

# BC PROVINCIAL CUTS TO

INFORMATION ACCURATE AS OF APRIL 10, 2002

THE GOVERNMENT OF BRITISH COLUMBIA has stated that it is committed to providing a wide range of services and programs to help seniors lead healthy and independent lives. **BC Seniors have been hit by more than fifteen different provincial cuts** to programs/services. Elimination of the Office of Seniors and the Seniors Advisory Council means that seniors have no formal voice in government policy (Spencer, 2002). The cuts affect the 213,000 seniors who are currently on government assistance of some kind. The cuts will also significantly affect senior women, especially those who are trying to escape violent situations. For example, not only do women make up 58% of the population over aged 65 (Health Canada, 2001) the BC Human Rights Commission has reported that the poverty rate for women over 65 in BC is 22.1%.

# SENIORS

## ANTICIPATED IMPACT ON WOMEN WHO EXPERIENCE VIOLENCE

### CUTS, POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE CHANGES

### IMPACT: KNOWN AND POTENTIAL

#### General

Provincial Seniors Advisory Council disbanded.

Office for Seniors closed.

#### Health

Pharmacare

-Changes in means testing.

-Majority of BC seniors now pay up to \$25 for each prescription to a maximum of \$275. Previously, the costs were about \$7 per prescription in dispensing fees.

Senior Support Services - 30% cut; proposal to eliminate in next three years

MSP coverage for podiatrist, massage therapy, physiotherapy, chiropractic services and naturopathy eliminated.

Proposals to privatize ambulances, emergency rooms; close hospitals and residential facility beds.

#### Social Services

Senior Citizens Counsellors Program eliminated (elimination of approximately 160 counsellors who make an average of 6000 telephone and personal interview contacts each month).



-Advisory function to Minister Responsible for Seniors on issues concerning seniors in BC is eliminated.

-Elimination of the coordination of provincial policies, programs, services that support security for seniors; reduction of links between seniors community and government.

-The number of prescriptions bought by BC seniors will decrease; potential for averse health reactions and increased hospitalizations.

-Increased hunger and malnutrition if food budget is used for increase cost of medications.

-Support services to frail elderly will be eliminated.

-More serious health problems and lost work days resulting from violence if health impacts are not treated by appropriate health professionals.

-The potential for user fees and closures may undermine abused women's ability to access services.

-Affects assistance with housing information, income tax, disability forms, handicapped disability pension, home-maker services, depression, abuse, access

CONTINUED

### INFORMATION

**BC Institute Against Family Violence**  
(604) 669-7055  
1-877-755-7055 (toll free)

**BC Association of Specialized Victim Assistance and Counselling Programs**  
(604) 633-2506

**BC/Yukon Society of Transition Houses**  
(604) 669-6943

### RESOURCES

**Government of British Columbia, Minister of Finance**  
[www.bcbudget.gov.bc.ca](http://www.bcbudget.gov.bc.ca)

**PovNet**  
[www.povnet.org](http://www.povnet.org)

**BC Coalition of Women's Centres**  
[www3.telus.net/bcwomen/bcwomen](http://www3.telus.net/bcwomen/bcwomen)

**Access Justice**  
[www.accessjustice.ca](http://www.accessjustice.ca)

**Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives**  
[www.policyalternatives.ca/bc](http://www.policyalternatives.ca/bc)

**BC Coalition of People with Disabilities**  
[www.bccpd.bc.ca](http://www.bccpd.bc.ca)

Cuts to Income Assistance for ages 50-64 to \$185.

BC Seniors Supplement phased out.

-this is a \$49.30/month pension 'top up' for the poorest of all seniors.

Cuts to Home Support.

Meals on Wheels funding eliminated by 2004 with a proposed reduction in funding of 30% in 2002.

Women's Centre eliminated by 2004 (funding of approximately \$2 million annually).

### **Housing**

Seniors Supportive Housing Projects frozen.

### **Legal System**

Funding of BC Human Rights Office under review, chairperson terminated.

Landlord-tenant offices in Vancouver and Nanaimo closed.

Ombudsman's Office cut by 35%.

Legal Aid cut by almost 40%.

to transition houses, respite for caregivers, client difficulties with welfare.

-Increased financial dependence on abusive partners by older women experiencing violence.

- Increased poverty, decrease in food security, increase in food bank usage.

-Increased difficulties finding safe, clean housing.

-Decreased ability to pay for necessary services.

-Increased institutionalization since home care services are essential for seniors to be able to live in the community.

-Increased hunger and poor nutrition leading to more health problems and costs.

-Affects a range of services provided to elderly women who experience abuse and violence.

-Reduction in the ability to afford rental housing without cutting down on other basic needs (e.g. food, transportation, clothing). Increased poverty, homelessness, and hunger).

-Human rights of women compromised especially those belonging to immigrant communities and economically disadvantaged groups (such as abused women).

-Major impacts on seniors who often have difficulties with apartment managers.

-Decreased ability to report injuries and complaints about the practices and services provided by public bodies.

-Further compromise of legal issues most likely to affect older adults' lives including elder abuse.

-Reduction of access to justice for women experiencing violence.