

**25**  
years

# Advocate

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



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## What an NDP majority will mean for you and your family



NDP Leader John Horgan, elected as Premier with a large majority government, has set himself an ambitious agenda to tackle the immense challenges that face British Columbians during the global pandemic.

**P**REMIER JOHN Horgan – as head of an NDP government with a strong majority – has set himself an ambitious agenda for the next four years.

“I’m humbled and honoured by the support British Columbians have shown for our BC NDP team and want to wish a warm welcome to the newest members of our team of 57 BC NDP MLAs,” said Horgan.

“Just like we have for the last three and a half years, we’re going to do our level best each and every day to keep BC moving forward and build a better future for everyone. That’s my commitment to you,” he said.

As laid out in the NDP platform, Horgan’s detailed commitments build on the work the NDP did as a minority to restore services cut by the previous Liberal government, to create good jobs, and to support ordinary people.

The plan includes additional steps that the NDP will take to support people and businesses in recovering from the Covid-19 pandemic, continuing to move B.C. forward with measures that are widely regarded as the most robust and successful in Canada.

Here are some brief highlights:

### **Pandemic response**

- Free Covid-19 vaccine, when approved and available, to everyone who wants it.
  - A long-term economic recovery plan that provides direct support to people, communities, workers
- Please see “Tackling challenges”, page 4

# 25 years forum BC

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## THE ADVOCATE

# In this edition

This will go down as one of the strangest years any of us have ever seen. It's been a huge test for every nation in the world and for each of us as individuals.

Our cover story examines the actions that you can expect the new John Horgan majority government to take to get us through these perilous times.

In the years ahead, we will need to confront and conquer many challenges that have been exposed and magnified by the pandemic.

And that's the focus in this edition:

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**UFCW**

WE FIGHT FOR FAIRNESS



# A crisis hits seniors in long term care

By Diane Wood  
President, BC FORUM

**W**HETHER IT'S climate change or a pandemic, we are not very good at dealing with slow moving crises. Our species' "fight or flight" skills evolved to deal with threats we could see first hand. Predators. Emergencies. Immediate danger.

We are not as good at dealing with threats we can't easily see with our own eyes – relentlessly worsening climate crisis, and the needless deaths of thousands of people behind closed doors.

As I write this, Canada and many other nations are setting daily records for new COVID-19 infections and deaths. It's clear that if this goes on, we will be in a lot of trouble.

Long term care is in crisis. That's not new. It has been for years. Decades of under-funding, understaffing, and a focus on profit instead of care have left the system tragically unprepared for the health crisis we're facing as a result of the global pandemic.

Four out of five COVID-19 related deaths in Canada have been residents or staff in a long term care home.

It's the worst record in the developed world. It's a national shame for our country.

**I**N EARLY November, on behalf of BC FORUM, I wrote to Prime Minister Trudeau, with a copy to other parties, asking him to show leadership on this issue.

I asked Mr. Trudeau to:

- Act now to bring long term care fully in the public health care system under the Canada Health Act.
- Remove profit from the system, and ensure the delivery of care is

based on the needs of residents, not shareholders.

- Enact and enforce national standards that ensure proper staffing levels and high quality care.
- Address the long-standing crisis in long term care by providing stable federal funding.
- Address rampant recruitment and retention problems by regulating the industry and making sure workers are fairly compensated.

**I**HAVEN'T YET heard back from Mr. Trudeau, but I hope he acts quickly. Peter Julian, the NDP House Leader, did take the time to answer my letter. Excerpts of his response are on page 6.

As an example of how bad it can get, at this writing, fully two-thirds of the care homes in Winnipeg have active outbreaks. The worst outbreaks – in both numbers and deaths – are in two for-profit care homes operated by Revera Inc.

This only adds to the shame the Trudeau government should feel.

**R**EVERA IS owned by the federal government through a crown corporation. All of the shares in the company were purchased by the Public Sector Pension Investment Board in 2007.

It's a huge company, based in Mississauga Ontario. It operates more than 500 long term care and assisted living residences in Canada, the UK, and the USA. It operates 18 facilities in British Columbia.

Revera's record drives home the point that the problems with for-profit care existed long before the pandemic. The CBC reported in January 2019 that Revera was facing a staggering 85 lawsuits for neglect contributing to deaths.

Surely we can do better. We must.



Diane Wood

**O**THER THAN the election of a majority NDP government to see our province through and beyond the pandemic, there hasn't been much to celebrate this year.

People are increasingly anxious as the pandemic continues to rage. I hope it doesn't get worse before it gets better, but I fear it will.

Throughout this year, Dr. Bonnie Henry has counseled us to be kind to each other, to remain calm, and to take the steps needed to stay safe.

That's good advice and more important than ever as we find new ways to celebrate the holiday season.

My best wishes and a big virtual hug to you and your family. And however you celebrate, please stay safe.

# Tackling the many challenges that face British Columbians

Continued from Page 1

and businesses, not tax cuts for the wealthy.

- A one-time \$1,000 recovery benefit to families with an income of less than \$125,000 a year, with reduced amounts for families earning up to \$175,000, and \$500 to single people earning less than \$62,000 with a sliding scale up to \$87,000.

### Health care

- Deliver better and faster care in more communities by opening more Urgent Primary Care Centres. Already 21 are opened or coming soon, and ten more are on their way.
- Continue to build and modernize hospitals. So far, the NDP has moved forward with 14 hospital construction projects.
- Continue to increase capacity for surgeries and diagnostic assessments. Wait times for MRIs have already been cut in half.
- Launch B.C.'s second medical school – in Surrey – to educate more health professionals in our own province.
- Fight for a national Pharmacare program, while continuing to improve Fair Pharmacare to reduce the cost of prescription drugs.

### Long term care and home care

- Hire 7,000 new health care workers in long-term care and assisted living to meet and beat the standard of 3.36 hours of care per day per senior – something that 90 percent of facilities failed to do under the Liberals.
- Maintain “levelled up wages” to retain qualified staff and provide better care.
- Build better, public long-term care



NDP Leader John Horgan participates in a debate hosted by the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade, one of the many virtual events that were a feature of the 2020 election.

- homes that keep seniors safer, healthier and more comfortable.
- Put care before profit with requirements that private operators are more transparent and accountable for the public funding they receive.
- Expand publicly funded home care to allow seniors to remain in their homes.

### Additional highlights

- Freeze rents to the end of 2021, and limit increases to the rate of inflation thereafter.
- A renter's rebate of \$400 a year for households earning up to \$80,000 a year.
- Work to control the rising cost of strata insurance – and develop a public strata insurance option if rates have not corrected by the end of 2021.
- An enhanced care model that will deliver better care to people who are injured in car accidents and reduce ICBC premiums by an

average of 20 percent next spring.

- Pay rebates to B.C. drivers from any surplus ICBC delivers as a result of the pandemic.

### And much more

**H**ORGAN'S PLAN includes action in many more areas that will help shape our future as individuals and a civil society. These include climate change. Good jobs. Affordable housing. Reconciliation with First Nations. Systemic racism. The opioid crisis. Affordable child care. Poverty.

In these times, when a pandemic makes it a challenge to even swear in new MLAs and recall the Legislature, it is clear that Premier Horgan and his new cabinet will have their hands full.

“Covid-19 is presenting us with new challenges each day,” said Horgan.

“We need to keep the focus where it belongs: keeping ourselves, our families and our communities healthy, safe and secure. We will get through this together,” he said.



# What the heck happened?

## The 2020 pandemic election is clearly one for the history books

By Soren Bech  
Editor, The Advocate

**H**ELD IN the shadow of a global pandemic and the raging Trumpist denial of reality that dominated the news, there will never be another B.C. election like this one. I hope.

### Safety first

**M**ANY QUESTIONED whether the election could be conducted safely. I was one of them. Elections B.C. came through with flying colours.

With additional days of voting, voting by mail, and impressive safety precautions at polling places, public health said there were no cases of transmission due to the election.

In stark contrast to what we saw in the United States, B.C.'s political leaders and parties also followed strict safety protocols. Physical distancing. Masks. Daily monitoring. Questionnaires that reporters must complete before attending events.

### The sounds of silence

**P**OLITICS, LIKE sports, is just not the same without the cheering and jeering. There were no banner waving crowds. There were no chance confrontations at shopping malls.

It was so quiet on the campaign trail that our political leaders had to step up to heckle each other to fill the vacuum. Other than a few over-the-top Facebook ads, even that was remarkably civil. The Leaders' debate also featured debate of policy choices and the candidates' records, not interruptions and invectives.

### A big win for the NDP

**T**HE MAJOR media projected an NDP majority government a little over an hour after the polls closed. Only



No crowds. No cheering. No jeering. But NDP Leader John Horgan along with MLAs Lisa Bear and Bob D'Eith did find time for a family pumpkin carving event.

a fraction of the ballots had been counted, but it was clear the party would elect at least 44 MLAs to B.C.'s 87 seat Legislature.

The final count included more than 600,000 absentee and mail ballots. They tended to favour the NDP. There will be 57 NDP MLAs in the Legislature, as well as 28 Liberal MLAs and two from the Green Party.

Thanks to a surge in support, some favourable vote splitting and a couple of unpalatable opponents, the NDP won in areas where it has never won before. Chilliwack. Langley. Abbotsford-Mission.

It also picked up three of the four Richmond seats, its first victory there since Harold Steves won a Richmond seat in 1972.

Overall, it is the largest majority of any NDP government in B.C. history.

And it's a far cry from the single vote majority that the NDP and Greens had during the last three years.

### The big numbers

**E**LECTIONS B.C. did everything it could to make it easy. All parties encouraged people to vote. No one

launched law suits to make it harder.

Yet there were 86,021 fewer votes cast than in 2017. Liberal votes down by 160,435. Greens down 48,0005. Only NDP votes went up, by 103,861.

Voter turnout, adjusted for an increase in voter registration, is estimated at 54.5 percent. That's down from 61 percent in 2017.

### Good, but could be better

**T**HE PARLIAMENTARY system has a lot going for it. Rep-by-pop is not on the list. The NDP had a record 47.7 percent support, slightly less than a majority, yet won 66 percent of the seats in the Legislature.

Green Party candidates won 15 percent of the votes. A judicial recount confirmed a 60 vote Liberal win in West Vancouver - Sea to Sky, leaving the Greens with just 2 percent of the MLAs.

That, again, illustrates the fragility and unpredictability of first past the post. A few votes in a single constituency can make all the difference. If 95 people in Courtenay-Comox had voted Liberal rather than NDP, they would have elected a Liberal majority government in 2017.

# When profit takes priority, the result for seniors can be deadly

## BC FORUM calls on the federal government to take immediate action

**I**N EARLY November, BC FORUM President Diane Wood wrote Prime Minister Trudeau, with copies to all federal parties, demanding action on the staggering COVID-19 death toll in Canada's long term care homes.

"Prime Minister, we need you to show leadership," she wrote.

"You can act now to bring long-term care fully into the public system and regulate it under the Canada Health Act. You can remove profit from the system and ensure the delivery of care is based on the needs of residents, not shareholders."

At deadline, we had not yet received a response from Mr. Trudeau. We did receive a response from the federal NDP.

### Revera is one of the worst. It's owned by the federal government.

**D**URING THE first wave of the pandemic, over 80 percent of COVID-19 deaths in Canada happened in long-term care – one of the highest proportions of death in long-term care in the world. And in for-profit homes, the situation is much worse. Now over 10,000 Canadians have lost their lives to COVID-19," wrote Peter Julian, NDP House Leader and MP for New Westminster – Burnaby.

Pointing out that the Liberals have maintained the health care cuts imposed by Stephen Harper, Julian said, "Long-term care facilities did not have the resources they needed during the first wave of COVID-19 and lives were lost. This federal government needs to make sure

that long-term care facilities get the money they need to take care of our seniors."

### Long term care must be reformed to save lives

**I**N HIS response to BC FORUM, Julian continued:

"With COVID-19 infections continuing to grow across the country, we believe that long-term care in Canada must be reformed.

"Long-term care homes run by Revera are for-profit and owned by the federal government. These homes have become ground zero for the spread of COVID-19. Since the spring, Revera homes across Canada have been ravaged by the virus and have had some of the worst active outbreaks. Parkview Place, a Revera home in Winnipeg, is currently reeling from an outbreak that has so far claimed the lives of 19 residents, with dozens more infected.

"Their disregard for seniors and other residents, including persons with disabilities, during the pandemic is a national tragedy. Workers' and residents' lives are on the line and families are terrified to lose their loved ones....

"The federal NDP has been calling on the Trudeau government to take immediate action so that our seniors in these facilities can receive a dignified and proper standard of living and of care.

"We want the federal government to end profit-driven care that hurts our seniors and for our loved ones in long-term care to be safe.

"The federal government needs to take control of long-term care operator Revera – a wholly owned subsidiary of the Public Sector Pension Investment Board, a federal Crown Corporation – by replacing

its Board of Directors, scrapping all profit-driven care motive from federally owned long-term care homes and bringing Revera into public ownership.

"The federal government needs to play a leadership role by increasing transfers to provinces for long-term care, ensuring more supports for public care centres, and developing national care standards for home care and long-term care.

"The proposals put forward by Canada's New Democrats are tangible actions the federal government can take immediately to help protect the welfare of seniors and retirees.

*"The Prime Minister must commit to protecting people in homes owned by his government. This is not about jurisdiction, it's about responsibility. This is absolutely within the control of the federal government to fix this,"* wrote Julian. *(Emphasis added)*

## Quick facts about Revera

- Revera Inc. operates more than 500 properties in Canada, the UK and the US; 18 are in B.C.
- It is owned by the Public Sector Pension Investment Board, a federal crown corporation.
- For-profit care homes operated by Revera have been the sites of massive COVID-19 outbreaks involving hundreds of residents and staff. At least 50 have died in two Winnipeg homes.
- In January 2019, long before the pandemic, Revera was facing 85 lawsuits in Canada for neglect contributing to deaths of residents.

# Long term care must be a safe space for the frail elderly

**L**ONG TERM care is the last resort when families are stretched beyond their ability to care for a loved one. It's a decision that's forced on us when we can no longer cope. It's accepted only with great reluctance and tears, and the hope that our mother, father or spouse will receive better care than we are able to provide.

In many cases, it must be said, the latter is true. The professional staff at many care homes provide exceptional care, looking after residents as though they were members of their own families.

It's a very hard job, under-paid and under-respected.

The problems brought into sharp focus by the pandemic have been brewing for a long time.

Under Gordon Campbell, the previous B.C. Liberal government tore up collective agreements and encouraged contract flipping, triggering a lowest bidder race to the bottom. Campbell was determined to find ways to pay for his massive tax giveaways to the wealthy.

It worked. The government saved money. It did so by cutting the wages and job security of care aides and other front line health care workers. Many were forced to work two jobs to make ends meet.

As we've now seen, Campbell's gift to the rich has created a disaster in disease control in care homes.

We can't just flip a switch to correct that. It will take a long time.

To their credit, Health Minister Adrian Dix and the NDP have been working steadily to correct the issues since they took office in 2017.

Training programs for care aides have been expanded, and more



The COVID-19 pandemic has put the spotlight on long-standing shortfalls in the level of care provided to frail seniors in Canada. Permanent solutions are needed.

people have been hired with the goal of providing 3.6 hours of care per day to each resident. It's a standard that has never been met in B.C. It now seems within reach.

The NDP also eliminated contract flipping, providing more security to workers and stability of care to residents.

Then the pandemic hit. The long-standing shortfalls in care became a crisis. People died before their time.

Canada's tangled mess of public, non-profit and for-profit nursing homes and long term care facilities were not up to the task.

Ignoring the government's pleas, under-paid and under-equipped care aides in Quebec's CHSLDs stayed home. Ontario's nursing homes were similarly overwhelmed.

Both provinces called on the federal government to send in the army.

In November, two-thirds of long term care homes in Winnipeg

reported active outbreaks. They called in the Red Cross.

When your house is burning it's small comfort that the flames across the street are higher, but it is worth noting that B.C.'s response has been significantly better.

Care aides were ordered to work on only one site. Wages were standardized to prevent lost income for those who had worked two jobs.

About 1,200 additional staff were hired in the early months, a number that was subsequently multiplied with plans to train and hire an additional 7,000.

It's a gargantuan, time-consuming task. It involves more than 600 facilities, thousands of workers and a complex mix of owner/operators. And it's not cheap. To date, the government has allocated an additional \$140 million to improve care and make care homes safer.

This work towards a permanent solution must continue.



## COSCO AT 70



The Council of Senior Citizens' Organizations of B.C. (COSCO) marked the 70th anniversary of its advocacy on behalf of seniors with a virtual celebration in November. The event brought together delegates from affiliated organizations, including BC FORUM, and featured several prominent speakers.

Clockwise from top left, BC FORUM President Diane Wood acted as co-host; BC Seniors Advocate Isobel Mackenzie; Fraser Health Authority Chair and former BC Fed President Jim Sinclair; COSCO President Sheila Pither; BCGEU President Stephanie Smith; NDP House Leader Peter Julian.

# Beyond the pandemic

## Seniors Advocate sees the crisis as a driver for lasting positive changes

**I**SOBEL MACKENZIE, B.C.'s Seniors Advocate believes a lot of positive changes – as well as some serious challenges – will result from the current public health crisis.

“My hope is that as we come out of this pandemic, we will also see renewed hope, optimism and innovation,” said MacKenzie as she congratulated COSCO for 70 years of fighting for seniors.

MacKenzie acknowledged that the economic impact will be felt for several years, and that the mental health impact may also be felt for some time. However, for most of her address, she highlighted the potential positives.

“Necessity is the mother of invention. As a result of this pandemic, a number of gaps have been magnified, I would say, more than identified

particularly as it relates to seniors.

“Once the public became aware of these gaps and shortcomings, there was an outpouring of support that we need to do better for our seniors and particularly for frail older seniors.

“I think that is a very lasting legacy that will come out of this pandemic,” she said.

### Human connection

**M**ACKENZIE SAID another issue that has been magnified by the pandemic is our need for human connection with others.

“As much as new channels have been opened by technology, as we’re using today, I think it has also reinforced for us that we need human connection. I think that will be a driving force for us all in the years ahead,” she said.

“One thing COVID-19 has done for society at large is to make us focus on really what is important and what we need to do for each other.

“Ironically a lot of the things we strive for in life, that we put out as markers of success are more material in nature. We have found that they didn’t actually matter when this pandemic struck, just as we found when World War II struck that they didn’t matter.

“I think that will help us to come together to a greater extent, and that will help all of us,” she said.

### Care home visits

**S**HORTLY BEFORE MacKenzie’s comments at the COSCO event, she released a report on the impact of restricting visits at long term care homes.

“We really need to look at a way to more humanely balance the risks of COVID-19 versus the risks from the status quo of separating these very vulnerable people from their loved ones for a prolonged period of time,” she said.

“It is definitely having an impact.”



# Building the Canada we want

## We must build a fairer, more equitable society

**W**ITH THE world in the throes of the worst economic shock since the Great Depression and a raging global pandemic, even conservative commentators are calling for new solutions.

The deficit hawks are increasingly isolated in their calls for belt tightening, an approach that would spell disaster for millions of people.

“As western leaders learnt in the Great Depression, and after the second world war, to demand collective sacrifice you must offer a social contract that benefits everyone,” says an editorial in the conservative *Financial Times*.

“Radical reforms – reversing the prevailing policy direction of the last four decades – will need to be put on the table.

“Governments will have to accept a more active role in the economy. They must see public services as investments rather than liabilities, and look for ways to make labour markets less insecure,” said the *Times*.

## Huge challenges

**A** NEW REPORT from the Broadbent Institute notes that before the pandemic, the world was just starting to come to terms with the extent of change that would be needed to avoid widespread ecosystem collapse

due to climate change.

“Indeed, the pandemic has provided a sobering appraisal of the deep cracks in our systems, from education and health to employment standards and income supports,” says *Paying for the recovery we want*, prepared by a team of four economists and public policy veterans.

“We have been forced to face up to longstanding inequities and injustices that Indigenous people, women, Black people and other racialized groups have borne for years. They have suffered some of the worst impacts of the virus.”

## The road ahead

**C**ONTINUED DEFICIT spending will be a necessity for the foreseeable future, and with interest rates for federal spending near zero, it is also good fiscal policy,” says the report.

“Plenty of research has shown that bold investment now in core social supports such as health, education and housing will reap long-term economic and social rewards. So, too, will investing in a low-carbon economy.

“Such investment relies on a simple truth: preventing problems is usually less expensive than fixing them,” it says.

A massive transformation is required. It cannot be funded indefinitely through deficit spending, so

significant new sources of revenue are needed.

“A well-balanced, well-designed, and fair tax system can support a society that is also well-balanced, smart and fair,” says the report. “Most Canadians endorse such an arrangement, but our current tax system misses the mark.”

The report says many decisions made by governments in Canada and other industrialized democracies have not delivered on their promised benefits, but have delivered great costs.

“Above all, since the 1980s we have managed to engineer an unprecedented transfer of wealth to a small minority that needed help the least while imposing austerity on the majority of the population. The result has been growing inequality and insecurity.

“We have also paid huge opportunity costs by giving away the net value of our natural resources for free.

“In some sense, these were two trillion dollar thefts from the majority of us to the rich, and from all Canadians as collective owners of our resources to a handful of mostly foreign private shareholders. To achieve what we need to achieve in these times, we will need to establish more balanced and sensible public revenue policies.”

The full report, with specific measures to make taxes more fair, can be found at [www.broadbentinstitute.ca](http://www.broadbentinstitute.ca).



## TAKING ACTION

### An unfair decision

**B**C FORUM has called on Deb Schulte, federal Minister of Seniors, to reconsider a decision that discriminates against disabled seniors.

The federal government is paying a one time benefit of \$600 to those who live with disabilities – unless they are seniors.

For elderly people with disabilities, the government will only provide \$300, saying seniors have already received a separate benefit of \$300.

“We do not understand why the government has combined the two criteria (seniors and disabled). The result is that seniors lose out,” wrote Diane Wood, BC FORUM President, in a letter to Schulte.

Wood points out that the pandemic has resulted in increased costs for seniors, and that the burden is even greater for those who have disabilities.

“The government needs to give all disabled people in Canada the \$600 disability benefit and not discriminate against a disabled person because he/she also happens to be a senior,” said Wood.

### “Insulting indexation”

**T**HE QUEBEC seniors network FADOQ has criticized what it calls an “insulting indexation” of Old Age Security (OAS) and the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS).

The network points to the Trudeau government’s election promise to increase these payments to the poorest seniors, yet the cost-of-living

increase announced Oct. 1 is less than one percent. This amounts to a meagre \$18.24 a year for seniors who are already struggling to live on just over \$18,000 a year, says FADOQ.

### Don’t lose your benefits

**T**HOUSANDS OF low income seniors are at risk of losing their Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) payments because they haven’t filed their taxes.

Because of the pandemic, the deadline for seniors to file was extended from April to October.

However, the government estimates there are still 63,000 people who could see their payments suspended on January 1 if they don’t file their returns quickly.

If this applies to you or someone you know, make sure to file that tax return today.



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# Social stigma spreading like a virus!

By David Porteous

SINCE THE beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic there has been a strong trend towards stigmatization of people of Asian descent, older adults and intergenerational divisions. We all can do our part to fight social stigma. Use the right terms when talking about others, including older adults. Spread the true facts about the virus, encourage greater social cohesion, and support intergenerational solidarity.

Crises often bring out the best in people, but they can also bring out the worst. Pandemics, like the one we are experiencing, are fertile ground for social stigma. Fortunately, we have seen surges in solidarity at the local and community levels, many people trying to break the wall of

isolation using virtual means, as well as collective efforts to respect public health measures. When it comes to health, social stigma arises from wrongly blaming a group of people who share certain characteristics. This means people are labelled, stereotyped, discriminated against, and treated unfairly because of a perceived connection to the disease.

Some factors that may have contributed to fueling social stigma during the pandemic, notably ageism, the use of arbitrary age cut-offs by health authorities (for example, recommending that all people aged 70 and over stay confined and the fact that major outbreaks took place in long-term care facilities). Yes, in these cases the older adults were the most infected, but the cause was a

combination of individual poor health and poorly run and poorly staffed senior residences, not just age.

Be aware of the weight of words:

*Avoid using terms that fuel stereotypes and that suggest older adults are "all" fragile and vulnerable.*

*Spread the facts.* Share only trustworthy information with your friends and family.

*Encourage intergenerational solidarity.* Only share stories that humanize the experiences and struggles of people of all ages affected by the pandemic, and emphasize the need to support one another.

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

## BC FORUM Health & Dental Plans

***Exclusively for BC FORUM members and their families***

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

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## South Asian labour history

**T**HE BC Labour Heritage Centre has signed an agreement with the University of the Fraser Valley to design and develop a module focused on South Asian labour history in British Columbia.

The project is part of the South Asian Canadian Legacy Project, supported by the provincial government's \$1.14 million contribution to the South Asian Studies Institute at the University of the Fraser Valley.

The one-year project will present the history of South Asian workers in British Columbia, with a focus on organized labour, union membership and activism.

The project will also address non-unionized workers in B.C.'s labour force and questions of racist exclusion and choice in union membership.

"This is an exceptional opportunity

for the BC Labour Heritage Centre," said Board Chair Joey Hartman.

"It provides for new relationships, connections and an expanded body of work around South Asian workers, union leadership and activism."

"The partnership with the University of the Fraser Valley and the South Asian Studies Institute reflects a growing appreciation for our work and recognition of our expertise."

The South Asian Labour History Project will deliver a virtual exhibit supported by a print version.

The project will also contribute a chapter to a larger social history book being published by the University of the Fraser Valley.

The project will run until March 31, 2022.



IWA Local 1-357 picket line at North Mitchell Lumber, 1987. Photo by Sean Griffin, Pacific Tribune Photo Collection, Simon Fraser University MSC160-1511\_11A.

**Steelworkers Organization of Active Retirees**

**25 Years!**

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

**UNITED STEELWORKERS**  
**SOAR**  
STEELWORKERS ORGANIZATION OF ACTIVE RETIREES

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

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

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

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

Contact District 3 SOAR Coordinator Fred Girling: 1-604-999-7938  
fredgirling@shaw.ca  
[usw.ca/soar](http://usw.ca/soar)

## FIGHTING HATE

Like so many Canadians, I've experienced the violence of hate.

When I was young they were physical attacks.

When I was older they were slurs.

Together, we can build a Canada where no child has to experience such vile hatred, ever again.

– Jagmeet Singh

## Hate groups are a rapidly growing threat in Canada

IN NOVEMBER, federal NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh was joined by advocacy groups to discuss the growing threat of white supremacy in Canada and the danger it has brought to communities from coast to coast to coast.



Canada has seen a 200 percent increase in active hate groups in the last five years.

Singh said Justin Trudeau's Liberals must do more to tackle online hate and dismantle white supremacist and neo-Nazi groups in Canada.

"Hate and far-right ideology spread like fire online and Justin Trudeau has been slow to tackle this issue," said Singh.

"People need to feel safe in their towns, workplaces, schools and online. We are often told that white supremacy and racism exist only in the United States. This is misleading. Far-right extremist groups are operating across Canada, right now. Trudeau's Liberals cannot sit on the sideline, they must act immediately to counter hate groups wherever they are," he said.

In 2015, according to counter-terrorism experts in Canada, there were 100 alt-right or white supremacist groups operating in Canada. This has increased to more than 300.

As the number of alt-right and neo-Nazi groups grow in Canada, said Singh, we know that without action today, it will simply be a matter of time before the next attack against people.

"Nobody should feel unsafe and worried that they could be the target of such groups," said Singh.

CONGRATS TO THE BC FORUM  
on your 25th anniversary!



WE'VE  
FACED COVID-19  
TOGETHER.

Now let's make health care  
even stronger.

[www.heu.org](http://www.heu.org)



# Pushing for dental care

THE NDP is pushing for a national dental care program, starting with the 12 million Canadians who currently have no coverage.

Responding to a letter from BC FORUM, NDP Health Critic Don Davies says his motion to study the issue, placed before the House of Commons' Health Committee, will help shine a spotlight on this major health care need.

## MPs to vote on Pharmacare

THE CANADA Pharmacare Act, a private members' bill introduced by NDP House Leader Peter Julian will come to a vote in February 2021.

"We need universal pharmacare

coverage," says Julian.

Julian says one family in Burnaby is paying \$10,000 a year for necessary prescription drugs, and that's just one example of the countless individuals who are struggling with the high cost of medication.

BC FORUM joins with Julian in urging everyone to encourage their MP to vote yes on Bill C-213.

## Ont. nursing homes break law

AN INVESTIGATION by the CBC has found that 85 percent of nursing homes in Ontario have repeatedly broken the law with almost no consequences.

"A data analysis of the most serious breaches of Ontario's long-term care home safety legislation reveals that six in seven care homes are repeat offenders, and there are virtually

no consequences for homes that break the law repeatedly," says the CBC after reviewing 10,000 inspection reports and over 30,000 written notices of violations.

The violations reported include abuse, inadequate infection control, unsafe medication storage, inadequate hydration, and poor skin and wound care. Of the 632 homes in the Ontario database, 538 were repeat offenders.

## Bags of dirty money in casinos

TESTIMONY AT the Cullen inquiry into money laundering, which resumed after the provincial election, has been explosive.

At River Rock Casino in Richmond, B.C.'s largest, transactions of \$800,000 were common. People hauled in bags full of cash while the BC Liberals turned a blind eye.

## Information sources for retired workers

- The Office of the BC Seniors' Advocate provides links to a wide range of services including:
  - health care,
  - housing,
  - income support,
  - transportation and more.

Visit [www.seniorsadvocatebc.ca](http://www.seniorsadvocatebc.ca).

- Protect yourself from 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](http://www.seniorshelpingseniors.ca) for a complete list of topics.
- The Deprescribing Network – [deprescribing.org](http://deprescribing.org) – has info on how to safely reduce medications that may no longer be needed.



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**Strengthening BC FORUM has never been more important**

**Please encourage your friends to join our team**

**T**HROUGH 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](http://www.bcforum.ca).

**Renew your membership**

**P**LEASE 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](http://www.bcforum.ca).

**Many unions cover first year dues**

**B**C 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.



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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:	<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.

# Turning an election victory into a better future for all

By Laird Cronk, Chair, BCFORUM  
President, BC Federation of Labour

**D**URING THE recent provincial election, British Columbians had a clear choice between two very different futures:

- Return to BC Liberal cuts and a government that worked only for those who were already powerful and wealthy — leaving the rest of us out in the cold.
- Or choose a future that puts people and families at the forefront.

Labour activists and workers (including a big contingent of retirees!) helped make a powerful case for building a future for all. We pitched in to get the word out, volunteering in campaigns across every riding in BC.

And I'm proud to say that when the votes were counted, it was clear that British Columbians were with us.

They saw a government that works for people, not just for the powerful. And they put their trust in Premier Horgan and the BC NDP with a resounding majority.

**T**HE NDP now has the second-largest caucus in the province's history — and, more important, a clear mandate for the kind of changes that put working people and their families front and centre.

And that couldn't be coming at a more critical time. Because this province needs to make decisions not just about getting through the next few months, but what BC will look like for many years to come.

Right now, those decisions include how we deal with the long-anticipated second wave of the COVID pandemic.

This includes the need to double down on efforts to protect workers from infection, and build on the

measures the government took early on to make long-term care homes safer for seniors and the workers caring for them. And we must do even more to keep people whose lives and livelihoods have been disrupted by the pandemic from falling through the cracks.

**B**UT THE urgency of those actions shouldn't keep us from pushing for bolder, more fundamental gains for the people of BC.

High on our agenda for this government: a truly worker-centered Workers' Compensation Board, stronger employment standards and a fair labour code, increased public services including universal Pharmacare and dental care, paid sick leave for all workers and climate-change strategies that create family- and community-supporting long-term jobs in the new economy.

But we've been through this enough times to know that none of it will come without a lot of hard work.

Even with a government that listens to working people, the usual powerful and wealthy suspects will be pulling out all the stops. They'll try to water down the government's

agenda, block badly-needed improvements and roll back progress at every opportunity. We've seen it before with NDP governments, and they'll need our voices speaking out loud and clear for the kind of changes we want to see.

**T**HE GOOD news? We know our voices are many and strong. And we've proven we can achieve those changes and more when we mobilize people throughout BC who support real, progressive change and a better, fairer province.

So in the coming weeks and months, you can expect to hear a lot from us about the changes we all know BC needs. And you can join us and start speaking out now through our campaign website: [FutureForAll.ca](http://FutureForAll.ca).

In the meantime, thank you for all of your hard work during this election. We can all take some real satisfaction in knowing we helped to re-elect a government with a solid record of delivering for working people — and in knowing what a difference that will make to people throughout our province.

## 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 or e-mail: 1.800.896.5678 (toll free), 604.688.4565, [bforum@bcfed.ca](mailto:bforum@bcfed.ca)



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