

Services to Seniors Coalition – North Shore

Co-Chairs

- Trish Alsop, *North Shore Neighbourhood House, and John Braithwaite Community Centre*
- Margaret Coates, *Lionsview Seniors' Planning Society*

About the Coalition

The *Lionsview Seniors' Planning Society* is the host agency for the Services to Seniors Coalition – North Shore. The Coalition has been operating since 1992 and is the planning table for issues facing seniors and services to seniors on the North Shore. The 50+ participating organizations and individuals represent a wide spectrum of service providers. We come together as the Coalition to network, plan services and supports strategically and set priorities and target resources for collaborative action.

Contact the Coalition

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Meeting Notes

Tuesday, February 17, 2026

12:00 pm to 1:30 pm

North Vancouver City Hall

1. Welcome – Lea Howard

2. Land Acknowledgement

At Lionsview, we recognize with gratitude that our work takes place on the unceded territories of the Coast Salish peoples, the St'at'imc, Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), and səliwətaʔt (Tsleil-Waututh). We honour their histories, cultures, and ongoing leadership, and we remain committed to building community in ways that respect and uplift these lands and their caretakers.

3. Attendees:

Lionsview Seniors Planning Society: Margaret Coates, Lindsay Macklin, Margarete Weidmann, Wallis Dixon, Barry Goodman(?)

Keep Well Society: Adele Wilson

Hollyburn Community Services Society: Veronica Traille

North Shore Neighborhood House: Lea Howard, Trish Alsop

North Shore Community Resources: Anne-Marie Jamin, Judy Stott

City of North Vancouver Library: Rakhshanda Ansari

BCCRN: Joanne Cooper

City of North Vancouver: Lisa Wambaa

Silver Harbour Seniors Centre: Annwen Loverin

Alzheimer's Society: Jullian W., Amelia Gilies

West Vancouver: Davida

Parkgate: Alex Fograscher, Kelsey Grass

Family Service: Robin Rivers

Capilano Community Services: Austin Neaves

Next meeting: March 17, 2026, at 12:00 pm (Location TBD)

4. North Vancouver City Hall – A little bit about City Planner (Lisa)

Lisa provided a brief overview of her background and current work as a City Planner. She shared her interest in the built environment. Lisa has previous experience working with neighbourhood organizations in Calgary, supporting and engaging older adults, as well as lived experience with older adults and people living with dementia.

She welcomed new perspectives and encouraged folks to reach out with questions or to connect for a chat!

5. Moving Forward with the Coalition

Community Strengths & Challenges

As we come to the end of a phase in which we have toured most organizations on the North Shore, the Coalition will now shift toward reassessing priorities and planning next steps to ensure continued value and benefit for members.

Silver Harbour (Annwen)

Annwen shared reflections on the transition to their new building, which presents both opportunities and challenges. The more visible and accessible location is expected to increase participation, but there are concerns about the long-term costs of operating the facility and managing growth.

Key considerations included:

- Creating a welcoming and inclusive environment for new participants while maintaining a sense of belonging for long-standing members.
- Working with SFU Gerontology to support emotional and social engagement during this transition.
- Incorporating feedback and recommendations from seniors.
- Managing increased demand without plans to expand staffing.
- Supporting volunteers through this change, while recognizing some may step back or retire.
- Designing flexible and social spaces to encourage drop-in and connection.

Keep Well (Adele)

Adele noted a shift in the needs and expectations of older adults. Many are more socially connected, tech-savvy, and seeking meaningful activities and engagement rather than aging quietly at home. This growing diversity in aging is creating increased demand for both social and emotional supports and will require ongoing adaptation of services.

Better at Home (Judy)

Judy highlighted that many clients are socially isolated but not ready to participate in group programming. Limited funding and reliance on volunteers continue to shape the level of support that can be provided.

Current priorities include:

- Expanding flexible and individualized supports.
- Managing increased demand for transportation and practical assistance.
- Exploring automation of scheduling and volunteer coordination to improve efficiency (although these tasks remain unfunded).

Family Services (Robin)

Robin shared that needs are becoming more complex, particularly related to:

- Financial insecurity and rising costs of living.
- Housing instability.
- Loneliness and social isolation.

Many clients require one-on-one phone support due to limited digital literacy. For some, these services represent their only point of connection. Food security programs are experiencing increased demand, but capacity remains limited.

Ongoing challenges include:

- Lack of funding for database and intake systems.
- Limited ability to provide coordinated, wraparound care.
- Prioritizing those with the highest needs, while supporting those who are beginning to require care.

Hollyburn (Veronica)

Veronica raised concerns about older adults who do not have next of kin or end-of-life plans. Barriers to care include long wait times, affordability, and rigid eligibility thresholds. There is concern about a lack of long-term system planning for seniors with complex needs, and the risks this creates for vulnerable individuals.

West Vancouver (Davida)

Davida noted an increase in older adults experiencing homelessness. Some individuals are living in their vehicles due to concerns about safety and appropriateness of shelters.

Capilano Community Services (Austin)

Capacity remains the primary challenge, with demand continuing to exceed available resources.

North Vancouver City Library (Rakhshanda)

Rakhshanda highlighted ongoing challenges in reaching older adults and communicating available services. Traditional outreach methods, such as printed materials and in-person engagement, remain important. Staff are also seeing increased use of library spaces by unhoused individuals, reflecting broader systemic challenges (i.e. rising costs of living).

Overall System Challenges

The group discussed broader sector challenges, including:

- Funding bodies need greater awareness of the importance of *capacity-building* work, including intake, administration, technology systems, and staffing.
- Provincial and federal funding is increasingly limited, with rising inflation and staff burnout affecting service delivery.
- The current system allows those with financial means to purchase private services, while the public system supports those with fewer resources.

Discussion also reflected on the narrative that “home is best.” While aging at home is often promoted, it is not always safe or realistic without adequate home support. This can lead to increased isolation and risk. Questions were raised about what happens to individuals who require additional levels of care but fall between available services.

The emerging “small care home” model was discussed as an innovative approach. Participants expressed interest in how this model may be implemented locally, including retrofitting existing buildings and supporting individuals with similar care needs in smaller, home-like settings.

Volunteers

The group identified volunteers as both a critical strength and a growing pressure point across organizations. While volunteers remain essential to service delivery, many organizations are experiencing increased demand, shifting volunteer demographics, and reduced capacity to recruit, train, and retain volunteers effectively.

Several key themes emerged:

- Volunteers are increasingly carrying a double burden as both agents of change and recipients of system pressures.
- Roles are becoming more complex, requiring greater training, supervision, and risk management.
- Many long-standing senior volunteers are aging out, reducing their involvement, or seeking paid or honorarium-based opportunities due to rising financial pressures.
- There is growing interest from younger volunteers and newcomers, including highly skilled immigrants seeking Canadian work experience, which creates ongoing training and onboarding demands.
- Volunteer turnover is increasing, with many individuals staying only short-term.
- Some organizations are exploring paid volunteer roles, but this can create expectations and inequities across programs.
- There is a need to diversify volunteer engagement, including *increasing participation among men*.

West Vancouver noted they currently have approximately 450 active volunteers contributing over 30,000 hours annually but face challenges onboarding new volunteers due to staffing limitations.

The Alzheimer Society shared that volunteers generally fall into two groups: those volunteering occasionally as a form of giving back, and those seeking professional experience.

Organizations noted that while volunteer programs are often seen as a low-cost solution, they require significant staff time and infrastructure to operate effectively. This includes recruitment, screening, training, coordination, risk management, and ongoing support.

The group emphasized that ***volunteer programs should be recognized as core programs***. Well-designed and well-supported volunteer opportunities strengthen both community capacity and individual wellbeing. Volunteers frequently return because of the sense of purpose, belonging, and connection they gain.

There was agreement that ***funders need to better understand the true costs and value of volunteer programs***. Sustainable funding is needed to:

- Build staff capacity to recruit, train, and support volunteers.
- Develop structured and meaningful volunteer roles.
- Reduce burnout among staff and volunteers.
- Strengthen community resilience and social connection.

Overall, investing in volunteer programs is a proactive and cost-effective approach that supports prevention, reduces isolation, and strengthens the broader system of care.

Outreach and Engagement

The group discussed ongoing challenges in reaching older adults:

- Limited capacity for outreach and communication.
- Hesitancy among older adults to answer calls or share personal information.
- Increasing concerns about ***privacy, security, and data collection*** (even within funding reports).
- The growing influence of private companies seeking information or partnerships.
- The time and resources required to protect seniors from predatory practices.

Areas for Growth and Collective Advocacy

The group agreed that this is an important time for the Coalition to reflect on its future direction and how its collective voice can be used more intentionally. As the touring phase comes to a close, there is an opportunity to shift toward stronger, more coordinated advocacy that reflects shared priorities across the sector.

There was strong interest in building on the Coalition's collective experience and relationships to raise awareness of key issues. The group is well positioned to speak to emerging challenges and bring forward lived experience and trends.

Key discussion points included:

- How the Coalition can be more coordinated and visible in its advocacy efforts.
- Identifying shared priorities and speaking with a stronger, unified voice.

- **Engaging decision-makers and funders in meaningful conversations about trends, pressures, and gaps in the system.**
- Using the strength of the group to influence funding and policy discussions.

People also emphasized the importance of continuing to focus on community needs and protecting older adults. There was agreement that the Coalition should remain cautious and intentional when engaging with private companies.

Overall, there was interest in continuing this conversation and identifying practical next steps to strengthen collective advocacy and impact.

6. Updates

- **Tech Connect:** Lionsview shared that the Tech Connect program will run Mondays from March 23 to May 11 at Silver Harbour Seniors Activity Centre, with sessions from 1:00 to 2:00 pm and 2:15 to 3:15 pm. The program offers free, small-group, personalized technology support to help older adults build confidence using their devices.
- **Caregiver Expo:** A caregiver expo will take place May 2 at Silver Harbour. Applications for tables are currently open through contact with the North Shore News.
- **Arts and Crafts Sale:** Silver Harbour is hosting an arts and crafts sale on March 14.