



COSCO News

Council of Senior Citizens' Organizations of B.C.

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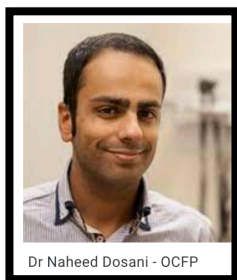
PRESIDENT'S REPORT: COSCO IN ACTION



Spring is a time of regrowth and renewal, and the Earth comes alive once again especially with the birds and flowering plants. Similarly, COSCO along with many other organizations is emerging from covid-induced hibernation and is starting to embark on in-person activities, while continuing with many regular activities on Zoom.

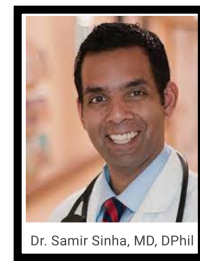
Attending the Press conference and Round Table with NDP leader Jagmeet Singh in April, together with dental hygienists and a pediatric dentist, I learned that dental hygienists can set up independent practices and provide services in people's homes, including Long Term Care homes.

While participating in the Workshop on Human Rights and the United Way's Summit on Aging, I was



Dr Naheed Dosani - OCFP

able to connect with key representatives from many other seniors' organizations. The invited speakers from across Canada were inspiring, including presentations on palliative care for homeless older adults by *Dr. Naheed Dosani*, and *Dr. Samir Sinha* on the barriers we need to overcome to activate systems change in older adult community care to support care in people's homes and reduce the demand for expensive long-term care.



Dr. Samir Sinha, MD, DPhil

COSCO participated in a Zoom consultation with the BC Seniors Advocate on an upcoming report focusing on low-income seniors. The next week, we met as an Executive with Isobel Mackenzie to discuss our priorities and gain perspectives on key issues. First VP Barb Mikulec and I accepted an invitation to present about COSCO to the BC Community Response Networks, which sets up host

agencies in communities across BC to create a coordinated community response to abuse, neglect, and self-neglect in vulnerable adults.



Past President Sheila Pither and I were invited by *Minister Nicholas Simons* to witness an announcement about the AccessibleBC plan to identify, remove and prevent barriers to participation for people with disabilities – we need to shift the culture from what a person can't do, to what they can contribute! This recognized the work Sheila had contributed to a committee developing policies on this issue.

As reported elsewhere Linda Forsythe developed a submission on Household Energy Affordability. We presented a brief to Burnaby City Council in support of an addition to Seton Villa, to provide accessible housing for older adults. We continue to follow-up on the hospital parking, an issue about which some of our members have worked diligently for years. We also supported the National Pensioners' Federation and the Canadian Federation of Pensioners by writing a letter of support for Bill C-228, which is intended to protect workplace pensions when a company goes bankrupt.

On June 15th I will be presenting to the BC Government Finance Committee, our three major concerns we'd like to see addressed in the 2023 Provincial budget.

In between, we've continued to present workshops on *Stay on the Road* and have launched *Passing the Torch* virtually and undertook training to prepare for in-person sessions starting in the Fall. We continue to develop our website and are planning to upgrade our membership system.



Finally, it has also been a time of saying good-bye – may we be inspired to carry on the torch they so brightly lit through their contributions to COSCO:

- **Rudy Lawrence**, August 31, 1930 – April 8, 2022
- **Ernie Bayer**, April 7, 1933 – April 28, 2022
- **Marie-Claire (Mary) Kube**, July 27, 1938 – May 19, 2022

Council Of Senior Citizens'
Organizations Of BC (COSCO)

Visit us at www.coscobc.org &
<https://www.facebook.com/COSCOBC/>

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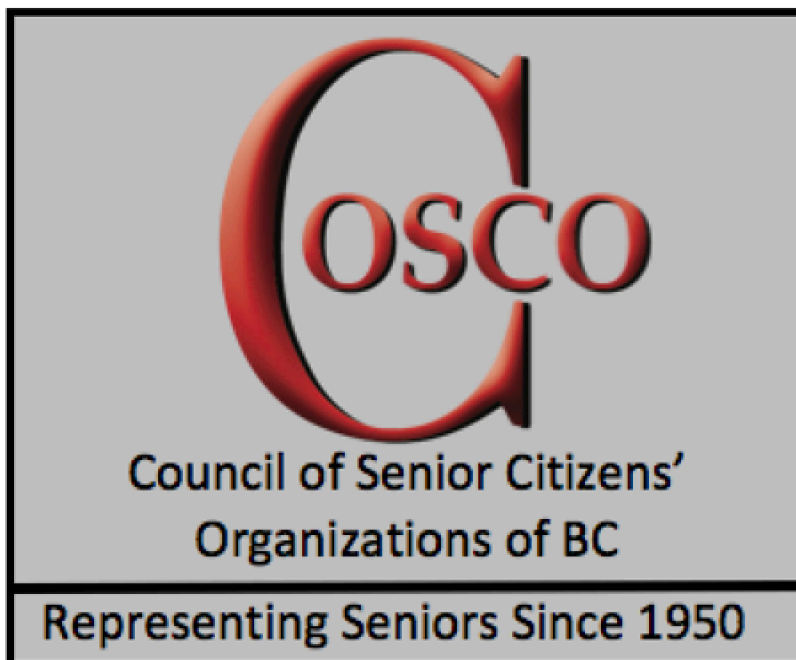
- Linda Forsythe (VOBSS)
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About COSCO

COSCO is an umbrella organization that brings together 64 different seniors groups, representing approximately 70,000 women and men to work on common issues.

COSCO is affiliated with the 1,000,000 member National Pensioners Federation (NPF) which promotes these issues at the national level.

COSCO is a registered non- profit organization.

Send your letters to the editor or other contributions to:

cosconews.editor@coscobc.org

Disclaimer: Unless otherwise noted, opinions, viewpoints, accuracy of facts submitted by the member is the sole responsibility of the writer, and not necessarily the opinion of the Editor, Executive, or Membership of COSCO.

Canada's Oldest Seniors Group: Old Age Pensioners Organization (OAPO)

Our organization has a long and interesting history. We are the oldest seniors' organization in Canada. This June we celebrated our 90th Anniversary at our Annual Convention held in Williams Lake.

The early years of the 1900s were a very changeable time: the First World War, high prices, followed by a recession and a depression. It was a difficult time for all, but particularly so for the seniors who had been the pioneers of the country. The federal government eventually recognized the difficulties being experienced by seniors and enacted legislation on mandatory retirement; also, Old Age Pension legislation based on a means test and a minimum age of 70 years.

The pension was a cost shared program and a matter of Provincial jurisdiction. B.C. had been the most assertive province for the program and was the first province to join the new program in 1927. The first cheque issued on September 1, 1927 went to William Henry Derby of Port Alberni. The cheque for the maximum monthly allowance of \$20 was presented by A.W. Neil, MP, who, then, purchased the cheque back from Mr. Derby and framed it.

The qualifications for eligibility were quite stringent: must be a British subject, 70 years of age, 20 years residence in Canada, 5 years in the province, not an Indian under the Indian Act, not in receipt of an income of as much as \$365 a year, etc.

E.R. Vipond was the co-founder and the first president of the BCOAPO. He had applied for a pension and his application was rejected on the ground that his several sons were capable of supporting him. The pension would only be awarded if he took his sons to court under the Parent Maintenance Act and the court decreed his sons could not support him. As a result, he was angry and consulted a lawyer, Gerald V. Pelton, and after some discussion they arranged a meeting of interested persons to establish the Old Age Pensioners' Organization of British Columbia.

The aim was to:

- Protect the rights and interests of Old Age Pensioners or prospective pensioners over 60, to prevent discrimination, avoid technicalities and undue delay in the consideration of applications for pensions;
- Endeavour to secure and maintain fair and just legislation and executive action at all times in the best interest of old age pensioners;
- Preserve their status as citizens, entitled to pensions, as a social and legal right and not by way of relief or charity, and enable them to maintain their dignity and self-respect as pioneer citizens of Canada.

The story goes that, while Gerald Pelton was not paid directly by the BCOAPO for his legal advice, he helped many individuals with their applications for the Old Age Pension and, when asked what his charge was, he would say: "Oh you just give me a dollar when you get your first cheque!"

In 1932 the BCOAPO organized its first provincial legislative petition. The petition was aimed at federal regulations under the Act and called for an end to the calculation of fictive income from adult children. Copies were sent to all towns in B.C. and the target was 20,000 signatures. We do not know if that target was met.

As an organization, we continue to advocate on behalf of all seniors in British Columbia through our resolutions discussed and passed at Convention. We also have had a long-established, ongoing relationship with COSCO because of our shared interests and advocacy.

Our branches continue to contribute to the social lives and activities of seniors in their communities in many ways.

Over the years there has been much discussion about removing the words 'Old Age' from our organization's name, but that old age pension dispute was the reason for our organization.

We all need to remember our reason for being!

CONGRATULATIONS to BCOAPO on Their 90th Anniversary Convention!



Leslie Gaudette, Isobel Mackenzie, BCOAPO President Jerry Gosling

I drove through the Fraser Canyon coming home from the amazing 90th Anniversary Convention of the BC OAPO. The beauty of the mountains and the strength of the water flowing rapidly in the river channel reassured me that Mother Nature would take care of the Earth.

As for us humans, construction crews were hard at work to repair damage and rebuild bridges from the floods last year. Trains snaked through the canyon and truckers lined up patiently to take their turn to pass over a temporary bridge. We must all be thankful for the many workers determined to keep our transportation routes open for goods and people.

And then I reflected on the determination of the members present at the BCOAPO convention who have not stopped advocating for seniors for 90 years. BCOAPO Branches have contributed to their communities by keeping their groups running, maintaining their seniors halls, and doing anything they could to keep the older people in their communities connected and safe. And this they did through fire and rain and floods on top of COVID! Let's all applaud the work seniors do across this province, often very quietly and invisibly. As Isobel Mackenzie pointed out at the Summit on Aging in April, it was the non-profit sector that pivoted to provide additional services at the beginning of COVID and our seniors centres were a big part of that effort.



Leslie Gaudette, Mayor Cobb, Tina Doerksen

Many thanks to the Williams Lake Seniors' Activity Centre BCOAPO Branch #93 for welcoming delegates from across the province to share their space, enjoy food prepared and served by a small army of volunteers, provide the best swag bag ever, and yes, help with the technical aspects. The group welcomed the Mayor Walt Cobb of Williams Lake, who at 76 years of age, certainly appreciates the needs of seniors. We also heard from BC Seniors Advocate Isobel Mackenzie. All of this was much appreciated to support the intense discussions the group reviewed and passed more than 35 resolutions, which will now be presented to various orders of government.



BCOAPO Branch #93 President Tina Doerksen & BCOAPO Jerry Gosling cutting the cake

Be Prepared for the Heat

by Linda Forsythe

Last year, 619 people lost their lives due to extreme heat. Nearly 70% were seniors. The most vulnerable people in our community are seniors, young children and babies, those living with serious health conditions, disabilities or mental health concerns.



The BC Coroner released a report this month and made 3 recommendations:

- 1) Implement a coordinated provincial heat alert and response system;
- 2) identify and support populations most at risk of dying;
- 3) implement extreme heat and long-term mitigation strategies.

The City of Burnaby has been working on its response since last August. It recently held an open house to get feedback from the public. A number of ideas have come up from these discussions.

First, we need to look for the symptoms of extreme heat on seniors. Heat Stroke symptoms include high body temperature, fainting or decreased consciousness, confusion, lack of coordination, very hot and red skin. Heat Exhaustion symptoms (the lesser of the 2 problems) include a skin rash, heavy sweating, dizziness, nausea or vomiting, rapid breathing and heart beat, headache, difficulty concentrating, muscle cramps, extreme thirst, decreased urination and dark urine. For people with heart problems, heat exhaustion may look like a heart attack.

Some problems with the response were immediately apparent. We need longer hours for the cooling centres (possibly 24/7). We need transportation to and

from the Centres. We can also access the malls, the library, city hall and any other public facilities. We need a workable 911 system so when people call, someone will answer.

What can be done if you live in an apartment?

1. Get your landlord or strata to buy a very good air conditioner for the common room.
2. Put in blackout curtains in the common room that will help with both winter cold and summer heat. The common room can be used as your very own cooling centre.
3. Think about using the lowest level of your parking lot as a place to go to cool down.
4. Daily you can check on your neighbours especially those in the most vulnerable groups. This could be done by appointing one household per floor who will call to check on people on their floor, or knock on their doors.

What can we do as individuals?

1. Get a bucket of cool water and put your feet in it. That will help to cool the blood in your whole body.
2. Drink lots of water. For those who have been sweating a lot, drink Gatorade or something that will balance your electrolytes. We give kids Pedialyte and it will work for adults too.
3. Put towels in cool water, wring them out and wrap them around your shoulders.
4. Take a cool bath/shower.
5. Close your curtains and windows so that the sun and heat cannot enter.
6. If you have an air conditioner, use it.
7. If you only have a fan, you can make it better by putting a couple of bottles of frozen water in front of the fan. This will cool the air.
8. Do NOT use fans if the temperature is more than 35 degrees as it makes everything worse.

The overall aim is to keep your core body temperature as cool as possible and keep your home as cool as you can.

Information taken from various sources including Fraser Health, the Coroner's Office and Burnaby emergency programs

Elder Abuse: Get the Facts

- **1 in 2 people** are prejudiced against older people (Global Report on Ageism, World Health Organization)
- **1 in 5 Canadians** say older people are a burden on society (Report on Ageism, Revera, 2012)
- An estimated **7.5% of Canadians 55 and older** experienced abuse (Into the Light National Survey on the Mistreatment of Older Canadians, National Initiative for the Care of the Elderly, 2015)
- **1 in 6 people over the age of 60** are victims of elder abuse (World Health Organization)
- In 2021, **Women aged 55 and older** represented 28% of all victims of femicide, killing on account of gender (Call it Femicide Report, Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability, 2021)
- **Nearly 8 in 10 seniors** report age discrimination in healthcare (Report on Ageism, Revera, 2012)
- In Ontario, there was a **250% increase in calls to the Seniors Safety Line in 2020** (Assaulted Women's Helpline, 2021)

Elder abuse is the discrimination of elders in every aspect of life. It can show itself in families (physical, emotional, financial, neglect & sexual), in society (physical, financial, social, including being ignored and/or being invisible, sexual), in hospitals, in government (where laws are made to protect elders from all types of abuse), in the workplace (where elders

are not able to get jobs they are qualified for or are passed up for promotions).

The first step in combatting elder abuse is to recognize it in elders (including yourself). Next is to talk to a trusted person. Or speak to someone in an organization like BC Community Response Network that can offer support. Your local health authority can also provide help. You can also join these groups to help make systemic changes.



Senior's First BC, Seniors Abuse and Information Line (SAIL) also has language interpretation. They can be reached at 1-866-437-1940

- Health Authorities – call the one in your area.
- First Nations Health Authority can be reached at 604-693-6500
- Public Guardian and Trustee of BC – for financial abuse. 604-660-4444
- Local Community Response Network is available online at <https://bccrns.ca/>.

Reprinted from World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD.CA)

Lung Screening Program

Since so many of us smoked when we were younger, the announcement of a lung screening program in the province is welcome news. Lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer deaths in Canada. The new screening program will be available at 36 sites in BC. The screening will be done by CT scans. Early diagnosis is the best way to save lives. Anyone interested in taking part in this program call 1-877-717-5864. The one glitch is that you must have a family doctor. It is offered by BC Cancer in every health authority in the province.



To be eligible a person must be:

- Between 55-74
- Currently smoking or have previously smoked
- Have smoked for 20 years or more

COSCO Calls For Dental Care To Be Part of Our Medicare System

by Leslie Gaudette

COSCO has advocated for more than twenty years for a dental care program for seniors. We know that many older adults struggle with the high cost of dental care. Some have dental plans during their working years, which disappear upon retirement, or whose costs and benefits may change arbitrarily. This uncertainty can wreak havoc on budgets for seniors with moderate incomes. Costs can be prohibitive as aging teeth need replacement fillings, crowns, root canals, implants or dentures.

Those on minimum incomes of about \$20,000 per year simply do not have extra funds to deal with dental emergencies. These seniors must give priority first to paying their rent, and then must juggle to pay for food, medications or getting their teeth fixed. Many are just not able to afford a visit to the dentist.

Lack of dental care has wretched consequences. Seniors with bad or missing teeth may be too embarrassed to go out which leads to the anguish of social isolation. We hear of reports from our members in seniors' centres, where the older adults in their communities regularly appear with severe pain related to the poor condition of their teeth. Some cannot afford even the discounted dental options available, and opt to have all their teeth pulled. And those with very poor or no teeth, struggle to properly chew and digest their food.



May 2019: Don Davies – COSCO Board member Diane Wood presents petition on Dental Care to MP Don Davies at Delegates Meeting with Health Committee Chair Kathleen Jamieson and Leslie Gaudette

In short, social isolation, inadequate nutrition and gum disease all contribute to chronic diseases and poor health from cardiovascular disease, dementia, diabetes and so on. Put another way, older adults with good teeth will generally be healthier. They will require fewer services from other parts of our embattled health care system and enjoy a higher quality of life. The omission of dental coverage from our universal health care system stands as a gaping hole in our approach to primary health care, as well as an issue of social justice.

COSCO is prepared to work with all political parties to ensure the dental care needs of older – and indeed all – Canadians are met. We started calling for a dental program over 20 years ago. And it was part of our demands for the 2021 Federal election.

Energy Poverty

by Linda Forsythe

Energy poverty is the term used when people do not have enough money to pay their energy costs. The situation of energy poverty likely does not completely reflect the situation of seniors. Many seniors believe that they must pay their bills for essentials first before they do anything else. They pay their hydro bills at the expense of food, medicine or a new pair of winter boots. There are over 100,000 seniors in the province who receive the GIS which means that they earn less than \$19,000 a year. Homeowners often can't take advantage of the programs that help mitigate heat loss in their homes. They simply can't afford to buy the needed items, even if there is a rebate. And poor construction, or lack of essential maintenance, can cause energy costs to soar. Those who don't own their homes find any kind of housing difficult. Those renting have little ability to make their homes more energy efficient and are at the whims of the landlords for repairs.



The BC Hydro program does not deal with energy poverty but just the results of that poverty in their grant system. It is only at the point of energy crisis and disconnection that the \$600 Customer Crisis Fund (CCF) kicks in. This is seen in the numbers who used the program (only a small fraction of low-income households). It's a bit too late for them to

be able to plan how they will use energy efficiently or be able to use energy conservation programs. They will be playing catch-up for a long time to come.

The programs that the BC government could implement would allow energy users to either defer their energy costs or provide a subsidy for those living below the poverty line. The deferral program for homeowners could be modelled after the property tax deferral program that defers the costs until the sale of the home. Or a subsidy program could be modelled after the one currently available in Ontario where low-income households would be given a monthly subsidy for energy costs (for example, a single person living on less than \$28,000 annually would be subsidized \$45 a month). BC Hydro has the numbers on this and it likely is easily transferrable. For renters who pay their own heating and other electrical costs, the subsidy program could be the same. For renters who pay their energy costs as part of the rent, a system of subsidy could be created.

It's also not likely that energy demand will decrease. Not only do we have relatively cold winters, but now we're faced with extremely hot summers where air conditioners and coolants become life saving pieces of equipment. Over 600 British Columbians died of heat related causes in the 2021 heat dome; nearly 70% were seniors. So cooling systems become essential. However, these systems are beyond the budget of many seniors, as well as the costs of electricity to run them. Subsidies for the purchase of portable air conditioners and/or high-end fans (some run to many hundreds of dollars) would help low-income seniors with the heat. A subsidy program would help with the energy costs. These are just a few of the ways in which the government could help ease the problems of people living in energy poverty.

Property Tax Deferral

Marion Pollack, Delegate from BC FORUM

Help for Homeowners

Do you own and live in your own home? Are you a senior? Are you finding it a financial drain to pay your property taxes? Do you know about the property tax deferral program?

If you are unable or find it difficult to pay your property taxes on your own home, you may be able to defer the payment of these taxes. This is due to the province of BC's tax deferral program.

What is the tax deferral program?



The tax deferral is a low interest loan program that helps qualified B.C. homeowners pay their annual property taxes on their principal residence. You must meet all eligibility qualifications above to apply.

Eligibility age etc.

The BC Tax Deferral Regular Program allows you to defer your property taxes if:

- You are 55 or older during the current year
- You are a surviving spouse of any age
- You are a person with disabilities

For the purpose of this article, we are going to focus in the age requirements.

Eligibility more

In addition to the above to qualify for the tax deferral program, you must actually pay property taxes and:

- Be a Canadian citizen or permanent resident of Canada
- Be a registered owner of the eligible property (this has to be your primary residence)
- Have lived in B.C. for at least a year
- Have paid all previous years' property taxes, utility user fees, penalties and interest
- You also must have and maintain a minimum equity of 25% of the property's assessed value. This means that all charges registered against your property plus the amount of taxes you want to defer can't be

more than 75% of the BC Assessment value of your property in the year you apply.

When to apply for a Property Tax Deferral

You can submit an application to defer your unpaid property taxes between early May and December 31 of the current taxation year. It is best that you apply after you receive your property tax notice and before your property taxes are due.

It costs to apply for a property tax deferral. It is \$60.00 for new applications, and \$10.00 per year for renewals. These amounts are added to your property-tax-deferral-amount-owing account.

What does getting a Property Tax Deferral mean?

The BC Government will pay the property taxes for you. You will not have to pay them. The BC Government will also place a restrictive lien on your property. This means that you cannot sell your property, or add someone new to the property title who is not your partner. It also means you cannot refinance your property.

For each year you defer your property taxes (or don't pay your property taxes as part of this program), the government charges simple interest on the amount of tax owing.

When you pass away or sell your property, the deferred property tax plus interest will have to be paid. Also, the application fees will have to be paid at this time.

Why do seniors participate in the BC Property Tax Deferral Program?

Many seniors may own their homes but they are on a fixed income. By deferring their property tax, they will have more money to spend on other things including food, utilities, medicine, or the occasional restaurant meal.

Before you decide to participate in the property tax deferral program you will need more information. A good way to do this is to phone the following toll-free number: 1-888-355-2700 and ask them to send you information by mail. Or, you can find lots of information about this on the internet at

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/taxes/property-taxes/annual-property-tax/defer-taxes>.

Transportation In Metro Vancouver

Chris Chang, Translink

Transportation is only a part of a senior's day-to-day life, but it is the part that makes other parts possible. As seniors consider how they will get where they need to go today, and tomorrow, it is important to know what services are available in the community.

TransLink is Metro Vancouver's transportation authority, providing a range of accessible services for persons with different range of abilities.

In partnership with community groups throughout the region, TransLink provides large group informational workshops for seniors, persons with disabilities and newcomers to assist with independent travel. A bus can also come on-site for a hands-on experience, away from the active system.



Hosting a community information fair?

TransLink can participate by hosting an information booth with useful tips and tools to share with participants.

TransLink can also provide Train the Trainer workshops for staff and volunteers who support seniors, persons with disabilities and newcomers. There are also a series of travel training videos available on Translink's Youtube channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCGCojI9dGM9IfZS1edDnvQ>.

They are available in 7 different languages.

For more information or to request a workshop, please contact the Travel Training team at [604.953.3636](tel:604.953.3636).

Using the Bus with a Mobility Device

Coast Mountain Bus Company (CMBC) provides practice training sessions at the Vancouver Transit Centre on how to board and exit a bus using a mobility device. To contact an instructor and book a training appointment, call [604.264.5420](tel:604.264.5420).

For more information on bus travel training, plus information about the accessibility of all our transit services, please visit our Accessing Public Transit section: <https://www.translink.ca/rider-guide/transit-accessibility/accessing-public-transit>.

Improving Bus Stop Accessibility

TransLink and CMBC are improving bus stop accessibility for people who are blind, Deafblind, and partially sighted. Staff are currently installing dual format tactile signage, with raised tactile lettering and braille, at every bus stop across the region. Tactile walking surface indicators are also being installed at bus stops owned, leased, and licensed by TransLink.



Health and Wellness Institute



There are 44 free choices of workshops both in person and by zoom. Amazingly the number of workshops given has now passed 3,000! The Resource Page has been updated on the website www.seniorshelpingseniors.ca. There is a free Personal Planning series every Wednesday for 7 weeks and registration is open, from June 1st to July 13th contact Sylvia at sylviahelmer42@gmail.com. Our Canada Summer Student is preparing a new workshop 'Aging in Place' with tips for modifying your home to age well with dignity. We are looking for more facilitators especially with language skills in other major language groups.

UNIDOP

By Agnes Jackman, COSCO Executive



The UN International Day of Older Persons (UNIDOP) 2022 is on *Saturday, October 1st.*

Over the next three decades the number of older persons (65+years) worldwide is projected to more than double, reaching more than 1.5 billion persons in 2050. This is the fastest growing segment of the world population. "Population aging is poised to become one of the most significant social transformations of the twenty-first century." (UN

website for IDOP) Recognizing this, the UN has declared 2021 - 2030 to be the "Decade of Healthy Aging" In recent years, COSCO has contacted each municipal government in BC to request they recognize this day through raising a flag or making a proclamation. This year, as we have found that many of the government councils prefer that a local resident do the requesting, may I ask that if you are interested in approaching your local government council on behalf of COSCO, please contact me at either agnes.jackman@gmail.com or 604-376-5188 and I will be happy to provide information.

COSCO is also interested in hearing about any event/activity on or around October 1st that will be happening in BC to recognize the UNIDOP and the contributions of older persons to our society – please feel free to forward any reports including photos if possible, which would be of interest to our membership for the COSCO News, and our website.

To find out more about the UNIDOP visit: <https://www.un.org/en/observances/older-persons-day>.

COSCO Associate Membership

In addition to my \$25 Associate Membership fee, I wish to make a donation of \$ _____ to COSCO.

Name: _____

Address: _____ Postal Code: _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____ E-mail: _____

Date: _____ Signature: _____

COSCO does not share mailing lists with third parties, unless we are required by law to do so.

Associate Membership is \$25 a year. Please make cheques payable to **COSCO** and mail your application to: **Linda Forsythe**, Membership Secretary, E-Mail: membership@coscobc.org
Box 81131 Stn S. Burnaby, Burnaby, BC V5H 4K2 Telephone: (604) 444-4300

For information about **Affiliate (organizational) Membership**, please contact the Membership Secretary.

You can now contribute on our website <http://www.coscobc.org>