

**Portion Of Presentation To Council By Rory Sutter – Speech Not Completed
June 24, 2019 Re: Petition To Keep Age Of Eligibility Of Senior Pricing At 55+**

Mayor, Councillors,

My name is Rory Sutter. I live at [REDACTED], Richmond, B.C.

I feel I am speaking on behalf of thousands of Richmond residents who have been affected and I want to do them justice in 5 minutes.

5 minutes for FITNESS 55.

This petition was started June 14 and I have personally spoken with over 320 people face-to-face on six occasions at community centres in last 10 days to determine how they feel about the change of the age of eligibility from 55 to 65 year of age at Richmond recreation facilities.

I have also communicated with another 280 plus people and we have over 600 signatures and are now growing by more than 100 people per day. And this movement is just beginning – we’ve just started. And I can deliver thousands of signatures.

The petition comments reveal what people are thinking in this City. The overwhelming response is this change in policy is crazy. They wonder what you are doing? And many are angry because they believed in you and voted for you.

This petition is supported by all ethnicities, cultures and language groups in this City. And not just by people in the 55-64 demographic. The 70 year-old seniors said we got the discount and they should too.

Like me they are taxpayers and long-time residents who love this community and the unparalleled access to recreation that we have.

Tonight I am their voice.

Richmondites have bought in to the City’s vision that Richmond is a nurturing, connected community that promotes HEALTHY and ACTIVE aging within our mature demographic;

Provided at a level of affordability that allows, encourages and supports their long-term participation.

They are not asking for something new or unprecedented. They did not define an active senior as being 55 plus. You did.

Our mature residents have bought in to Directive 3 of 2015-2020 Seniors Service Plan Framework that says there is a citywide focus and understanding of seniors needs and wants. Is there? I can tell you the answer is no.

That they are CELEBRATED and RECOGNIZED as VALUED community members. This policy change casts another no.

And Directive 1 that communication with seniors is timely, effective and appropriately delivered and received.

I remind Council that actions speak louder than words.

Clearly our seniors do not feel valued and celebrated and they are now being recognized for one thing and that is THEIR ABILITY TO PAY. And communication has been poor to say the least. People in the 55-64 demographic all over this city are confused. How do I know because I have been speaking to them.

When it comes to providing recreation facilities for our mature demographic. Richmond is a leader and not a follower. And we can be proud of that. And it's working. It's working.

There is no set age at which a person is considered a senior in Canada. Generally, the age at which seniors discounts start is usually 55. However, for government benefits, such as Canada Pension Plan, you have to be at least 60 years of age.

Seniors discounts can kick in as young as 50.

And we don't have to try and justify an action – to RAISE the age for eligibility for seniors pricing to 65 – SIMPLY BECAUSE WE BELIEVE OTHER CITIES ARE DOING IT, especially when they are not.

The Township and City of Langley are 60. Maple Ridge is 60. Surrey is 60. Port Moody is 60. West Van, Maple Ridge and Victoria are 55+ for Seniors Activity Centre Programs.

I reject the justification that studies show that people in the 55 – 64 demographic have the largest disposable incomes therefore they should pay more.

We live in an age where information can be manipulated just like numbers, to support any rationale. Averages. Not everyone in this community drive Bentley's, Rolls Royce's, Mercedes, and BMW's. There are two Richmond's.

People in the 55-64 demographic are retiring earlier and working longer. They are paying for sports for their kids that involve equipment and travel. They are supporting their children through colleges and universities. They have aging parents to support with serious health needs, including dementia, and expensive care homes. Is anyone a caregiver in this room?

They are trying to make it in a city that has one of the highest costs of living in the entire country.

Their kids are staying at home longer and they are trying to give their kids a hand-up to live in this region. Normal working-class people who earn their incomes in

Canada cannot afford to purchase in this city. Did you know that under the new mortgage stress test most people do not even qualify for their existing home mortgages?

They are paying high property taxes in city. Many in this demographic are self-employed and don't have company pensions to look forward to. People are stressed and wonder how they can afford to retire?

People that are 55-64 have a higher likelihood of getting laid off, as you will see in the petition comments. I have spoken to several 57-year-olds who were targeted to reduce wages. And many are taking lower paid and part time jobs in this community.

On the flip side there are some members of this demographic in Richmond, that are not paying their share. And what scares me is that they qualify for the Recreation Fee Subsidy Program and their address may be in Terra Nova.

The question for council is why are we penalizing the people who have been paying their share for years? Just like you they've given to society and it's time for society to give back.

In 2018 you faced a drop in your pay due to the loss of a federal tax exemption and how did you feel? Personally I think you deserved pay your pay increase or adjustment this year.

CUT OFF BY MAYOR BEFORE COMPLETION OF PARAGRAPH

And people in the 55 to 64 demographic deserve their \$67 dollar discount on an annual fitness pass.