



## North Shore News Column.

### Older & Wiser

By Tom Carney

## **Better late than never: Looking back on 2012**

Top stories worth revisiting due to recent developments

By Tom Carney, Special to North Shore News February 3, 2013

I had one of those light bulb moments recently.

I'd like to say those moments of illumination happen to me quite frequently but that wouldn't be true.

Anyway, over the Christmas holidays it seemed every columnist, except me, came out with a top 10 list for 2012. Top 10 movies, top 10 political stories, you name it.

Why didn't I think of that?

It's too late for that now. Instead, let's go back and catch up on the latest developments with some of the stories we've covered recently.

Last year at about this time, the federal government was being lobbied from all sides to fix our pension system. The government's view was that expanding the Canada Pension Plan would be too expensive. Instead, the finance ministry introduced changes to Old Age Security (that will start in 2023) and proposed a new voluntary retirement savings vehicle, Pooled Registered Pension Plans (PRPPs).

Update: It seems the federal government may be open to taking a second look at expanding the CPP after all. They've announced that all options for pension expansion will be on the table at their next meeting with the provinces in June.

Last February, the B.C. Ombudsperson released the Best of Care Report, Part 2. The report looked at the care of seniors in B.C.

Update: The most recent information related to the report can be found in the Ombudsperson e-newsletter, viewable at [ombudsman.bc.ca](http://ombudsman.bc.ca).

On the same day, the B.C. Ministry of Health made a commitment to establish an office of a seniors' advocate in the province. From May to July 2012, the Seniors Action Plan Team consulted with seniors' families and other stakeholders around the province on what a new office of the seniors' advocate should do.

Since then: Silence. I asked local MLA Ralph Sultan, the Minister of State for Seniors, what was happening with this file last week.

Update: Look for seniors' advocate legislation to be introduced in the spring 2013 session of the legislature.

We go back to the year 2009 for our next story. Here's the headline: B.C. public trustee sentenced for fraud.

The story involved an employee of the Office of the Public Guardian and Trustee using his position to defraud B.C. seniors. My readers wanted two things to happen in this case. First, they wanted heads to roll at the office and they wanted the penalty for the employee to be severe.

Update: Readers were disappointed on both counts. The employee, who was in charge of 200 case files, allegedly falsified his job application, provided phoney references and falsely claimed he had two university degrees. In response, the agency said that it would conduct a sweeping review of their hiring practises. You can't make this stuff up. The employee in question was sentenced to six years in prison in 2009. Eight months later he was released into the community on day parole. In October 2012 he was granted full parole after serving less than half his sentence.

When TransLink announced plans in the spring of 2012 to cancel the popular Taxi Saver program, seniors and those with disabilities were outraged.

Update: This story has a happy ending. The Taxi Saver program was saved. TransLink's explanation was that when they made the decision to cancel the service they did not have a full understanding of how their (own) program worked, proving once again that what you don't know can hurt you.

And speaking of incompetence, late last summer all of the health authorities in B.C. announced they would be implementing a new influenza control policy for their staff. The new policy required care staff, with a few exceptions, to receive an influenza vaccination or wear a surgical/procedure mask while at work during the flu season.

At the time of the announcement the health authority called it a huge leap forward in their commitment to protecting the health and safety of their patients. I called the policy a bold move and a lawsuit waiting to happen.

Update: Days before the policy was scheduled to come into effect, the health authorities took what I think was a huge step backward and rescinded the policy. To be exact, the policy remains in effect but no disciplinary action will be taken.

Is this a setback for the health authority? Not at all! According to a senior official with the health ministry, it gives the health authority an additional opportunity to listen to the voices of their employees and craft a policy that works for everyone. Everyone is a winner here. Everyone except the patients.

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