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Council of Senior Citizens' Organizations of BC (COSCO)

Submission by COSCO to the Provincial Budget

The Council of Senior Citizens' Organizations of BC (COSCO) represents thousands of seniors throughout the province. We are a volunteer, non-profit organization and work to secure fair and equal treatment for all seniors in the province. Specifically we work in the areas of health care (including Home Support and PharmaCare), housing, transportation and income security. We appreciate the opportunity to express our position on Budget 2019 for British Columbia. Seniors are a large demographic in BC - more than 20% of the population the majority are women. Women are twice as likely as men to live alone. Poverty is a serious problem for many seniors, both men and women, and as the BC Seniors Advocate points out many are faced with untenable choices: pay rent or buy food; buy food or buy medications; buy food or pay heat and hydro.

We propose that you include the following in Budget 2019:

1. Increase the Seniors Supplement that since 1989 remains \$49.30 a month.
2. Adjust provincial social program criteria upward to take into account indexes to federal pensions. Presently seniors have these increased amounts clawed back from provincial programs.
3. Provide more subsidized housing where renters pay no more than 30% of their gross income as rent.
4. Attach rent increases to the rental unit.
5. Match SAFER grants to the amount of rent increases (2.5% in the coming year).
6. Create a plan for home owners facing catastrophic repairs (furnaces, roofs, windows). The government-funded plan should be modeled after the Property tax deferral plan: low-income seniors could borrow money for their home repairs and pay it back upon disposition of the house.
7. Ensure that people being evicted from Manufactured homes receive fair and equitable compensation for their units.
8. Roll the cost of the medical examination of drivers in their 80s into the MSP. To be forced to pay for these checkups is discriminatory.
9. Expand the low-income bus pass to include any senior earning less than \$25,000 per year.
10. Expand the Pharmacare program to include eyewear, hearing aids, mobility devices and dental care.
11. Make home support and home care free of charge to seniors with income less than \$25,000.
12. Eliminate user-fees for respite and hospice care.
13. Enhance nutritional support programs for seniors.
14. Support 'rent banks' for those who need to borrow to pay their rent.
15. Regulate and fund adequate staff to implement and enforce regulations around housing.
16. Provide core funding for independent community-based senior centres that offer multicultural programs. And provide subsidies for regular meal programs at these centres.
17. Provide seniors centres with the infrastructure and resources for Information and Referral programs so that seniors get help navigating the requirements for access to programs.

Thank you consideration of our proposals.

Gudrun Langolf,
President, COSCO