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TODAY'S SENIOR® NEWSMA GAZINE



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ACCORDION TO DAN

Yup! Spring has sprung and the grass has riz, I wonder where the birdies is?

Although the grammar is bad that saying was very popular years ago. For this March edition, it might bring a spring memory or two. Back then when we were young whippersnappers, the pace of life was certainly different.

Today, much of society uses and depends on cellphones and faster transportation. The inflationary cost of housing, pharmaceuticals, food and all the other basics that relatively speaking used to be a piece of cake, for goodness sake.

GOING BACK NOSTALGICALLY CAN HAVE ITS MERITS

Do you still remember the Groucho Marx Show... You Bet Your Life? If the contestant said the secret word, he or she would win an extra hundred smackaroos. How about the days when Revlon sponsored the 64 Thousand Dollar Question. Oh my, do you remember all the tension watching and waiting with baited breath whether the contestant would win the big prize. Back in those times someone could afford a spacious new house with that money compared to today. Those were special days, eh? The amazing invention called tv totally mesmerized us kids and parents, glued to that old Westinghouse, Philco, Admiral and RCA. Back when they still advertised 'The Man from Glad', 'Ajax Boom Boom the foaming cleanser'. Here in Vancouver, do you remember those musical jingles on vacuum tube radio? 'Honest Nats Department Store 48th and Fraser'. '\$1.49 day Woodwards', that we used to love to sing along to?

TWO CLASSIC WORDS, "TELL" AND "VISION"

What kind of vision does a television 'tell'? Radio only creates vision with sound. Although each produces vision in different ways, which of the two does the job well? Where on earth is this bit of rhyme bound? One sometimes ponders whether the printed word is perhaps deeper and better. Going back to the basic fonts of the old-fashioned printing press. How about returning to the days of a



Seniors, Spring has sprung, soon Summer will bloom. (Photo: Dan Propp)

handwritten detailed letter? Canada Post would still likely be thriving and perhaps the pace of humanity slower and friendlier. So much old-fashioned mail today consists of flyers, brochures, bank statements and other unsolicited mail. Gone are all those handwritten letters, a lifestyle that some of us fondly still remember and envy.

MEASURING OUR YESTERDAYS

I don't know about you, but I can still envision the days that feel familiar. The old Canadian dollar bills, pennies and the fifty-cent piece still seem more genuine. So do inches, feet, yards, gallons, quarts and pints. Kilometers, meters, loonies and toonies feel foreign even after all these years of change. Thus, in closing the following, a bit more nostalgia.

MORE COMPARISON TO PONDER

Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz, Red Skelton and Father Knows Best, those magic days of early tv when we were still kids. Who would have guessed in future years that we would see so many changes. Now, far removed from the era of tv shows like

Bonanza, do you remember the Ponderosa with former CBC broadcaster Lorne Green? How we watched tv

and stayed in touch with family and friends. The changes over the years these days as golden agers, goodness me, have seen in entertainment, lifestyle, the pace is such a contrast of what used to be. Driverless cars may soon become more the fashion, and in the future years also be redundant—'old hat'—like rotary phones. A next generation of seniors that will also become unaware of what we still, as seniors, remember of the yester-years when most folks could afford to live in more easy, comfortable, singular attached homes.

Please visit www.Nostalgicroads.Weebly.com

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EMILY CARR'S MONUMENTAL WORK AT THE VANCOUVER ART GALLERY!

Article & photos by Lenora A. Hayman.

The exhibition at the Vancouver Art Gallery from Feb 6-Nov 8, 2026 of That Green Ideal: Emily Carr and the Idea of Nature has 112 paintings, of which all, except 4 from private donors, are from the Collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery.

Most are wonderful BC landscapes but a few were created from her experience studying Modernism and Primitivism while in France. Both Paul Gauguin and Pablo Picasso used Modernism when painting non-western cultures. Lauren Harris, part of the Group of Seven, also influenced Carr with their mutual interest in Canadian nature.

So nice to see the photo of Carr (Dec. 13, 1871-Mar 2, 1945) and her caravan, originally called The Elephant and later The Motherly Old Hen that she lived in with her dogs, monkey and white rat, while out in the bush painting her beloved trees, story poles and Indigenous villages.

Thanks Richard Hill, Smith Jarislowsky Senior Curator of Canadian Art, Eva Respini and Sirish Rao, Co-CEOs of VAG, for allowing us to view the



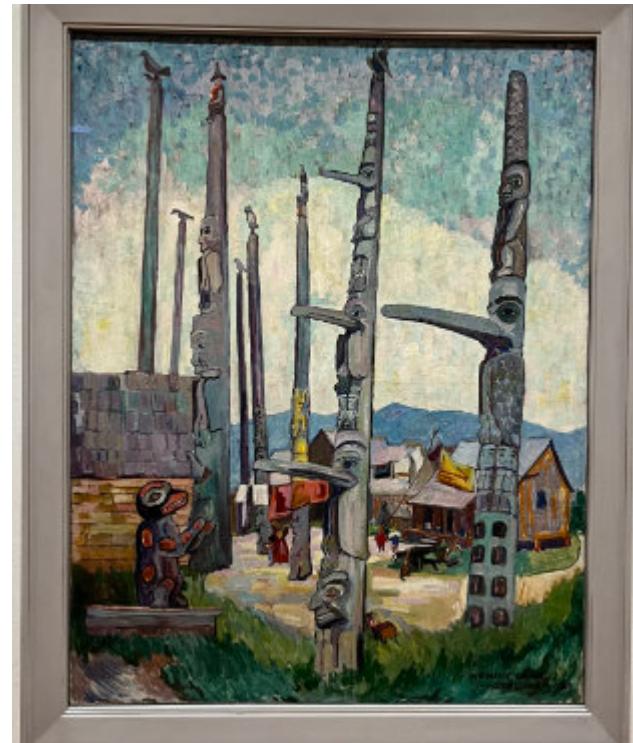
forest and BC coast through Emily Carr's eyes!
Photos by Lenora A. Hayman.

Top Left: Among the trees, 1936 by Emily Carr.

Top Right: Totem Poles, Kitseukla (Gitseguklia), 1912 by Emily Carr.

Bottom Right: Zunoqua of the Cat Village, 1931 by Emily Carr.

Middle: The Motherly Old Hen (née The Elephant), Emily Carr & her menagerie!



HOW SENIORS CAN BETTER PROTECT THEIR VISION

A loss of vision can have a serious impact on anyone's life. Seniors face a higher risk—as much as five times higher, according to a Canadian study on aging.

Seniors are more susceptible to a range of vision issues. The most common eye diseases that can lead to vision loss are highly age-dependant, including:

- Age-related macular degeneration
- Diabetic retinopathy
- Cataracts

With early detection, many eye diseases can be treated or prevented. The key is getting regular comprehensive eye exams. Healthy adults aged 65 or older should get their eyes examined every year, but many seniors don't.

Why are seniors skipping regular eye exams? Many seniors will have already experienced vision loss. So why do they hesitate to get an annual eye exam?

Affordability is a barrier, according to a recent report. It found that the cost of getting an eye exam is a problem for 32 per cent of seniors. Routine eye exams are covered for eligible seniors under some provincial healthcare plans, but less than half say that they have this coverage. Another barrier may be an awareness gap, where people's eye health can worsen without them noticing.

"Many people don't realize their eye health may be changing without them experiencing any difference in their vision," says Naomi Barber, clinical services director at Specsavers Canada. "Vision health starts with regular eye exams."

Catching issues early is the best way to protect vision. One way to detect issues early on is with a comprehensive eye exam that uses advanced technology such as optical coherence tomography (OCT). It's an imaging technique that lets optometrists see what's going on beneath the surface of the eye. This is important for detecting common eye diseases that don't have symptoms in the early stages, such as glaucoma. Eyesight is precious at any age. You can help protect it by getting a regular eye exam with OCT.

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4 CANADIAN CITIES PERFECT FOR YOUR NEXT WINTER GETAWAY



Whether you were born here or adopted Canada as your home, embracing winter adventures is part of the Canuck spirit. With more travellers than ever eager to explore, the travel experts at Radisson are highlighting some of their favourite Canadian cities to make the most of the snowy season.

Winnipeg: With a nickname like "Winterpeg," it's no wonder this city and winter are inseparable. With some of the largest winter festivals in Western Canada, visitors can enjoy music, dance, sculpture and outdoor activities. Strap on skates and explore one of the world's longest natural skating trails at The Forks, where paths stretch across the Assiniboine and Red Rivers. At FortWhyte Alive, explore 660 acres with tobogganing, snowshoeing and even bison watching.

Calgary: Starting January 30, the city's winter festival, Chinook Blast, begins with live music, sporting events, art installations and markets. Calgary Zoo's Zoolights can make family visits extra festive and bright, while thrill seekers can head to WinSport Canada Olympic Park for skiing, snowboarding and a world-class halfpipe. Bowness Park offers skating, ice bikes and cozy firepits—or try crokicurl, a fun blend of crokinole and curling.

Belleville: This charming city shines with seasonal festivals like the Enchanted Holiday Market and Festival of Lights. Outdoor enthusiasts can hit the slopes at Batawa Ski Hill or explore the trails of H.R. Frink Conservation Area, wandering through snowy forests and boardwalks.

Kelowna: Winter doesn't put wineries on hold—many stay open for fireside tastings that pair local wines with snow-dusted vineyard views. Annual highlights of the city include the Winter Street Market, Light Up! and Okanagan Winter Wine Festival. The area boasts local trails and toboggan hills, while nearby Big White Ski Resort boasts vast and varied terrain and night skiing. Prefer a hike? Knox Mountain Park is worth a visit with sweeping views of Okanagan Lake.

Consider skipping the beach this year and embrace a true north winter trip. From coast to coast, Canada has no shortage of unforgettable cold-weather adventures. Find more Canadian destinations and travel tips at choicehotels.com.

www.newscanada.com

4 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT ESSENTIAL OILS

Canadians are increasingly exposed to products containing "essential oils." The name itself can be a bit misleading, and there isn't wide understanding of their potential health risks. Here are four things you should know about essential oils:

1 They're not essential

The name "essential oils" comes from the fact that they contain the essence of the plant's fragrance, not that they are in any way essential to your health.

2 They're in a lot of products

Essential oils are found in a wide range of household products including makeup, massage oil, body cleansers and moisturizers, non-prescription drugs, cleaning products and sunscreen. Some, including jasmine, tarragon and bay oils, are sold on their own at concentrations up to 100 per cent for consumers to use as a DIY ingredient.

3 They could be toxic

Health Canada has completed a chemical risk assessment of essential oils and has determined that some may pose health risks. The evaluations of these potential risks are continuing in order to determine what actions the government should take to protect your health. Further assessments are underway to determine if other essential oil exposures and uses may also pose a risk.

4 It's important to read the label

Being an informed consumer can help you stay safer. Read the labels on cosmetics, non-prescription drugs and natural health products, and look for essential oils in product ingredients.

Find more information about essential oils at canada.ca/healthy-home.

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*Christensen et al. (2024). Evaluating Real-World Benefits of Hearing Aids With Deep Neural Network-Based Noise Reduction: An Ecological Momentary Assessment Study. *American Journal of Audiology*, 33(1), 242-253. **A comprehensive hearing assessment is provided to adults ages 19 and older at no cost. The results of this assessment will be communicated verbally to you. Depending on the province you're located in, an administrative fee may apply if a copy of an Audiological Report is requested. Child hearing tests are conducted at select locations for a fee, please contact us for more information. Offers not valid in Quebec. See clinic for details. Offer expires March 31, 2026.



FINANCIAL NEWS

by Rick C. Singh, Founder, President, and Financial Advisor, CPC (Certified Professional Consultant on Aging) CRS Financial Wealth Management.

4 Reasons Why You Shouldn't Try to Time the Market

Market timing seems straightforward: buy when prices are low and sell when they are high. It has long enticed investors with the possibility of outsized returns, but doing so accurately and consistently is extremely difficult. Markets are influenced by a lot of variables and react rapidly to new information, leaving little room for accurate forecasting. This article explores why you shouldn't focus on trying to time the market and presents alternative investing strategies for building long-term wealth.

Why It Is Difficult to Time the Market

1. Randomness and Volatility

Markets are influenced by a complex web of interconnected factors: macroeconomic data, geopolitical developments, corporate earnings, investor sentiment, central bank policy, and more. The interplay of these variables makes short-term price movements highly unpredictable. To cite just one example, the start of President Trump's new tariffs and the 90-day pause announced days later has caused significant fluctuations in the stock market in the span of a week.

Generally, stock prices follow a pattern similar to a random walk, meaning that past movements have no reliable bearing on future direction. This randomness undercuts the basic assumption of market timing—that one can predict trends or patterns and act accordingly.

This is also complicated by market volatility. Sharp market declines are often followed by equally sharp recoveries. A market timer who exits during a downturn may miss the rebound, locking in losses and forfeiting gains. The unpredictable nature of such movements makes timing not only difficult but dangerous.

2. No Reliable Predictive Model

Despite decades of research, no model has consistently predicted market tops and bottoms with precision. While technical indicators, economic signals, and algorithmic strategies have had their moments of seeming accuracy, none have proven to work reliably across market cycles.

False signals and whipsaw movements—where markets reverse direction suddenly after giving a misleading indicator—can severely damage returns and investor confidence. Studies find that market timing strategies generally underperform simple buy-and-hold approaches, especially after factoring in transaction costs, taxes, and fees.

Even prominent investors like Warren Buffett

have consistently warned against market timing, emphasizing that time in the market is more important than timing the market.

3. Market Efficiency

According to the Efficient Market Hypothesis, financial markets quickly and fully incorporate all publicly available information into asset prices. This means that by the time news or data reaches the average investor, the market has already adjusted accordingly.

The EMH holds significant weight in highly liquid and transparent markets such as U.S. equities. For example, when a company reports better-than-expected earnings or when the Federal Reserve announces a policy change, stock prices reflect the new information almost instantaneously. This implies that if prices already reflect all known data, then consistently finding undervalued or overvalued stocks based on public information is a statistical improbability.

If you attempt to time the market, you must rely on anticipating future events. The odds of doing this successfully, repeatedly, and profitably are extraordinarily low.

4. Human Psychology

Behavioral finance has identified several cognitive biases that impair rational decision-making. For example, overconfidence leads you to overestimate your ability to predict market movements, while loss aversion causes you to fear losses more than you value gains, often resulting in premature selling. Herd behavior encourages you to follow the crowd—buying during booms and selling during busts—while recency bias leads you to place undue weight on recent market activity, skewing expectations for the future.

These psychological tendencies frequently cause investors to sell near market bottoms and buy near tops, which is the exact opposite of what successful timing requires. During events like the 2008 financial crisis or the Covid-19 pandemic, many retail investors exited the market at its lowest point and stayed sidelined during much of the subsequent recovery. Even professional fund managers, equipped with research and resources, often fall prey to these same psychological traps, resulting in suboptimal performance driven by emotional rather than rational decisions.

Alternatives to Timing the Market

1. Diversify Asset Allocation

Instead of attempting to predict short-term market movements, focus on distributing your capital across asset classes based on your risk tolerance, investment timeline, and return expectations.

A balanced portfolio can include a mix of asset classes, such as equities, fixed income, cash equivalents, and alternative investments. Each of these asset classes exhibits different risk and return characteristics, and their performance tends to vary under different economic conditions. For instance, equities offer higher growth potential but come with greater volatility, while bonds provide stability and income during periods of equity market stress.

You should also consider your goals, risk tolerance, and life stage. For example, a younger investor with decades until retirement might adopt an equity-heavy allocation to maximize growth, whereas a retiree focused on capital preservation and income may prefer a larger allocation to bonds and cash equivalents.

2. Consider Dollar-Cost Averaging

DCA is a disciplined approach where you invest a fixed amount of money at regular intervals, regardless of market conditions. When done consistently, you purchase more shares when prices are low and fewer shares when prices are high, effectively lowering the average cost per share over time.

This strategy minimizes the emotional aspect of

investing. Because it removes the need to make large, all-or-nothing investment decisions, DCA helps you to stay engaged during volatile periods and avoid the pitfalls of trying to time the market.

It also provides a psychological benefit: when prices decline, instead of fearing losses, you see it as an opportunity to acquire more shares at a discount.

3. Conduct Periodic Portfolio Rebalancing

Over time, market fluctuations will cause a portfolio's asset allocation to drift away from its original targets. For instance, a strong run-up in equities could lead to an overweight in stocks, increasing overall portfolio risk.

Rebalancing involves periodically adjusting the portfolio to bring asset allocations back in line with your targets. This can be done quarterly, semiannually, or annually, depending on your preference. It enforces the buy-low, sell-high discipline in a more structured manner. You do not react based on immediate news or market fluctuations but adjust based on a set schedule. This systematic approach mitigates the temptation to chase performance and helps manage risk.

4. Use Fundamental Analysis

Prioritize the intrinsic value and quality of individual assets over market sentiment or technical patterns. This process involves assessing a company's core attributes, such as its revenue growth, earnings consistency, debt levels, profit margins, and return on equity.

These indicators provide insights into the company's operational efficiency, financial health, and capacity for future growth. Strong fundamentals suggest a business has the resilience to weather economic downturns and the competitive advantage to thrive over the long term.

If you concentrate on purchasing stocks from well-run companies, you can construct a portfolio that is less vulnerable to market volatility and more capable of delivering consistent, compounding returns. This approach reduces reliance on timing and encourages patience, rational decision-making, and a deeper understanding of the assets held.

5. Stay the Course

Markets will inevitably go through periods of volatility, correction, and even crisis. The key is to remain invested through these cycles and avoid making panic-driven decisions.

The power of compounding magnifies over time, and missing even a few years of market participation can significantly alter long-term outcomes. Investors who stay disciplined, stick to their plan, and maintain a long-term perspective are often rewarded handsomely.

This does not mean being passive or unaware. This strategy means ongoing education, regular portfolio review, and a clear understanding of your goals. But it also means resisting the temptation to react impulsively to headlines or market swings.

The Bottom Line

To time the market successfully is very difficult, if not impossible. Instead, you should adopt a disciplined long-term approach to investing. Such a strategy does not promise quick riches, but it is a reliable path to long-term wealth accumulation through patience and persistence. In investing, as in life, time—not timing—is the key to success.

For tailored advice and professional guidance, consult a financial advisor. You can also contact Rick Singh CRS Financial Wealth Management at rick@crsfinancial.ca or call 604-535-3367. Suite 220 3388 Rosemary Heights Crescent Surrey, BC V3Z 0K7

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THE PHARMACIST REVIEW

By Lyle Sunada

Strengthening Bones with Metagenics Bone Builder: Why Quality Matters

As we age, maintaining strong bones becomes increasingly important — especially in areas like the **trabecular bone**, the spongy inner layer that provides structural support and helps prevent fractures. While many people rely on traditional calcium supplements, there is a more advanced option: **Metagenics Bone Builder**, a professional-grade **microcrystalline hydroxyapatite (MCHA)** with **ossein** supplement.

Unlike conventional calcium salts such as calcium carbonate or citrate, MCHA is derived from **whole bone**, preserving both the mineral content and the **organic matrix proteins (ossein)**. This combination mimics the natural composition of human bone, making it particularly effective for **trabecular bone**, which is rich in collagen and

more metabolically active than cortical bone. Research suggests that MCHA supports bone remodeling by providing both the calcium and phosphorus needed for mineralization and the proteins that help bone cells function effectively. In fact, advanced bone imaging such as **REMS scans** can differentiate changes in trabecular bone density, highlighting areas where MCHA supplementation may be particularly beneficial.

What sets **Metagenics Bone Builder** apart from generic MCHA products is its **professional quality and rigorous standards**. Manufactured in GMP-certified facilities, each batch undergoes extensive testing for calcium, phosphorus, trace minerals, and contaminants, ensuring consistency and safety. The raw bone source is traceable, and the ossein matrix is carefully preserved — a level of quality control often missing in over-the-counter MCHA supplements. For consumers, this means confidence that what's on the label matches what's in the capsule/tablet. **Bone Builder Extra Strength** is also designed with convenience in mind. Each tablet contains a higher calcium dose, allowing users to achieve their daily intake with fewer pills.

Bone health is only part of the picture. Many older adults face **osteosarcopenia**, a combination of reduced bone and muscle mass that increases fracture risk and decreases mobility. **Strong muscles** support bone integrity by applying mechanical stress that **stimulates bone remodeling**. This is where **Metagenics Creatine UP** plays a role: it helps maintain and build muscle mass, improving strength, balance, and mobility, which indirectly supports bone density. When combined with **taurine and betaine**, creatine's benefits may be enhanced, as it improves muscle hydration, endurance, and cellular function,

making resistance training more effective and safer. Together, these nutrients address the **muscle-bone unit**, helping reduce the risk of falls, fractures, and osteosarcopenia.

Taken together, these strategies — professional-grade bone supplementation with MCHA/ossein (**Metagenics Bone Builder**), attention to trabecular bone health, resistance training, and **Metagenics Creatine UP** for muscle support — create a comprehensive approach to reducing fracture risk and maintaining independence. Choosing supplements that mirror the body's natural bone composition, meet professional manufacturing standards, and support both muscle and bone, is an important step toward long-term skeletal health and preventing fractures.

Our next REMS Bone Health Screening Clinic is on Apr 10th.

Lyle Sunada is a compounding pharmacist and NAMS Certified Menopause Practitioner specializing in hormone balancing and alternative medicine at Cloverdale Pharmasave. Everything mentioned in the article is available In-Store.



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NEW WAYS TO ENJOY FAMILY MOVIE NIGHTS THIS WINTER

The days may be slowly getting longer, but winter nights are still cold, dark and long—perfect for huddling up at home. Movie nights are a classic family activity, especially during this time of year. There are some simple ways to make the experience new while still keeping things affordable. Here are some things you can try:

Up your movie snack game. Variety is the spice of life—shake things up from night to night. Even a simple snack like popcorn has a lot of variety:

- The classic, with a twist: There's nothing wrong with the classic butter n' salt popcorn, but you can also try substituting seasoned salt for extra flavour.

- Caramel corn: Melt a little caramel in a saucepan or in the microwave and toss your popcorn in it a couple hours before you begin.

- Chicago mix: If you do half a batch of caramel corn, and toss the other half with a powdered cheese (like one that ready-made macaroni and cheese uses).

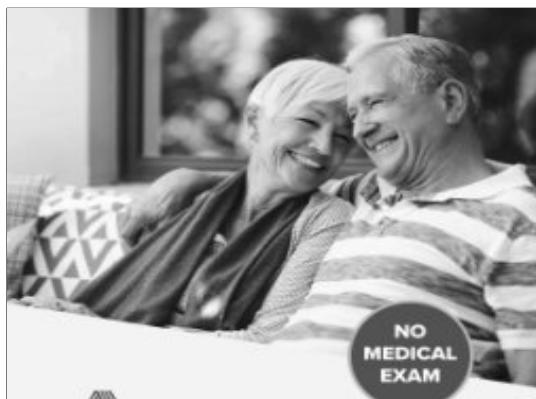
Feeling fancy? You can combine any cold meats, cheeses and pickled veggies you've got on hand to make a charcuterie board.

Make movie selection part of the fun. One simple way to add a fun flair to movie night is by having a theme. It doesn't have to be complicated: retro night, comedy night, animated classics or greatest car chases—there are plenty of themes to choose from. One way to find inspiration for your theme is to look at the curated channels on a streaming service, such as Pluto TV. It's free to access

and enjoy, so you can pick the perfect theme without impacting your entertainment budget.

Get creative with your space. Another fun way to keep things interesting is to try different ways of setting up your watch area. Rearranging things and making them special is a no-cost way to make the night a special event. One thing you can try is setting up a blanket fort by standing couch cushions up on both sides of the watching area, stretching a blanket between them as a "roof" and laying out plenty of pillows to relax on for watching.

The key to a perfect movie night is to make it a fun way for you and your family to connect. When you keep that as the priority, you'll find the other elements of your night falling into place. Families looking for free movies and shows can explore options available at pluto.tv.
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The Next Chapter

By Mike McCardell

Fishing For Memories

I met them in Stanley Park when David was teaching his father how to cast with a fly rod. His father held the rod while David stood behind him guiding his father's arm back and forth.

Together they made the line float like a long, curved feather.

I did not know them when they were younger, when David's father taught him how to cast. David's father was an engineer who made things work.

"Move your arm smoothly," he told his son. "Keep your arm up and the line will fly."

The little boy adored his father who was not stopped by anything, not in engineering, not in fathering, not in fishing. He took David fishing in lakes, on the ocean and later when some kids want little to do with their fathers he brought him into the magical world of fly casting.

They spent hours, days, forever working on the art of making a hook dressed with threads and feathers dance in the air then skip across the water.

"If you have the right attitude you can do it," his

father said. "It's all in your mind."

David knew his father had the right attitude. When the car broke down his father could fix it. When David's mother wanted the kitchen painted his father painted it. No fuss, no arguing. Just do it.

"Then I can get back to fishing," his father said. David wanted to be like him.

Time passed and David now had his own family and because of that he spent less time with his father.

His mother said his father was getting older. Sometimes he forgot where he was going. At first it was a joke. He forgot the punch lines of stories. Then he forgot the subject of conversations. Then he forgot his wife's birthday. Then his own birthday. Then he forgot his son's name.

That is when they went to Stanley Park to go fishing. There were some feathers and threads at the end of the line but no hook. They were in Brockton Oval which is large and was empty. David stood behind his father guiding his arm, helping the line fly.

"I don't remember this," his father said

He dropped his arm and the line fell on the ground. "I can't remember. Did I do this?"

"You put the line in the air and make it

fly," David whispered in his father's ear. "it's all in your attitude."

He held his father's arm again and moved the rod back and forth and the line rose up. His father looked at it in wonderment.

"You're a natural," said David. "You can do anything."

He gently laid his hand on his father's arm and the two of them made the line go so high it seemed to float just below the clouds.

That is when I was lucky enough to meet them, the day two arms fished with one rod and the son taught the father what the father had taught the son and one fishing line light as a feather pulled them together.

You could swear that line had an attitude of its own.

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SENIORS' POPULATION INCREASE OUTPACING LONG-TERM CARE

VICTORIA – Data showing the slow pace of building new public long-term care beds and assisted living units in B.C. was released today by the Office of the Seniors Advocate.

The 2025 Long-Term Care and Assisted Living Directory, containing detailed information on 301 long-term care facilities and 133 assisted living residences in B.C. is now available online. The summary report shows a 5% increase in the number of long-term care beds since 2019/20, compared to a 19% increase in the population of seniors 65+ over the same period.

"We are at the beginning of a rapid increase in the number of people 65 and over and we know the gap between the seniors' population and older adults requiring public services will only widen if we don't act now," said Dan Levitt, BC Seniors Advocate. "Government's own data shared in our report last July shows 16,000 more long-term care beds will be needed over the next decade and as of today, the Province has no plan to meet this demand"

The directory reports an increase of four publicly-subsidized long-term care homes and 513 more beds in 2024/25 compared to the previous year; there was an increase of six facilities and 1,437 beds since 2019/20. The new long-term care homes were opened in Kamloops, Aldergrove, Victoria and Prince George in 2024/25. There were seven fewer publicly-subsidized assisted living units in B.C. in 2024/25 compared to the year before.

"The wait lists and wait times for long-term care and assisted living continue to grow, putting

seniors and family caregivers under tremendous strain. Public home support services remain unaffordable for many seniors and don't provide adequate help for older people to age at home," said Levitt. "The stories I hear from families at their breaking point caring for their loved ones are heartbreaking. We simply must do better."

The directory, which is updated annually, is a popular public resource with over 80,000 website page visits per year. Important care quality measures are included such as: funded care hours, number of beds and room configuration, spending on food, medication use, use of physical restraints, complexity of care in the resident population, licensing complaints, reportable incidents and inspection reports. Changes in this year's directory include adding information on wait times for new non-urgent admissions from the community, as well as for all new admissions from both hospitals and the community.

"The updated directory also found areas of improvement in long-term care including an increase in single rooms and decrease in double and multi-bedrooms, and funding per bed has gone up," said Levitt. "However, there are still many areas of concern including use of antipsychotic medication without a diagnosis of psychosis remaining above the national average, as well as increases in substantiated complaints and reportable incidents last year."

The information in the directory and summary report is compiled from several sources including the facilities/residences, the Ministry of Health, health authorities, the Canadian Institute for Health

Information and the BC Centre for Disease Control. This is the eleventh directory the Office of the Seniors Advocate (OSA) has updated and released for the public.

Quick Facts:

- B.C.'s senior population (65+) is projected to increase 26% in the next 10 years.

- The Ministry of Health's current ten-year bed expansion plan aims to increase the number of new long-term care beds by 10% (2,935 beds) from 2025 to 2030; no additional beds are planned after 2030.

- Today, there is a 2,000-bed shortfall and that gap widens and grows over 700% to meet the ministry's projected future long-term care demand of 16,000 beds by 2035/36.

Learn More:

- OSA 2025 Long-Term Care and Assisted Living Directory: <https://www.seniorsadvocatebc.ca/long-term-care-directory>

- OSA Report - From Shortfall to Crisis: Growing Demand for Long-Term Care Beds in B.C.: <https://www.seniorsadvocatebc.ca/osa-reports/from-shortfall-to-crisis-growing-demand-for-long-term-care-beds-in-b-c/>

The Office of the Seniors Advocate is an independent office of the provincial government with a mandate of monitoring seniors' services and reporting on systemic issues affecting seniors. The office also provides information and referral to seniors and their caregivers by calling toll-free 1 877 952-3181, via email at info@seniorsadvocatebc.ca, Canada Post and the OSA web site <https://www.seniorsadvocatebc.ca/>.

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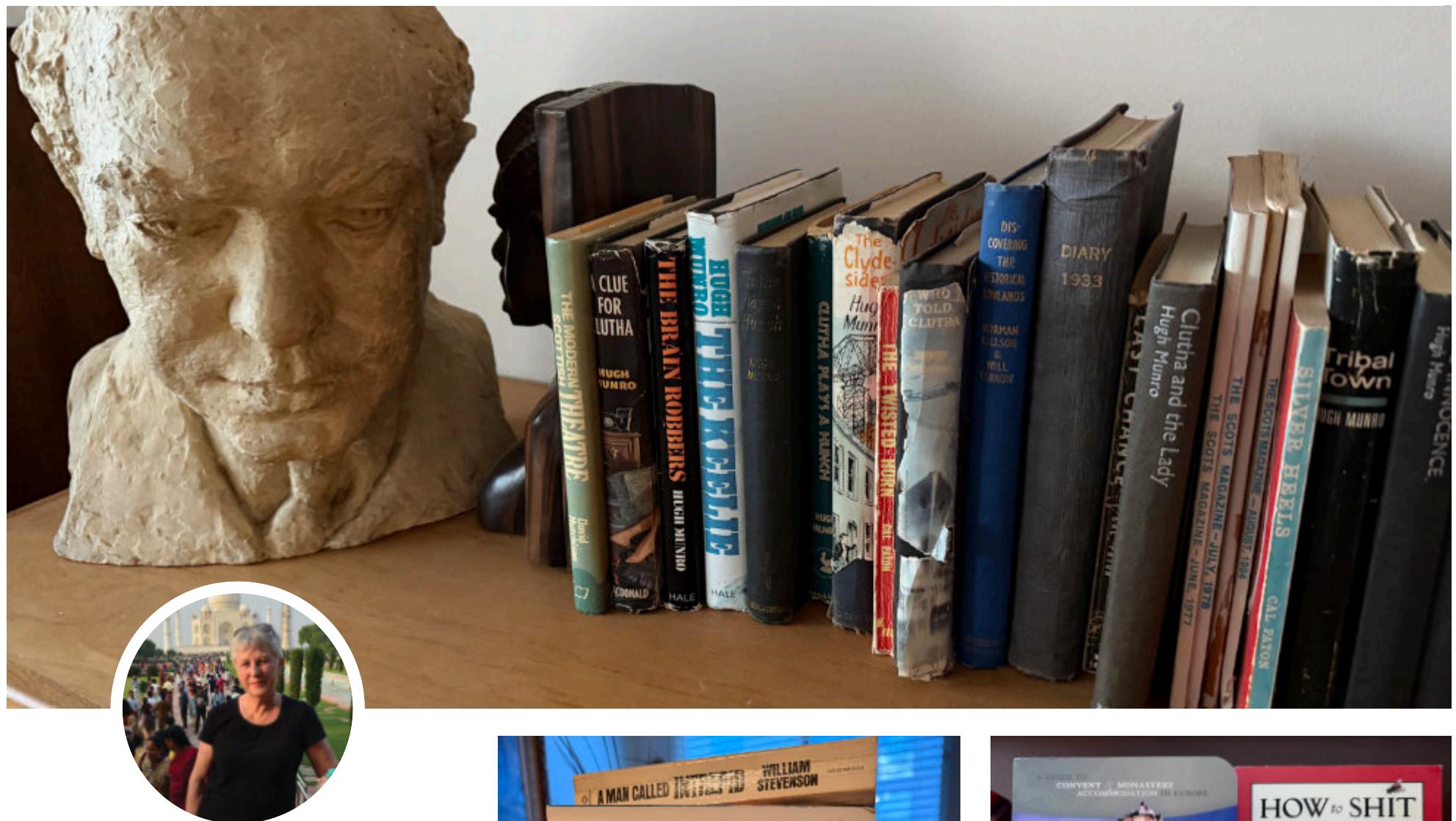
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THE FINE ART OF LETTING BOOKS GO

By Ursula Maxwell-Lewis

My mother and I moved a lot of books over the years—across hemispheres, continents, oceans, and significant chapters of our lives. To my father's frustration (and expense), our books often took precedence over clothes and more practical necessities. A 'jumper' could be replaced; a book that had travelled with us, been argued over, gifted by a beloved friend, written by a Munro uncle or aunt, or filled with "deathless prose" felt—and still feels—essential.

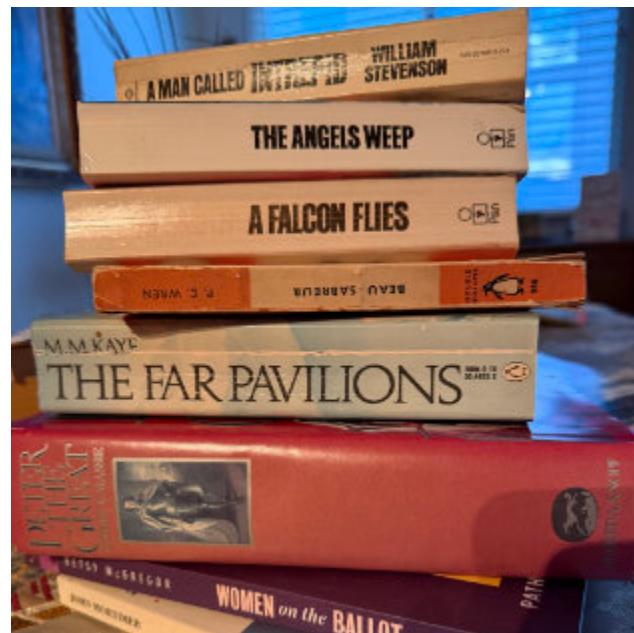
For readers and writers, the genealogy of books makes literary downsizing especially complicated later in life. The question isn't simply what should I keep? It's what, who, and where does this book represent?

The downsizing I'm tackling this month is a practical, long-overdue exercise, but with books it is also deeply emotional. Take Sylvia Brooke's Queen of the Headhunters and The Last White Rajah of Sarawak. They're dog-eared, but they stay. Both tell the stories of the grandparents of my late Air Canada friend Dave Roy. When he first gave me the books, I thought he was joking about the connection. He wasn't. Those books—and his colourful historic relatives—inspired multiple sojourns to what are now much-loved destinations: Malaysia, Sabah, and Sarawak.

A personal library reflects not only what we've read, but dreams that came true, fascinating characters we've met, places we've explored, and sometimes the person we imagined ourselves becoming.

Some books clearly earn their space, though they're not always the most impressive titles. I did debate keeping How to Shit Around the World purely for its shock—and conversation—value. To be clear, it's a sensible, well-written book by Dr. Jane Wilson-Howarth about staying clean and healthy while travelling.

Although some information in Good Night & God Bless (volumes one and two) by Trish Clark



now needs updating, they remain on the keep list. Partly because the titles make me smile (always a plus), and partly as a reminder that convents and monasteries in places like Austria, Italy, and Czechia are still worth considering.

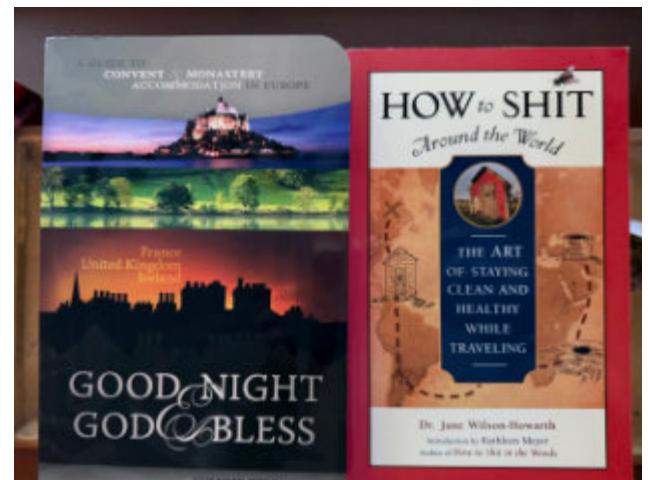
Other books linger out of obligation rather than affection. Shelves of "someday" books—impulse purchases, well-intentioned you must read this gifts, or tomes untouched for ten or fifteen years—are unlikely to miraculously demand attention now.

Travel books pose their own dilemma. Old guidebooks, with outdated hotel lists and long-expired prices, are often the easiest to release. Narrative travel writing—memoirs, essays, cultural histories—ages far better. I'm a complete sucker for books (and day trips) like Ghost Stories of London by Edrick Thay. The distinction is simple: if a book tells a story directly connected to people or places that have shaped—or may yet shape—my life, it may still deserve its place.

Classics don't need to be kept out of duty. That said, Palgrave's Golden Treasury, inscribed to me by my uncle—the late Daily Mail journalist and award-winning playwright George Munro—remains for sentimental reasons. I have more than a few of those!

I remind myself that downsizing my library doesn't mean caring less about books. It can mean trusting them more: trusting that the right ones will stay close, and that others will continue their quiet journeys elsewhere.

Once we decide which books are ready to retire,



the question becomes—where should they go?

Poetry and essay collections, especially by Canadian or regional writers, are often appreciated when donated thoughtfully. Children's and young adult books, gently used and complete, are also welcome at many sales.

Equally important is knowing what not to donate. Outdated computer guides, old travel manuals, damaged books, incomplete encyclopedias, and heavily marked textbooks are unlikely to serve anyone well. Choosing not to donate these isn't wasteful—it's considerate.

For me, a framed cross-stitch created by my mother and hanging in my office explains my book dilemma perfectly:

*A ship is a breath of romance
That carries us miles away;
And a book is a ship of fancy
That could sail on any day.*

Ursula Maxwell-Lewis is a Surrey writer and lifelong bookworm. She can be reached at UrsulaMaxwell@gmail.com.

BALLOONING LONG-TERM CARE WAITLISTS SIGNAL URGENT NEED TO REMOVE HOME SUPPORT CO-PAYMENTS, SAY SENIORS' ORGANIZATIONS

Vancouver, BC — A newly released report from British Columbia's Seniors Advocate confirming a more than 200 per cent increase in long-term care (LTC) waitlists since 2016 underscores a systemic failure to keep pace with the needs of an aging population. While the number of seniors in

B.C. has grown by 19 per cent over the past decade, the number of publicly funded LTC beds has increased by only five per cent, leaving many older adults waiting nearly 10 months for care.

The Jewish Seniors Alliance of British Columbia (JSABC) has been leading the charge, alongside six provincial seniors and caregiver organizations representing nearly 400,000 older adults, saying the findings reinforce what seniors and families have been experiencing for years — pointing to a clear, immediate solution: remove co-payments for publicly funded home support services to help solve the shortage.

"Long-term care waitlists are not just a capacity problem — they are a policy problem," said Jeff Moss, Executive Director at JSABC. "Many seniors could safely and successfully age at home if home support services were truly accessible. Co-payments create a financial barrier that pushes people prematurely into crisis and, ultimately, into long-term care. Ontario, Alberta, Manitoba and others offer serious solutions for seniors at home. Why doesn't BC?"

Home support services — including personal care, meal preparation, and assistance with daily tasks — are widely recognized as a cost-effective

alternative to residential care. However, current co-payment requirements mean that many seniors either reduce services or decline them altogether, increasing health risks, caregiver burnout, and avoidable hospital and LTC admissions. The coalition of seniors' organizations argues that eliminating co-payments would:

- Enable more seniors to remain safely at home longer
- Reduce demand for long-term care placements
- Alleviate pressure on hospitals and emergency services
- Improve quality of life while lowering overall system costs

"With seniors waiting nearly a year for a long-term care bed, it is clear that building our way out of this crisis is not enough," Moss stated. "We must invest in upstream solutions that work now — and home support is one of them."

The Seniors Advocate report confirms that population aging is accelerating faster than infrastructure expansion. JSABC and its partners are calling on the provincial government to act decisively by removing financial barriers to home support and embedding aging-at-home strategies as a cornerstone of seniors' care planning.

"Seniors overwhelmingly want to age at home," said the coalition. "Removing home support co-payments is a practical, humane, and fiscally responsible step that would immediately relieve pressure on long-term care waitlists and better meet the needs of British Columbia's older adults."

About the Jewish Seniors Alliance of British Columbia

JSABC is a provincial organization dedicated to improving the quality of life for all BC seniors through advocacy, education, and community engagement. JSABC advances policies that promote dignity, inclusion, and aging in place for better health outcomes.

JSABC is working collaboratively with the following partners:

Lisa Dawson - Independent Long Term Care Councils of BC (ILTCCABC),

Leslie Gaudette - Council of Senior Citizens' Organizations of BC (COSCOBC)

Barb MacLean - Family Caregivers of BC (FCBC)

Mary Polak, BC Care Providers Association (BCCPA)

Danny Birch - BC Care Providers Association (BCCPA), CEO - Hero Home Care

Cheryl Cameron - BC Health Coalition (BCHC)

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How Was Your B.C. Family Day?

I was wondering just what kind of day I was going to have until along came an e-mail from a strata council asking all owners to vacuum their parking stalls. I didn't think too much of it until I wondered who has a shop vac? I would hope that for anyone who does not have one you could borrow one or even rent one. I do have one but remember when you use a vacuum the exhausted air coming from the vac will stir up the dust and become air bourn (not healthy.) Only new or clean filters should be used.

Here Are Some Tips:

Wear a mask no matter what it is you are doing in underground parking, using a vac. or sweeping anywhere that air quality may be a concern.

You never know what's in that black dirty dust. There could be a lot of unhealthy air bourne dust. For example; a number of owners (like me) ride a cycle, some walk, ride a wheel chair push a walker and yes sweep and vac. the area.

Automobile brake dust, on days that it is inclement people like myself cycle or walk in the underground garage. I thought I would consider wearing a mask, guess what? I could see a faint discoloured area on my mask and since then I do wear a mask. If your neighbours car is a dark colour they will thank you if you follow a good neighbour policy and use a string mop or sponge mop and give a quick wipe to your area with tap water. It will last a number of weeks.

Special note when riding a two wheel or three wheel trike always wear a helmet accidents can happen (accidents can be eliminated)

Please don't over look the good neighbour policy "Always help your neighbour if they require support."

Your Monthly Home Improvement Tips

Exterior Door Installation

Installing a new exterior door will require you to make some decisions.

Solid Core Plywood Faced Door: Will require a lot of maintenance, staining, sealing or painting.

Solid Wood Door Such as Western Red Cedar or Oak Etc. These will require sanding, sealing, staining, natural finish – subject to temperature change inside and out. Panels may crack requiring repairs and refinishing on an annual basis.

Steel Insulated Door Primed Ready for Paint. Most people assume steel insulated doors are a

MARCH 2026



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Blarney
Jig
Banshee
Cockles and Mussels
Belleek

Fiddle
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Shillelagh
Four Leaf Clover
Ides of March
Green
Top O' The Mornin

Celtic
St. Paddy
Magical
Guinness
Pot of Gold
Lucky
Tradition
Luck of the Irish

finished product (usually white in colour) wrong! They must be painted within the first 6 – 8 months of installation using an exterior acrylic latex paint or an exterior urethane. Before painting the door must be washed with a cleaning formula or a non phosphate cleaner using a soft scrubber pad. Rinse well with clear water.

Consider Fibreglass Insulated Doors as they are maintenance friendly.

Fencing Hint:

Today the most popular fence is the vertical board fence with lattice on top made of Western Red Cedar or Spruce.

For the best installation to give good neighbour privacy consider this tip: Use pressure treated posts (usually pine or hemlock) with concrete set in the bottom of the hole and brace each post individually until concrete has set.

Fill in around the post with good drainage material such as pit run gravel or road base tamped down with the end of a 2x4.

Using a 2x6 top cap and a 2x4 bottom rail use 1 inch shiplap cedar siding or tongue and groove "V" matched cedar for vertical boards stopped into place with 1"x1" cedar strips. These will retain the privacy feature even after the boards shrink when dry. The 2x6 top rail acts as a drip edge to protect the boards below.

If lattice is added to the top of the fence use 2x4 for top of the board and 2x6 for the top of the lattice.

Vinyl Siding Hint:

Here are a few hints to tackle your vinyl siding

project.

First: Colour – the lighter the colour the easier it is to install as there is less expansion at the seams and butt joints.

Second: When nailing don't set the nails tight. Allow enough tolerance to enable the siding to expand within the slotted nail holes.

Third: Always overlap the seams away from the sight line ie: start from the furthest away point on the side of the home. A seam installed in this manner will not show the cut edge of the overlap.

Fourth: Outside corners are best when using rough cedar 1" or 2" lumber and butting "J" trim up against them. This allows you to paint or stain the corners the colour of the trim boards facia etc.

Fifth: Always save one package of siding ie: 100 to 200 square feet for future expansion or damage repairs as you just never know what may happen.

Don't Forget Daylight Savings Time Begins on March 8th. Mark It on Your Calendar

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Straight from the Horse's Mouth

By Mel Kositsky

Plans are being made to hold a harness racing meet in the Fall of 2026 at Osoyoos Desert Park in southern British Columbia.

Kelly MacMillan, President of Harness Racing BC (HRBC), has asked all horsemen – owners, trainers and drivers -- to help plan for the number of stalls needed at the town's fairgrounds so that racing officials can plan the number of races possible for an inaugural race meeting, most probably starting in September.

"While the original schedule anticipated approximately 10+ race days, we are committed to working toward an expanded race schedule of 20 race days over a three-month period, creating greater opportunities for participation and competition," said MacMillan in a published letter.

"Purses are expected to be very competitive with Alberta and will also include some stakes races. The climate in Osoyoos is mild with little precipitation. The barns are in good shape with about 100 stalls now and an additional 50+ new stalls planned for opening," he wrote.

MacMillan added that accommodations in Osoyoos are very reasonable with trailer parks, hotels and short-term rentals (i.e. Airbnb), with plenty of availability in the fall (off season). He has asked the racing industry to complete a statement of intent, which would be a non-binding estimate to help management finalize the meet structure.

A Standardbred Canada news release says the new plans for racing at Osoyoos Desert Park has postponed a decision by the Town of Osoyoos to permanently close the complex.

According to a Kelowna news report on castanet.net, Town Council postponed making a decision on the demolition of the weathered Desert Park to a March 10 session, citing an upcoming meeting between the Desert Park Exhibition Society and HRBC that could impact operations and finances after a structural assessment of the building put required operational repairs in the \$2 million range.

"There could be some potential infrastructure money from the province," Gerald Davis, Director, Community Services at Town of Osoyoos, was quoted as saying in the article. "Depending on how much we can do with what we have now, and that funding — if there was a way to meet the needs, not just for the Harness Racing BC or Desert Park Exhibition Society — but the community to have this facility use it — that would be a really good thing."

The Town of Osoyoos is located about 365 km east of the former harness racetrack, Fraser Downs, in Surrey and it is close to the U.S. border.

Last August the City of Surrey and Great Canadian Entertainment shut down harness racing at the Cloverdale Fairgrounds for good -- just two weeks before the fall/winter meet was about to start for its 50th year of racing on September 4. Cloverdale Raceway first opened on January 1, 1976 and later changed its name to Fraser Downs.

It is perhaps ironic that the mild winter weather so

far this year would have allowed for ideal racing conditions for the pacers as opposed to last year's inclement weather which caused a number of cancellations due to poor track conditions.

To make sure the decision to end racing was permanent, multiple barns and other structures have been demolished and the track surface destroyed as the night lighting was taken away. No plans have been announced yet for the future of the Surrey fairgrounds, but the historic Cloverdale Rodeo, which is held on the May holiday weekend, is still going ahead this year.

In late November, the Province of B.C. caught the thoroughbred industry off-guard by announcing the end of funding for all horse racing in the province -- and that their portion of revenue from slot machines in Surrey and Vancouver's Hastings Racecourse would come to an end on January 31, 2026.

Great Canadian followed that announcement with its closure of racing facilities at Hastings and the shut down of all operations there. In early February, the horse industry was given two weeks to clear out all personal equipment in the locked-down barn area -- instead of the original plans to open up for training for a 2026 season at the Pacific National Exhibition grounds.

Since then, it was also announced that the City of Vancouver is in negotiations with the Vancouver Whitecaps soccer club to build a new stadium on the PNE grounds.

The thoroughbred racing industry remains in negotiations with provincial and city government officials over future use of the existing track and stable area.

Last year around this time, in order to better understand the economic impact of horse racing in B.C., the B.C. Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General engaged MNP consultants to undertake an economic impact assessment to understand the economic, employment and social contributions of the Standardbred and Thoroughbred horse racing industries in B.C. during 2024.

As part of the study, revenue and expenditure data was collected from horse racing industry participants. MNP also gathered information from others involved in the industry, including trainers, backstretch workers, and track management companies. The provincial government then used the results of that study as its basis to shut down racing in the province.

The world of racing will turn its attention later this month to Meydan Racecourse, the home of the \$30.5 million (US) Dubai World Cup meeting held annually on the last Saturday of March. In addition to the world's most spectacular race day, the venue hosts the five-month long Dubai Racing Carnival that runs from November to March.

A total of \$30.5 million in prize money across six Group 1 and three Group 2 races, a multiple Guinness World Record setting closing ceremony, exceptional dining, avant-garde fashion and mesmerising entertainment, have made Dubai World Cup Day the sporting and social highlight of the city. This year marks the 30th anniversary of the world's most spectacular race day on March 28, 2026.

All eyes will be on Forever Young, the 2025 Breeders' Cup Classic winner and now two-time Saudi Cup champion, as he looks to become one of the greatest racehorses ever. Along with recent Dubai World Cup champions Laurel River (2024) and Hit Show (2025), Forever Young is among a world-class list of nominees for the \$12 million G1 Dubai World Cup, the centrepiece of Dubai World Cup Day.

The Japanese runner made sporting history at King Abdulaziz Racecourse on February 14 as Forever Young became the first two-time winner of

the \$20 million Saudi Cup (G1).

Yoshito Yahagi's undisputed dirt champion found a perfect gap along the inside rail turning into the home straight, and drew off after a brave challenge from the Bob Baffert-trained Nysos to win by one length in a final time of 1:51.027 for the nine furlongs.

Banishing (USA) and Thundersquall (GB) had led the field along the backstretch with Nysos tracking. Meanwhile, Forever Young and jockey Ryusei Sakai sat just behind those horses, hugging the rail, in a tactical move that ultimately worked out perfectly in the long stretch duel.

The nine-race card is anchored by an exceptional supporting program, led by the \$6 million G1 Longines Dubai Sheema Classic. Among the possible starters are the 2025 Longines World's Best Racehorse Calandagan, alongside 2024 Sheema Classic hero Rebel's Romance, Breeders' Cup Turf winner Ethical Diamond and reigning champion Danon Decile. Japan is strongly represented once again with Croix Du Nord, Durezza and Masquerade Ball.

The outstanding Dubai World Cup Day program is further bolstered by the G2 UAE Derby, the G2 Godolphin Mile sponsored by Emaar, and the G2 Dubai Gold Cup sponsored by Al Tayer Motors. The day traditionally opens with the G1 Dubai Kahayla Classic for Purebred Arabians.

A bill that would allow Gulfstream Park's racing and slot-machine licences to be decoupled was again approved by the Florida House of Representatives in early February by a vote of 77-34.

House Bill 881 was filed by Republican Adam Anderson. He sponsored a similar bill that was passed last year in the House before it was merged into a wider-reaching gambling bill that died in the Florida Senate in May.

If the bill is passed by the Senate and approved by Gov. Ron DeSantis, it would take effect July 1. The Stronach Group, owner of Gulfstream Park, would have to offer races there for another three years before it could pull the plug.

Last year's bill also was approved by the Florida House, but the effort failed after DeSantis said in April that he was not going to look favorably on legislation that is going to decimate a signature industry.

DeSantis still is the governor, and he is bound by term limits to leave office this year. Even though they often are at odds, his same fellow Republicans still run both houses of the legislature.

Citing a bearish market for the Thoroughbred economy, Stronach said the best way forward for South Florida racing is to decouple and let it run its gaming business separately. Racing supporters say Stronach knew what it was getting into when it agreed two decades ago to have racing as a requirement for running slot machines, which help provide money for Thoroughbred purses.

One industry spokesperson was quoted last year as saying:

"Thoroughbred racing isn't just a sport in Florida—it's a way of life, deeply embedded in our state's history and agricultural heritage. The misguided effort to decouple racing in favor of slot machine and cardroom casinos threatens the heart of our state's \$3.24 billion, and growing, Thoroughbred industry. HB 105 undermines a legacy built by multi-generational farms, expert trainers, passionate owners and the small businesses that keep our communities thriving."

Unfortunately, what is happening to the racing industry in British Columbia is also going on in other parts of North America, even though the sport is thriving in many locations.

Early Warning Signs: Protecting Health and Independence for Seniors at Home



Home is more than a place. It is a feeling of safety, being seen, and having peace of mind. For seniors, maintaining that sense of security often requires support as health and mobility change. In-home care is more than helping with everyday tasks. It is about **noticing early changes that can affect safety and health**. Subtle shifts in energy, mood, or mobility can increase risks such as falls or illness. Recognizing these signs early allows for timely intervention. Personalized in-home care can offer gentle support with daily routines, from helping with meals and personal care to providing reminders, companionship, and post-hospital assistance and specialized dementia care.

Post-hospitalization support is especially important. Returning home after surgery or hospitalization can be challenging. Without proper

care, seniors may experience setbacks, miss medications, or struggle with reduced mobility. Understanding these risks highlights the value of continuous, personalized support that includes daily assistance, careful monitoring, and clear communication with family members. Unlike public-funded services with limited hours, personalized in-home care can include evenings and overnight help to ensure recovery and prevent complications.

Specialized dementia care is another area where education matters. Caring for someone with dementia or Alzheimer's requires structure, patience, and knowledge. Consistent routines, meaningful engagement, and trusted companionship improve safety and emotional well-being. Families also benefit from guidance on navigating challenges and learning strategies for care delivered with confidence.

Wellness and engagement go beyond daily care. Nest Home Care offers **educational workshops led by doctors and health professionals**, providing practical strategies for safety, healthy living, and cognitive wellness. We also provide practical strategies for safety and healthy living, and online resources to help seniors stay confident, connected, and independent. Follow us on social media @nesthomecare.ca for updated guides and tips.

Understanding the reasons behind in-home care can make all the difference. Nest Home Care provides guidance, personalized support, and compassionate care for every family. Call 778.901.5350 today for a free consultation to learn how we can help you or your loved one thrive at home.

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New food allergies after 50? What you need to watch for

It's one thing to be cautious about cholesterol and blood pressure after 50, but what if a favourite food suddenly leaves you gasping for breath or covered in hives?

Surprisingly, adult-onset food allergies are more common than you might think, according to Dr. Harold Kim, an allergist and immunologist. "It's not unusual to see someone in their 60s react to shellfish or nuts. Your immune system evolves with age, and that can mean new sensitivities."

Common triggers and symptoms

The most common food allergens include crustaceans, tree nuts, peanuts, milk, eggs, soy, wheat, sesame and fish. "Shellfish and fish are particularly common in adults developing allergies for the first time," says Dr. Kim. "You could have enjoyed lobster your whole life and suddenly develop an allergy at 58."

Symptoms can vary from mild to severe, typically appearing within minutes to two hours after eating. Watch for tingling or itching in the mouth, hives or rash on the face or throat, vomiting, or shortness of breath or wheezing.

If you've recently experienced these symptoms after a meal, don't shrug it off—experts recommend seeing your doctor promptly. "Don't wait for a second reaction," urges Dr. Kim. "The next one may be more severe."

What to do next

Diagnosis involves food history, blood tests and sometimes supervised food challenges. While avoidance is key, having an emergency plan is crucial, including carrying a safety device like an EpiPen, which delivers epinephrine used to treat a severe or life-threatening allergic reaction.

For anyone at risk of anaphylaxis, quick access to epinephrine is critical, but especially for older individuals with other health conditions.

You can also make lifestyle adjustments, including reading labels, wearing a medical ID and asking about ingredients when you eat out. You can find more tips and information at epipen.ca.

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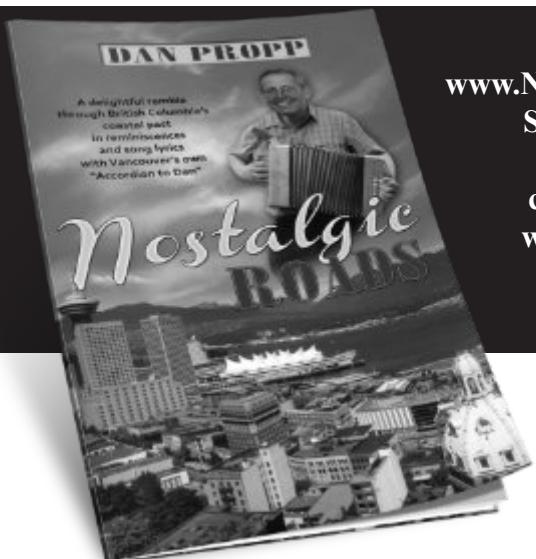
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ARMCHAIR TRAVELS SAILING WITH SIR FRANCIS DRAKE

By Rick Millikan

A replicated Golden Hind moors below London Bridge. Sir Francis Drake's storied achievements occur while commanding this small, square-rigged galleon. In reading *The Secret Voyage of Sir Francis Drake*, I vicariously experience his intrepid travels from my La-Z-Boy recliner.

Author Sam Bawlf introduces Drake as an English

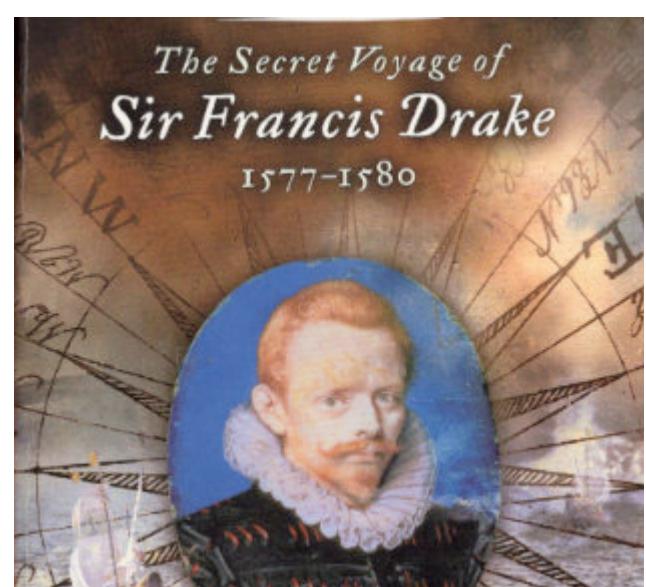
Protestant determined to avenge Catholic Spain's aggression. His research allows readers like me to sail back in time and around the world. Boarding Drake's licensed privateer, we initially go to Spain's Caribbean and seize shiploads of treasures.

Once back in England, Drake gains Queen Elizabeth's support for his plan to snatch even more Spanish riches. Turning pages, I sail southward. When his astrolabe determines the correct latitude, Drake uses his compass to steer westward. Catching Africa's trade winds, we skirt the Canary Islands. To estimate speed, Drake plunges a small chip-log, then watches his 30-second sandglass empty. Pulling this weighted board from the water, crewmen count the rope's knots. Drake notes the knots and calculates our daily distance in the ship's logbook. We spend five weeks crossing the Atlantic.

Drawing from officer diaries, Bawlf provides insight into Drake's leadership. Beaching the Golden Hind on the Patagonian coast, he assists the scraping the hull to increase speed, manages sailor concerns...and deals justly with an officer's mutiny. And landing in the Straits of Magellan, he orders gathering fresh provisions...and attempts trading with Tierra del Fuegians.

Reaching the Pacific Ocean, the Golden Hind follows Chile's coastline north. Near Santiago, we surprise and plunder Spanish merchant vessels. Proceeding with stolen charts and kidnapped pilots, Drake effectively locates Peru's and Mexico's main ports. Capturing offshore galleons, he repeatedly replaces his ballast with riches and continues northward. Today, plaques along California's coast suggest Drake's landings.

Rough maps and crew commentaries reveal an ongoing search for a northwest passage. Eventually, our Golden Hind turns south through Johnson Strait and along Salish Sea shorelines. Sailor drawings show a native village visited near today's Comox. There, Drake



declares southern Vancouver Island part of England, naming it Nova Albion.

Exiting Georgia Straits, Morera, a captured pilot guides us south-by-southwest across the Pacific Ocean, through the Philippines and into Indonesia. In the Malukus, then the Spice Islands, Drake exchanges much of his treasure for higher valued cloves, nutmeg and mace.

Upon returning to Plymouth in 1577, Drake shouts, "Is good Queen Bess still on the throne?" Assured, he docks. In meeting with Queen Elizabeth, she honours him with a knighthood. Bowing, he repays her investment with hefty interest. Sir Francis is now a very wealthy English hero.

Swashbuckling adventures continue with Drake's return to the Caribbean. This time he leads a fleet of twenty-nine vessels. We famously raid and ransack Cartagena and Santo Domingo. English countrymen welcome us home, wildly celebrating our new victories. With royal approval, he publishes maps and accounts of his circumnavigation...omitting covert details!

Ten years later, Queen Elizabeth enlists Drake to undermine Spain's impending invasion. Commanding 24 warships, he attacks Cadiz, seizing twice that number of enemy vessels.

The Spanish Armada embarks from Lisbon in 1588. Appointed England's vice-admiral, Drake commands a faster, more maneuverable fleet manned with veteran gunnery. Sailing from Portsmouth, we pursue Spain's 130 large ships. When gales force them into safe harbour, Sir Francis sends fireships into their midst. Spain's warships scatter, becoming easy prey for our smaller vessels. Raging storms blow others northward, where many shipwreck off the British Isles' rocky coasts.

Armchair travel carries me comfortably into Sir Francis Drake's worldwide adventures. I experience his glorious battles, extraordinary explorations and huge contributions to England's rise to power. I may next book travel with Captain Cook!



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EARLY SIGNS OF RESPIRATORY ILLNESS OLDER CANADIANS SHOULDN'T IGNORE



During respiratory virus season, it's especially important for older adults and their caregivers to stay alert to the health risks posed by circulating viruses. By recognizing early signs of illness and taking timely action, you can potentially prevent serious complications.

Some symptoms may seem mild at first, but deserve attention, especially for those over 60 or with chronic health conditions:

- Runny or stuffy nose
- Sore throat

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- Mild fever
- Fatigue or tiredness
- Persistent cough
- Shortness of breath
- Chest discomfort or wheezing

There's a seasonal virus putting older adults at higher risk.

While anyone can experience the symptoms listed above, older adults often face additional risks if an illness worsens. Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) is a common contagious virus affecting the lungs and breathing passages, and it can begin with cold-like symptoms. But, in people over 60 or those with chronic health conditions, it can quickly progress into something more serious.

Some seniors may downplay or normalize symptoms: chalking up a cough to dry air, or fatigue to a poor night's sleep. But it's important not to ignore even minor-seeming symptoms. RSV can present light symptoms for some, then can lead to severe outcomes, including pneumonia and hospitalization.

Adults with chronic conditions such as diabetes, asthma, chronic obstructive lung disease (COPD) and heart failure are more likely to be hospitalized with RSV than adults without these conditions. As the virus progresses, watch for increasing difficulty breathing, chest tightness or weakness as signs of progression.

RSV can also lead to long-term loss of independence or make underlying health problems

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worse. The mortality rate for adults over 50 hospitalized with RSV is about one in nine — higher than for influenza. Re-admission is also more common due to complications or flare-ups of chronic conditions like COPD and heart disease.

Caregivers are often the first to notice when something isn't quite right. Watch for subtle changes like confusion, reduced appetite or difficulty with daily tasks. These could all be early indicators of a more serious illness taking hold.

Early action can make a difference. The National Advisory committee on Immunization recommends that adults aged 60 to 74 may consider RSV vaccination in consultation with a health care provider.

Staying alert, informed and proactive can help older Canadians, and those who care for them, navigate the season safely.

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3 THINGS YOU DIDN'T KNOW COULD AFFECT YOUR VISION

Most people understand that aging and eye strain can impact their vision, but many are unaware of other factors that can seriously impact their eyesight. Specsavers Canada's clinical services director, Naomi Barber, shares three surprising things that can affect your vision, and what you can do about them:

1 Diabetes: According to Diabetes Canada, people living with diabetes are 25 times more likely to experience vision loss than the general population due to diabetic retinopathy. Like many serious eye conditions, it can progress without symptoms until significant, sometimes irreversible damage occurs.

Many people with diabetes don't realize that even if their vision seems fine, that doesn't mean their eyes are healthy. But there are diagnostic tools that can help, like optical coherence tomography (OCT). It provides a 3D image of the eye that helps optometrists detect conditions like diabetic retinopathy in the early stages.

2 Glaucoma: Often called the "silent thief of sight," glaucoma is one of the most deceptive eye diseases because it typically has no early warning signs. Glaucoma damages the optic nerve, often due to increased pressure in the eye, and can lead to irreversible vision loss. Many people don't notice the symptoms until they've lost much of their peripheral vision. That's why booking routine eye exams is important—to catch and manage the condition early on.

3 Your diet: What you eat plays a bigger role in eye health than you might realize. A nutritious diet that includes leafy greens, colourful fruits and vegetables and foods rich in omega-3 fatty acids supports overall eye health. Nutrients such as lutein, zeaxanthin, vitamin C, vitamin E and zinc act as antioxidants that help protect the retina.

Vision loss is serious, but you can take steps to reduce your risk, and it can be managed when caught early. You can protect your eyesight with regular eye exams using OCT. Learn more about vision protection at specsavers.ca.

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WRITE AS I PLEASE

By Mel Kositsky

It's an old adage we have heard many times: "The more things change – the more things stay the same."

Maybe it's time to turn that page, flip that switch, or just change that channel.

Otherwise, we will just keep singing that "same old song".

On Sunday, March 8, it's that "time" thing again.

We move the clocks ahead one hour to give us more daylight. It has become the unofficial start of Spring – more daylight for after-work hours for such activities as gardening, baseball and maybe even early barbecues as the weather warms up.

Not everyone catches "Spring Fever", but the better weather usually puts a smile on the faces of those who have struggled through a harsh, cold winter. So let the debate continue. Should we keep changing the clocks every six months or just pick one – Standard Time or Daylight Savings Time (which ends this year on November 1)?

We are almost a year into the new federal government and nothing much has changed if you watch the House of Commons channel (CPAC). The decorum by our elected officials is just as bad now as it has been for years. Very few Members of Parliament even show up in Ottawa (except for Wednesday caucus days). And when they do conduct votes in the House, it is done strictly along party lines.

It may be a minority government, but there is no drama involved unless you believe the mainstream media hype. It is all for show!

While there is continuous talk about electoral reform, the first-past-the-post system is not going to change. Canada has evolved into a two-party system and the major parties like it that way. What is really needed is parliamentary reform. There is little respect for the Speaker of the House, even when he tries to control the noise, and when the MPs do vote, most of the voting is done on mobile phones from anywhere. (So much for listening to debate in the House.)

Not only is affordability still the major issue facing Canadians, as there has been no real "change" in the cost of groceries, housing and gas. In fact, prices keep going up!

The price at the gas pumps, especially in the Lower Mainland, is climbing higher and higher again for no apparent reason despite the pause in the much-argued carbon tax about a year ago. Not everyone wants to drive electric vehicles and they certainly do not warrant government subsidies (again).

It's no wonder the so-called political experts are saying Prime Minister Mark Carney will call a spring/summer federal election, even though we just had one last April. With the Prime Minister riding

high in the media and political polls – and the opposition parties ripe for the picking – this may be the perfect time for him to attempt to win his much-desired majority government.

Unlike the United States, which has real fixed election dates and sticks to them, Canadian politicians can call an election whenever it suits them, especially if they see a major advantage in going to the polls. With the Prime Minister needing to call at least six by-elections in the next six months, and maybe some others which are not official yet, it may be time for him to "go".

With the Toronto area being a Liberal stronghold now, he needs new representation in at least three ridings there and has already chosen two "star" candidates. It is unlikely he will now get any other "floor-crossing" MPs from the Conservatives to form that majority government, so his goal could be to unite the left and exploit the weak state of the NDP and Green parties, which are both in "rebuild".

There are two major events which may prevent PM Carney from calling a quick election. The uncertainty of what is happening in Iran and the possible escalation of another Middle East conflict is foremost. If the United States does take action against Iran, will Canada join in? Remember, Canada did not join the war in Iraq in 2003.

The sports-minded prime minister also wants to be the leader during the World Cup festivities in North America, which will be a major distraction to any election called in June or July, especially in the Toronto area. There will be too much focus on those games and soccer fans may not appreciate an election interfering with their fun.

Of course, this is all speculation, but it is more likely there will be an election called for September, if at all. The PM can just continue governing Canada as he is doing now and unless his party suffers major losses in by-elections, his strong "minority" position is good enough and can last for years.

Right now, the Prime Minister is holding all the right cards. His new government handout has received Royal Assent and more money will be tacked on when the new GST credit season starts July 1.

A news release from the Department of Finance Canada explains that "the global landscape is rapidly changing, leaving economies, businesses, and workers under a cloud of uncertainty. In response, Canada's new government is focused on what we can control: building a stronger economy to make life more affordable for Canadians. The biggest payoffs in our plan will take time. However, we recognize that many Canadians are feeling the pressures of everyday expenses and need relief right now.

"Affordability pressures—especially those related to food—require immediate support for Canadians. To support those most affected by the rising price of food, the government is proposing the new Canada Groceries and Essentials Benefit to help more than 12 million low- and modest-income Canadians afford day-to-day essentials, starting in the spring of 2026."

The Canada Groceries and Essentials Benefit, will be indexed to inflation, and builds on the existing Goods and Services Tax (GST) Credit and provide \$11.7 billion in additional support over six years by:

1. providing a one-time top-up payment to be paid as early as possible this spring and no later than June 2026 —equal to a 50% increase in the annual 2025-26 value of the GST Credit. This would deliver \$3.1 billion in immediate assistance to individuals and families who currently get the GST Credit.
2. increasing the value of the Canada Groceries

and Essentials Benefit by 25% for five years starting in July 2026. This increase would deliver \$8.6 billion in additional support over the 2026-27 to 2030-31 period, including to 500,000 new individuals and families.

Taken together, these measures would provide up to an additional \$402 to a single individual without children, \$527 to a couple, and \$805 to a couple with two children.

Eligible families and individuals in Canada will receive the enriched regular payments under the Canada Groceries and Essentials Benefit as of July 2026. The benefit will be paid quarterly, at the start of the quarter.

Under the proposed changes:

- A single senior with \$25,000 in net income would receive a one-time top-up of \$267 plus a longer-term increase of \$136 for the 2026-27 benefit year (total increase of \$402). In total, they would receive \$950 for the 2026-27 benefit year (including the top-up).

- A couple with two children with \$40,000 in net income would receive a one-time top-up of \$533 plus an increase of \$272 for the 2026-27 benefit year (total increase of \$805). In total, they would receive \$1,890 for the 2026-27 benefit year (including the top-up).

The one-time, top-up amount would be paid to all current recipients as a lump-sum payment based on eligibility to the GST Credit in January 2026. The new Canada Groceries and Essentials Benefit would continue to be delivered quarterly in July, October, January and April.

Recipients would not need to apply for the additional payments, but should file their 2024 tax return if they have not done so already to be able to receive the top-up, and must file their 2025 tax return to receive the increased Canada Groceries and Essentials Benefit payments as of July 2026.

It is estimated that 12.6 million individuals and families would benefit from the new Canada Groceries and Essentials Benefit. That is the reason the program was fast-tracked through Parliament by all MPs and Senators. Every little bit helps in today's challenging economy, but it also forces all Canadians who want to receive it, to file their annual income tax papers.

It also reveals that almost one-third of our 40 million plus Canadians are living near or below the poverty level in what is considered one of the richest countries in the world and a member of the G7 elite.

It would be interesting to track just how many millions of dollars are spent by the federal government in repackaging and advertising this tax credit. And remember, those who do receive the money are not obligated to spent it on groceries!

Agriculture increasingly occurs on the cutting edge of technology. The pace of change in the food system is red hot thanks to advances in genomics, robotics, sensing, data systems, automation and artificial intelligence. Do you want to learn more about this important topic?

On Wednesday, March 11 at 7 p.m. at KPU Richmond campus, Third Age Learning at Kwantlen (TALK) is hosting a Compelling Conversation with Dr. Lenore Newman, Director of the Food and Agriculture Institute at the University of the Fraser Valley.

Dr. Newman is a very entertaining speaker and will describe the changes in how our food is being produced and discuss the policy implications. There will be lots of time for questions and comments from the audience. This event is FREE but participants must register at kpu.ca/TALK.

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