grateful for the countless hours of volunteer work contributed by the Forum Board and activists.

Ken Georgetti, former President of the B.C. Federation of Labour, was the first Chair of the B.C. Federation of Retired Union Members' Board of Directors.

Advance notice of 2020 Annual General Meeting

- You are invited to attend BC FORUM's annual general meeting, 9:30 am to 1:00 pm, Wed. June 17 in the UFCW auditorium, 350 Columbia, New Westminster.

- Please mark your calendar today.

- We look forward to seeing you. And feel free to bring a friend!

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Advocate

The Advocate is published by the B.C. Federation of Retired Union Members. BC FORUM – supported by WE Consulting and Benefits and affiliated with the B.C. Federation of Labour – is dedicated to representing the interests of members and their families, continuing into retirement the relationship they enjoyed with the union movement.

#200-5118 Joyce Street

Vancouver, B.C. V5R 4H1

Toll-free 1.800.896.5678

Tel. 604.688.4565

bcforum@bcfed.ca

Editor: Soren Bech

soren.bech@gmail.com

2102 Porter Rd, Roberts Creek,

B.C., V0N 2W5

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THE ADVOCATE

In this edition

It's our 25th anniversary!

As BC FORUM marks this milestone, our first Chair – Ken Georgetti – writes on page 1 to share the thinking that led to the creation of our organization. On page 3, President Diane Wood describes why our continued solidarity and activism remains vital as we grow older and wiser together.

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UFCW

WE FIGHT FOR FAIRNESS

Standing proud, standing together

By Diane Wood
President, BC FORUM

IT'S NOW 25 years since Ken Georgetti and the leaders of B.C.'s labour movement came together to create BC FORUM. A quarter century! And what a time it has been.

We have faced challenges. Governments have threatened pensions, torn up contracts, imposed unfair taxes and privatized vital public services.

We have lost champions. Among them are Bill Clark, Jack Nichol, Joy Langan and Gerry Edwards who all served with distinction as president of our organization.

Through thick and thin we have moved forward. We continue our campaigns for a more civil society. We build on the best that's gone before.

Over 25 years, we have worked with our allies to make life better for older workers, retirees and our families. Our campaigns have forced progress on improvements to the Canada Pension Plan. Our calls for the creation of a B.C. Seniors' Advocate were heard. The momentum for a public Pharmacare program continues to build. And we have built the largest, most comprehensive union retiree benefits program in B.C.

Thanks to you and all the members who support BC FORUM's work, I am confident that the best is yet to come.

The labour movement and organizations like ours have a vital role to play in today's world. Inequality continues to grow, with more wealth and more power relentlessly concentrated in the hands of the few. In many nations they already own the government and the media, and manipulate both to their own benefit. To put that in other words, ordinary people are under attack.

South of our border, an out of control president has handed billions in tax giveaways to large corporations and the wealthy, while simultaneously proposing to cut health care coverage for the most vulnerable.

His ranting tweets are devoted to "me, myself and I," attacks on democratic institutions, and inappropriate attempts to defend cronies who have been found guilty of breaking the law.

Such is the power of American media – much of it owned by billionaires – that his insults, innuendo and repeated lies have infected political discourse around the world.

There is little restraint. Anger is in full flow. The lines are drawn harder and harder. With the growing intransigence, those who attempt to find common ground for progress through civilized discourse are too often dismissed as sell-outs. Surrounded by name calling, people are fighting fire with fire.

This, I believe, is why we can all be proud to be part of Canada's labour movement. We are sisters and brothers. We care for each other. We do our best to be respectful of differing opinions, remembering that we are all part of the family.

It's a model the world would do well to emulate.

Again, I thank you for being part of BC FORUM.

With solidarity and respect, we shall continue our struggle for a more civil, equitable and inclusive society.

"What we desire for ourselves, we wish for all. To this end, may we take our share in the world's work and the world's struggles," said J.S. Woodsworth.

In that spirit, we shall stand proud. We shall stand together.



Diane Wood

Join us today!

IF YOU'RE not yet a member of BC FORUM, I urge you to join us today.

It's quick and easy. You can join by mail using the form printed on page 15 of this edition. You can also join us online by visiting our website at www.bcforum.ca.

If you're already a member, please check the mailing label on page 16 to see if you're due for renewal.

Together we're strong.

I thank you for all you do to support our work!

For-profit care falls short

- **Lower wages**
- **Less care**
- **Unaccountable financial reporting**

SENIORS ADVOCATE Isobel Mackenzie says B.C.'s contracted long-term care system needs better monitoring of care hours, tighter financial oversight and more transparency.

While many previous studies have questioned the quality of for-profit care, Mackenzie's report – *A billion reasons to care* – is the first provincial review of the contracted long term care sector in British Columbia.

"Contracted long term care homes cost taxpayers almost \$1.3 billion a year," says Mackenzie.

"It is important to examine the levels of accountability, monitoring and financial oversight in one of the largest contracted sectors within government. The public needs to know whether contracted long term care homes are meeting the needs of both residents and taxpayers."

There are more than 27,000 seniors who live in one of 300 publicly funded care homes. These are owned and operated by health authorities, private companies and not-for-profit societies.

The review found:

- For-profit care homes failed to deliver 207,000 direct care hours for which they were funded.
- Not-for-profit care homes delivered an extra 80,000 hours of direct care, beyond what they were funded to deliver.
- Wages in for-profit care homes are as much as \$6.63 per hour less than the industry standard.

"There is a pattern of for-profit operators paying lower wages," says Mackenzie.



"The degree to which this is impacting their ability to recruit and retain staff is unclear."

The report concludes that there are "shortcomings" in the current approach to funding and monitoring long term care.

"Our funding and financial reporting is disjointed, unfair to the not-for-profit sector, and unaccountable to the public. It is not clear that we have a sufficiently firm grip on an annual expenditure of \$1.3 billion," says the report.

The Seniors Advocate calls on regulators and funders to implement monitoring and reporting systems based on a "trust but verify" relationship.

The report makes five recommendations to achieve this:

- Ensure that funding for direct care is spent on care. If operators hire staff at less than the funded rate, surplus funds should be used to provide more care or returned.
- Tighter reporting and monitoring of direct care hours.
- Define profit to ensure reported expenses are fair and appropriate.
- Standardized reporting for all care homes in all health authorities.
- Make revenues and expenditures for publicly funded care homes available to the public.

"However challenging and difficult the conversations and negotiations will be, we must change from our current practice or the problems will only compound in the future as the need for long term care beds increases," says the report.

Understanding the two types of insurance for your condo

By Nicole Lychak-Smith,
Branch Manager
Working Ventures Insurance

Did you know?

STRATA CONDOMINIUMS have two policies in force. Your personal condominium policy is intended to cover your personal property (contents), the increased costs of building repairs arising from any upgrades or improvements and betterments made inside the unit as well as your personal liability.

The Strata Corporation carries the building policy.

These two policies are intended to

complement one another but not to provide overlapping coverage.

As a unit owner, you should be aware of the coverages to both of the policies.

IT is recommended that you review the strata corporation's insurance policy annually to ensure your personal condo insurance policy provides sufficient coverage should you be assessed a deductible from the strata corporation's insurance policy.

You may need to consider making increases to the following:

- Personal property
- Improvements & Betterments

- Loss Assessment
- Corporate Strata Deductibles

Rented and Seasonal Condo policies would be insured differently.

They may not automatically provide coverage for a number of perils such as burglary, vandalism/tenant vandalism, sewer back up, overland water, replacement cost, and contents.

These coverages may be available to add to your policy depending on the insurance carrier.

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- **An end to the “wild west” of litigation-based insurance**

FOR YEARS, B.C. has been the only province to allow a purely litigation-based model for car insurance. It's been great for lawyers. Their fees kept going up and up. Over the last two years, \$1 billion of drivers' insurance premiums have gone directly to lawyers.

Until the BC NDP ended what the New York Times called “the wild west of political fund-raising” the limitless lawsuits were also great for the B.C. Liberals. They collected a lot of political cash from the lawyers who were raking it in. And the former Liberal government added to the injury to drivers by siphoning hundreds of millions of dollars from ICBC.

Dramatic changes announced in February will finally bring B.C. into the mainstream, minimize the legal free-for-all, reduce premiums and significantly increase benefits.

This major overhaul will require legislation. If approved by the Legislature, it will take effect May 1, 2021.

In the meantime, premiums for basic insurance will be frozen on April 1 of this year.

“It's time for change at ICBC,” says Premier John Horgan.

“The old government ignored ICBC's problems, allowing it to become a system that made lawyers rich while drivers paid too much for insurance.

“We're going to transform ICBC to lower rates for B.C. drivers... while also improving care for people who have been injured in a crash,” said Horgan.



Major changes to ICBC – much better coverage and an average 20 percent reduction in premiums – were announced by Premier John Horgan and Attorney General David Eby.

The new “enhanced care” model will lower ICBC premiums by about 20 percent, and greatly increase coverage for anyone who is injured in a crash.

This is possible because removing the majority of legal fees and other costs of litigation will save more than \$1.5 billion in the first year.

Here are highlights of the improvements in accident benefits:

- Medical and rehabilitation coverage will increase to at least \$7.5 million, compared to the current limit of \$300,000.
- New coverage of personal assistance expenses – up to \$4,800 a month in cases of non-catastrophic injuries, and \$10,000 a month for people with catastrophic injuries requiring 24 hour care.
- Income replacement of up to \$1,200 a week, up from the current \$740 a week. This was \$300 a week prior to April 1, 2019.

These and other new care and recovery benefits will be available

to anyone who is injured in a crash, regardless of who was responsible, and will last for a lifetime if needed.

“With these changes, patients will have the peace of mind of knowing that their care and treatment benefits will be there when they need them, and for as long as they need to get better and return to their daily lives,” says Christine Bradstock, chief executive officer of the Physiotherapy Association of B.C.

“The new care-based model provides significantly better coverage for people injured in traffic accidents through major increases in the level of medical care and supports for recovery,” says Dr. Kathleen Ross, president of Doctors of B.C.

A driver who is responsible for a crash will continue to be found at fault, and pay more for insurance.

Those who are injured by dangerous drivers convicted of Criminal Code offences, such as impaired driving, will retain the right to sue for additional compensation.

PHARMACARE NOW

We call for action on pharmacare

BC FORUM has joined with more than 150 national and provincial organizations to call on the federal government to follow through with the steps needed to make pharmacare a reality.

The Pharmacare Now Coalition includes groups that represent health care providers, non-profit organizations, unions, workers, business, seniors and patients.

In a letter to Finance Minister Bill Morneau, the groups reiterate their call for all parties to work together to implement universal, public pharmacare within the government's current mandate.

"We are now calling on your government to make the financial commitments that are needed in this year's budget to make this program a reality," says the letter.

The government's own Advisory Council on the Implementation of National Pharmacare recommended an allocation of \$3.5 billion to provide access to a national formulary of essential medicines by January 2022.

"We are counting on your government to fulfill its promise to Canadians by implementing the Advisory Council's recommendations," says the letter.

"Universal, public pharmacare would improve the health of our population and would save Canadians billions of dollars every year. Canada can't afford not to adopt this program.

"In this year's budget, we hope to see the necessary minimum commitment of \$3.5 billion in total for pharmacare between 2020 and 2022, as well as maintained funding for a rare diseases strategy. Anything less would put us behind schedule for implementing this essential new program.

"We thank your government for its commitment to universal pharmacare. Only single-payer, public pharmacare will ensure everyone in Canada can access the medications they need."

Congratulations on Celebrating 25 Years!

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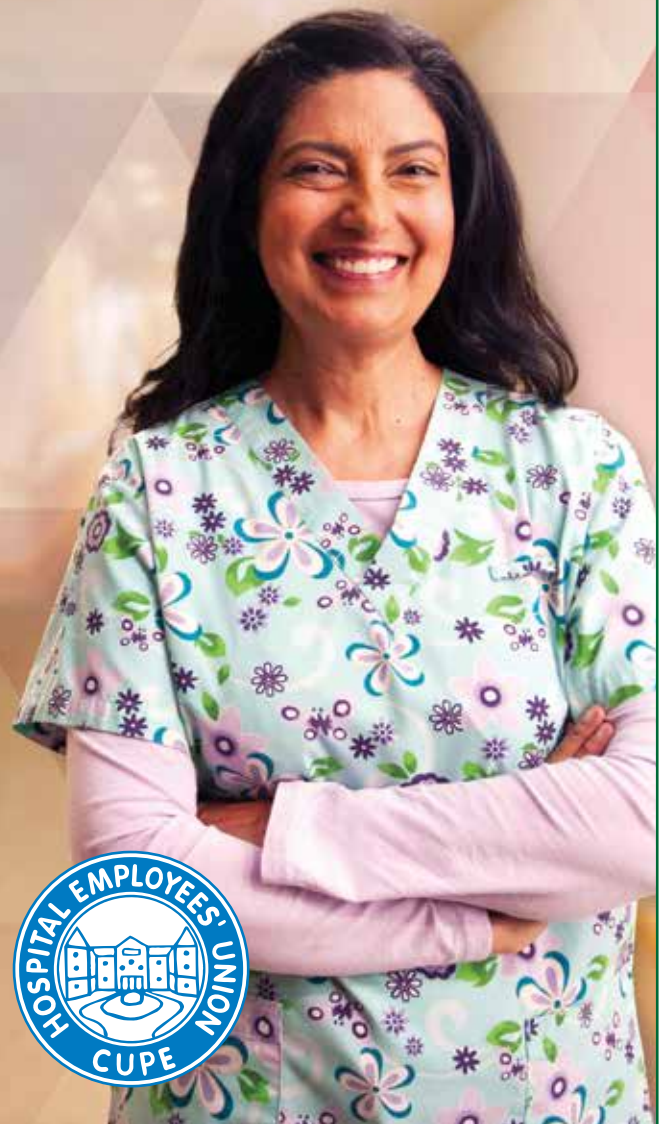
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Pharmacare: we must keep up the momentum

By David Porteous

THE CURRENT federal government (Liberal) estimates it will take at least four years for a national pharmacare program to be implemented. With their record we will be lucky if it's eight years. The official opposition (Conservatives) don't seem to want Pharmacare. The NDP wants action NOW and implementation within two years!

Some history! In 1964 The Royal Commission on Health services stated, "Prescription drugs should be insured under a public system." In 1997, the National Forum on Health came up with similar recommendations. In 2002, the Kirby and Romanow reports talked about catastrophic coverages, a Pan-Canadian Pharmaceutical alliance, and national formularies. In 2018, the

Parliamentary Budget Officer found that pharmacare could reduce total annual prescription expenditures by **\$4.2 BILLION**.

Some facts! The Hoskins Report on national pharmacare says 7.5 million Canadians don't have prescription drug insurance. One in five households had someone who did not take a prescribed medicine due to cost. Over 100,000 private plans cover approximately 36 percent of overall drug spending in Canada. Most are linked to workplace plans. With the changing face of employment in Canada and the massive increase in the cost of drugs, it's likely even more Canadians will not be covered properly in the future.

What's the holdup! Is it the millions of dollars in kickbacks (rebates) from the drug industry to

the insurance industry that deals with claims adjudication, and administration of health plans? At the 52nd Annual Canadian Employee Benefits Conference there was discussion of drug rebates ranging from 44 percent to 88 percent of the base price. It's been estimated that about 25 percent of the industry and benefit providers' income could vanish if a pharmacare was put in place. Most Trusts and Plan Sponsors (Contract Holders) support pharmacare. They are not getting the rebates, and they worry that if the big insurance companies keep dealing directly with drug companies, all Canadians with or without benefit plans will lose.

David Porteous is a Licensed Insurance (Nominee), an Elder Planning Counselor, and a charter member of the Canadian Initiative for Elder Planning Studies.

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Seniors Advocate reviews services for seniors in B.C.

EACH YEAR, the Office of the Seniors Advocate (OSA) reviews the state of services to seniors in B.C. This provides an independent assessment of changes over time, noting where we are doing well, and indicating where improvements are needed.

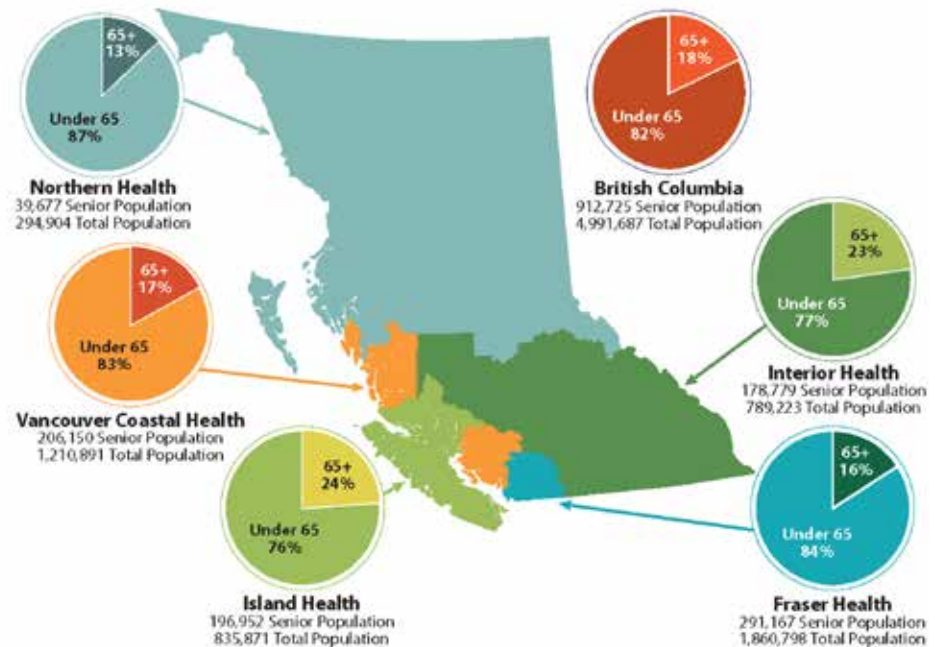
“This is the fifth year the OSA has published the Monitoring Seniors Services report, and we are beginning to develop meaningful trend lines that can help us better understand if we are moving in the right direction,” says Isobel Mackenzie, Seniors Advocate.

“Over the past five years, data quality and reporting from several government ministries and agencies have improved. This is a positive evolution as we need accurate and timely measurement of performance if we are going to meet the needs of our growing seniors population.

“We also include new elements in the report as issues arise and data becomes available. This year, for the first time, we are looking at influenza vaccination rates, health human resource data and additional data on elder abuse,” says Mackenzie.

Following are some highlights from the report released in December, 2019.

- The seniors population grew by 4 percent in 2018. Seniors now represent 18 percent of the population, up from 14 percent in 2008.
- The proportion of the population aged 75 to 84 and 85 plus has remained relatively stable at 5 percent and 2 percent respectively.
- The seniors population is generally healthy; 19 percent are living with high complexity chronic conditions, and 6 percent are diagnosed with dementia. This has



remained relatively stable over the last five years.

- 37 percent of seniors received the publicly funded flu vaccine, an increase over the 34 percent vaccinated in 2017/18. Vaccination rates ranged from a low of 26 percent in Vancouver Coastal to a high of 49 percent in Interior Health.
- 26 percent of emergency department visits and 44 percent of hospitalizations were for seniors. This has been slowly increasing over the past five years.
- The number of home support clients increased 1.7 percent. This is due solely to short-term home support clients who increased 5 percent while long-term home support clients saw a minor decrease of less than 1 percent. The target population of 80 plus grew by just over 3 percent during this time.
- There was a 17 percent increase in the number of home care

complaints. Complaints have been increasing steadily since 2015/16.

- There were 7 percent more day care programs with 10 percent more clients attending and a 1.5 percent reduction in the waitlist.
- There was a 1 percent decrease in the number of subsidized registered assisted living units and in the number of clients living in those units. Currently, the waitlist for subsidized assisted living represents 20 percent of the total available units.
- The number of beds in long-term care remained relatively unchanged increasing only 2 percent from 2015 to 2019 while the population aged 85 or older grew 13 percent.
- Average and median wait times for clients admitted to long-term care increased slightly.

The full 96 page report is available from the seniors advocate website: seniorsadvocatebc.ca.

A tale of two extremes

ECONOMIC INEQUALITY is out of control, says Oxfam International in a report released as political and business elites gathered at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.

The richest 1 percent now have more than twice as much wealth as 7.8 billion people. The richest 22 men in the world own more wealth than all the women in Africa.

“These extremes of wealth exist alongside great poverty. New estimates by the World Bank show that almost half of the world’s population live on less than \$5.50 a day, and the rate of poverty reduction has halved since 2013,” says Oxfam.

Calling it the “great divide” the report says a flawed and sexist economic system has accumulated

vast wealth and power in the hands of a rich few, in part by exploiting the labour of women and girls, and systematically violating their rights.

“At the top of the global economy a small elite are unimaginably rich. Their wealth grows exponentially over time, with little effort and regardless of whether they add value to society.

“Meanwhile, at the bottom of the economy, women and girls, especially women and girls living in poverty and from marginalized groups, are putting in 12.5 billion hours every day of care work for free, and countless more for poverty wages. Their work is essential to our communities. It underpins thriving families and a healthy and productive workforce.”

Oxfam has calculated that this

work adds value to the economy of at least \$10.8 trillion.

“Yet most of the financial benefits accrue to the richest, the majority of whom are men. This unjust system exploits and marginalizes the poorest women and girls, while increasing the wealth and power of a rich elite,” says Oxfam International.

Lauren Ravon of Oxfam Canada says, “It’s incomprehensible that a wealthy few continue to amass large fortunes, while the majority of the world struggles to make ends meet.”

“There is much our governments can do to tackle inequality, not just between the rich and poor, but also between men and women,” says Ravon. “We want to see the Canadian government take a leadership role (in) tackling unpaid care work.”



Steelworkers Organization of Active Retirees

25 Years!

Congratulations to BC FORUM from SOAR – the Steelworkers Organization of Active Retirees

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

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

Can you join?
Yes, if you can agree with and support the guiding principles and programs of SOAR.

Annual dues are reasonable at \$12 for individual membership and \$15 for a couple.

Contact District 3 SOAR Coordinator Fred Girling: 1-604-999-7938
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UNITED STEELWORKERS
SOAR
STEELWORKERS ORGANIZATION OF ACTIVE RETIREES

Are you taking prescription drugs you no longer need?

As we get older, we become more likely to experience side effects and adverse reactions

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS, researchers and clinicians are working together to inform and engage seniors in decisions about their medications.

Medications can help us in many different ways. However, as we get older, we become more sensitive to the effects of medications.

Our bodies do not process medications as efficiently and we become more likely to experience side effects, drug interactions or other adverse effects.

In Canada, seniors are hospitalized five times more often than people under the age of 65 because of harmful medication effects (Canadian Institute for Health Information 2013).

The Canadian Deprescribing Network (CaDeN) is a national nonprofit research organization working to educate and equip the public, health care professionals and governments to support the safe and appropriate use of medications for older Canadians.

In British Columbia, CaDeN works with several community organizations including BC FORUM, the BC Old Age Pensioners Organization, and the COSCO Health & Wellness Institute.

These organizations are putting on presentations in their communities, publishing articles in their newsletters, and sharing helpful resources with their members.

The goal? To equip more older adults in B.C., their families and their

caregivers with the information they need to engage in important conversations with health care professionals and ensure the medications they're taking are still right for them.

These conversations can lead to deprescribing, which means reducing or stopping medications that may not be beneficial or may be causing harm.

The goal of deprescribing is to maintain or improve quality of life, which is of importance when making

health-related decisions, particularly in the long term care setting.

To learn more and access CaDeN's free online resources for patients and healthcare professionals, visit deprescribingnetwork.ca.

Would you like to take part in spreading the word about the importance of taking special care with medications as we age? Contact info@deprescribingnetwork.ca.

As we get older, we should be careful with our medications

Did you know?
Older adults are hospitalized five times more often than people under the age of 65 because of harmful medication effects¹

Reference
¹Canadian Institute for Health Information. 2013. Adverse Drug Reaction-Related Hospitalizations Among Seniors, 2006 to 2011.

Canadian Deprescribing Network

The road ahead to Pharmacare

By Kathleen Jamieson

BY THE time you read this article NDP MP Peter Julian, Deputy Leader of the NDP, will have introduced an NDP plan for a universal, single payer Pharmacare plan in the House of Commons. As a private members' bill, it has little chance of passing but it will finally give all Canadians inside and outside the House of Commons a vision of what a Pharmacare plan could look like.

The debate on the bill may force the Liberals to explain what they are doing about implementing a Pharmacare plan. Although implementing Pharmacare is mentioned as a priority in the mandate letter of the current federal Minister of Health, Patty Hadju, we have only heard vague promises dangled before us and have very little idea what the Liberals are planning.

One hopeful sign that was not necessarily designed to be part of a

Liberal Pharmacare plan but which will help to make Pharmacare sustainable are significant changes to regulations that will control the rising and out-of-control costs of new patented drugs. These changes have been in the works for about three years and will come into effect July 1, 2020. The changes will be implemented by the arms-length federal agency, the Patented Medicines Price Review Board (PMPRB).

When the changes were announced in August 2019, the former Health Minister, Ginette Petipas Taylor said: "Today we take the biggest step to lower drug prices in a generation ... these bold reforms will both make prescription drugs more affordable and accessible for all Canadians ... saving them an estimated \$13 billion dollars in the next decade ... and lay the foundation for National Pharmacare."

The mandate of the PMPRB is to

implement these "bold reforms" through setting ceiling prices for new patented medicines, looking at a drug price in relation to its value and impact on the Canadian health care system, and updating the list of countries that Canada uses to compare its drug spending with.

These changes will significantly affect the profits of big pharmaceutical companies and almost immediately 21 pharmaceutical companies in two groups filed a challenge through the courts to the amendments. A spokesperson said at the time that they had been trying to work with Health Canada to find policy alternatives for two years. Who knew?

Kathleen Jamieson is the Chairperson of the National Pensioners Federation Health Committee, Chairperson of Council of Senior Citizen Organizations of BC Health Committee and Community Co-Chair, BC Health Coalition.

Access to subsidized assisted living drops

DESPITE A growing population of seniors, B.C. added a mere 105 units of publicly subsidized assisted living between 2010 and 2017. During the same period, the number of private-pay units – where there is no limit on what operators can charge – grew by 1,130 units.

These numbers are among the key findings in a new study published by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

The average rent for a one bedroom unit is more than \$36,000 a year, plus additional fees for "extra" services, well above the single senior median income of \$27,600.

"Without access to subsidized assisted living, seniors who can't afford to pay privately may go without care altogether, or wait until their



health deteriorates to the point of requiring a nursing home or hospitalization," says Richard Longhurst, author of the report. "This situation does not serve seniors or our public health care system well at all."

Longhurst notes that compared

to the number of seniors aged 75 or more, the number of subsidized units available dropped by 17 percent.

The study recommends new capital and operating funding for non-profits to create more subsidized assisted living units.

A champion fights for rights

THE CANADIAN Labour Congress (CLC) has honoured Marion Pollack for her lifetime of activism in fighting for people with disabilities.

Marion, a BC FORUM board member, was awarded the Carol McGregor CLC Disability Rights Award.

“Marion is an inspiring leader in our labour movement, who held positions at the local, regional and national level in the Canadian Union of Postal Workers,” says the CLC.

“A steadfast trade unionist and feminist, she has dedicated her life to tirelessly advocating for the rights of people with disabilities in British Columbia and across Canada.”

Marion’s advocacy efforts have spanned many workplaces, from her work in a psychiatric hospital where she witnessed the abuse people with disabilities face firsthand, to her work as an active union member at Canada Post, where she introduced a buddy system to improve fire drills and evacuation safety for deaf persons.

As a trade unionist, Marion was also passionate about educating her co-workers and the workers she represented on duty to accommodate legislation in BC. She worked hard every day to ensure the rights of workers with disabilities were respected in all workplaces.

She worked tirelessly to educate those around her about the importance of challenging and unlearning ableist language, in order to build a labour movement and communities that were inclusive of all abilities.

Marion’s activism has continued well into retirement. Most recently, she is known for her leadership in advancing the rights of seniors with disabilities. This includes efforts such as launching a successful campaign that ensured Translink users did not

always have to tap their Compass cards in order to access public transportation, ensuring better access for those with limited mobility.

“As a lifetime champion for disability rights and inclusion of people with disabilities in her union and across many workplaces and communities, Marion perfectly embodies the spirit of this award,” says the CLC.

“I cannot think of a more deserving person for this award, as she has dedicated her life to the struggles of persons with disabilities and educating society as a whole on these issues,” says Colleen Jones, Director of CUPW’s Pacific Region.



Marion Pollack addresses delegates at the 2019 BC FORUM annual general meeting.



History award for excellence

ONE HUNDRED years after his shooting death, the Cumberland Museum and Archives commemorated the life of labour activist Albert “Ginger” Goodwin. Hundreds gathered to take part in music, workshops, graveside ceremonies, art-making projects, a symposium, and the re-enactment of Goodwin’s funeral procession.

In January, the museum’s work was recognized with the Governor General’s history award for excellence in community programming.

In the photo above are Marianne Bell, Cumberland Mayor Leslie Baird, museum board member Karen Melnyk, engagement co-ordinator Anna Rambow, Governor General Julie Payette, Executive Director Robin Folvik (holding the award), Executive Vice President Joanna Lord of the BCGEU (a major sponsor of the Miners’ Memorial weekend), and Courtenay-Alberni MP Gord Johns.

This year’s Miners’ Memorial Weekend commemoration will be held June 19 - 21.



Bill Silvester was one of several volunteers who staffed the BC FORUM booth at the annual Harrison Winter School.

Current and future leaders come together at Harrison Winter School

THERE'S NOTHING quite like it. The five weeks of the Harrison Winter School cover everything from negotiating and enforcing contracts to organizing and dealing with mental health issues in the workplace.

But it's much more. It is in every sense the place where current and future leaders of the labour movement gather to share strategies for building a more just society.

In addition to a week of classroom learning and discussion, hundreds of participants come face to face with the leaders of the movement – including Laird Cronk of the BC Fed and Hassan Yussuff of the CLC – to discuss broader issues. Several cabinet ministers, including Harry Bains, Shane Simpson and Adrian Dix, also attended this year's session to make presentations and answer questions.

New Regional Representative appointed

BARB BILEY has been appointed as BC FORUM Regional Representative and delegate to the Campbell River, Courtenay and District Labour Council.



Barb Biley

President Diane Wood said Biley was “a very welcome addition to represent us at the labour council.”

“I think it is important that we keep active in the movement – the fight certainly does not end when you retire!” says Biley.

Before her retirement last July, Biley worked as a medical stenographer at the Comox Valley Hospital and as a cook at Glacierview Lodge. She was also serving her fourth two-year term as a member of the provincial executive of the Hospital Employees' Union.

Her union activism started in 1973 when she worked at Toronto Western Hospital. She served as a steward, a member of the CUPE local executive, was on the union's provincial bargaining committee during the 1981 strike by hospital workers, and was a founding member of the Ontario Council of Hospital Unions.

She has been participating in the labour council since 2004.

Senior Citizens' Repair Service

We provide low-cost minor house repairs, renovations and maintenance for seniors 55 years and over and for people with disabilities.

Services include plumbing, carpentry, electrical work, gas fitting, painting, yard work and general handyman services.

All services are guaranteed for 30 days and offered by retired or semi-retired experienced tradespeople.

Sponsored by the Plumbers and Pipefitters Union Local 170.

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Serves Metro Vancouver. Phone: 604 529-1100



Strengthening BC FORUM has never been more important

Please encourage your friends to join our team

THROUGH OUR UNIONS, before we retired, we've all seen the benefits of collective action. Our voices are strongest when we stand together 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 maintain strong links with provincial and national seniors' groups.

Together, we can make a difference for ourselves and our families. Please encourage friends, colleagues and family members to join us using the form below, or on-line at www.bcforum.ca.

Renew your membership

PLEASE HAVE A 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, #200 - 5118 Joyce St., Vancouver, B.C. V5R 4H1. You can also join us or renew your membership on-line at www.bcforum.ca.

Many unions cover first year dues

BC FORUM actively welcomes members who are 50 and better, working or retired, and the list of unions that cover the first year dues for their qualified members keeps growing! We welcome CUPE 402 and the B.C. Ferry and Marine Workers Union to the ranks of unions that support our campaigns and our work.

If you're not yet a member, contact your union for details. Some even pay dues for three years. And don't be shy about encouraging your friends and family members to join us. Solidarity makes us strong.



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

We are proud to now 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 • #200 - 5118 Joyce St., Vancouver, V5R 4H1
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: |__|__|__|__|__|__|__|__|__|__|__|__|__|__|__|__|

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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.

BC Fed welcomes expanded services for people and new tax on the 1%

Reducing inequality, creating opportunities

THE B.C. Federation of Labour says the 2020 provincial budget, delivered by Finance Minister Carole James on Feb. 18, moves B.C. in the right direction.

Information for retired workers

- The Office of the BC Seniors' Advocate provides links to a wide range of federal, provincial and other services including health care, housing, income support, personal support and transportation. The Advocate's website address is www.seniorsadvocatebc.ca.
- Protect yourself against scam artists with info from the Canadian Centre for Elder Law. Google "Be a Savvy Senior Fraud Protection."
- The People's Law School has summarized benefits available to B.C. seniors. Search the web for "When I'm 64: Benefits for Seniors" to get a free copy.
- The Council of Senior Citizens' Organizations of B.C. (COSCO) offers free workshops to seniors groups. Visit www.seniorshelpingseniors.ca for a complete list of topics.
- The Deprescribing Network – deprescribing.org – offers information about safely reducing medications that may no longer be needed.
- For details about federal services and benefits, search the web for "Programs and Services for Seniors – Canada.ca".

The BCFED notes that the budget introduces a new tax on the wealthiest 1 percent, and uses BC's strong economic position to expand public services and social programs that benefit working people.

With a record \$22.9 billion in infrastructure spending, the budget continues a sea change from the austerity and cuts of the BC Liberal days, says the BCFED.

"The NDP government invests in services that families and communities rely on, whether in health care, housing, education or childcare," says Laird Cronk, President of the BCFED.

"The new Child Opportunity Benefits and B.C. Access Grant are game changers that will help fight child poverty and improve access to post-secondary education."

Budget 2020 also puts a focus on fairness for some of the lowest paid workers in the province.

"By 2021, BC will eliminate the discriminatory server wage and have the highest provincial minimum wage at over \$15 an hour" says Sussanne Skidmore, Secretary Treasurer of the BCFED.

"We're seeing real progress for workers: boosts to wages for Early Childhood Educators, increases to the earnings exemptions for income and disability assistance, and the introduction of five days of paid leave for workers experiencing domestic and sexual violence."

The budget also delivered on other key priorities that reduce inequality and create secure, sustainable jobs:

- Critical funding for forestry revitalization, and supports for forestry workers.
- New investments to specifically address homelessness.
- Close to half a billion dollars in new funding for Clean BC.
- New resources to help women and under-represented groups access skilled trades training.
- Gaming-revenue sharing with First Nations and funding for an Indigenous justice strategy.

"A key measure of health for any economy is how it reduces inequality and creates opportunity," says Cronk. "On those measures, this budget delivers." B.C. continues to lead the country in growth and job creation.

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You can mail in the form on page 15, or you can reach us by telephone or e-mail: 1.800.896.5678 (toll free), 604.688.4565, bforum@bcfed.ca



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