



Prime Time

Association of British Columbia
College Pension Plan Retirees'
Newsletter



2017
Winter
Edition

President's Message

You may have been wondering whether or not your *Prime Time* was a little late this year. I expect it is. We held off finalizing this winter's issue until after the Executive had spent a day engaged in a Strategic Planning Session. We have been an independent group now for a couple of years, and we felt it was time to take stock of where we are as an organization and where we would like to be in the future. Your executive worked very hard on 23 January and a summary of our conclusions and planned actions is on page 4. We will keep you up to date on what we are doing via our website and in subsequent issues of *Prime Time*.

As you know, we held our Annual General Meeting in September, and thank you to all of you who came out and participated in our meeting at Langara College. At that meeting, members amended our Constitution so that our financial year end is now 31 August. This change makes much more sense than the 30 June year end we inherited from the RTA because the majority of our dues come in at the end of September. At that meeting we also conducted three workshop groups in which members discussed where they would like the Association to put its energies. Group Brainstorming revealed that people are very concerned about the Optional Extended Health and Dental plans offered through the Pension Corporation. Of most concern to everyone is cost, and they directed the Association to support the idea of merging all the Pension Corporation arranged health care plans into one. That is to say that retired members of College, Teachers, and Municipal Workers' Pension Plans would all have the option to participate in one plan. The increased number of participants in such a joint plan should have the effect of lowering premiums for everyone. Of next concern was the desire to see an increase in lifetime limits on coverage. Members also see the need for catastrophic coverage and that dental costs are very expensive.

At the time of that meeting, we were still under the Pacific Blue Cross Plan. In March, those of us who do participate in the optional insurance plans will have our coverage moved to Greenshields Canada. Paul will be saying more about this in his own article on page 2.

These plans do not offer us what we were used to when we were working, and on retirement each member has to make his or her decision about how much extra coverage he or she wants to buy and from whom. Some of us are in the plan for retired teachers, for example, because we are married to

In This Edition

Article	Page
President's Message	1-2
From the Board Table	2-3
Summary from Strategic Planning Session	4
On Our Notice Board	5
Are you Concerned About?	5
Cycling the Danube River Valley	6
Travel Tip	7
Contact Us and Useful Links	8

PRIME TIME is published twice a year. If you would like to contribute an article or images, please contact Mary L. Griffin marylgriffin@telus.net or Al Valteau al.valteau@shaw.ca.

retired teachers. Others are covered by other spousal benefits. We don't have a choice, however, about our BC Medical Services Plan premiums that went up again this year. In fact, as pensioners, we probably feel that we live in challenging times and are very grateful for our defined benefit pensions. As a group, CPPR's main focus is to protect and enhance those pensions for ourselves and for our younger still working colleagues. The larger our group becomes, the more the Pension Partners—FPSE, BCGEU, PSEA, and the Government—will listen to our input. So perhaps you could persuade an old colleague to join us, if he or she hasn't already done so.

Of interest, no doubt, to those of you who were once members of FPSE locals is FPSE's history project. I met with George Davison, President of FPSE, and Ken Novakowski of the BC Labour Heritage Centre early in January. FPSE is beginning the project of collecting and archiving its own history, and the memories of some of our members will be very helpful to that project. So if you were once a member of an FPSE local you may be interested in participating. More information can be found on page 5.

All that remains for me to say is to wish you belated new year's greetings. We have a Provincial Election coming up in the spring, and I know many of you will be very engaged in that. Some of you will be travelling; others working in your gardens, seeing grandchildren. Whatever the year holds for you, I hope 2017 is prosperous and fulfilling.

Mary L. Griffin

From the Board Table

On September 1, 2016, I officially became a Trustee of the College Pension Plan. I replaced Danny Bradford as the Retiree Trustee, appointed jointly by FPSE and the GEU. Danny served on the Board of Trustees for many years, and we members of the College Pension Plan all owe him a big "thank you."

During the Fall of 2016, I got oriented to the duties of trusteeship while participating in the meetings and decisions of the Board. Two big issues dominated Board activities last Fall. The first was receiving and dealing with the tri-annual actuarial valuation of our pension plan. Every three years the actuaries evaluate and report on the assets (money projected to be available for present and future pensions) and liabilities (the costs of paying for those pensions) of our plan. The results this time (for the 2012-2015 period) were very positive.

The funding ratio (assets/liabilities) for the College Pension Plan, as of August 31, 2015, was 103.6%; in simple words, the plan has a small surplus. At a time when fiscal and political uncertainties continue to roil world economies and when many another pension plan is in serious trouble, this is a result to be celebrated. While the surplus was too small to justify major increases in benefits or decreases in contributions, it allowed the cap on cost-of-living adjustments to be raised to 2.07% through 2018. Consumer price index increases will be fully covered up to 2.07%; our pensions will be adjusted accordingly—permanently.

The second big issue was changing carriers for the optional extended health and dental insurance plans available to retired pension plan members. Together with trustees from the Teachers' and Public Service Pension Plans, we reviewed our plans, asked Canadian leaders in providing this sort of insurance to submit bids, carefully evaluated the proposals we received, and in October selected the successful company. Green Shield Canada (GSC) will replace Pacific Blue Cross (PBC) as the carrier of our optional insurance plans as of April 1, 2017.

Some information on this change of carrier has already been sent to retirees participating in these plans. More will be provided in the *Pension Life* newsletter this month. And Green Shield will mail out welcome packages in March, including new ID cards and detailed information on how submit claims.

Some things will not change: the coverage provided by GSC will be the same as the current policies; services covered by the current plan will continue to be covered after April 1. Deductibles, co-pays, and limits will also be the same. Deductibles will not be reset on April 1; for example if you have paid half your yearly deductible by that date, the new plan will reflect that.

Some things will change. Premiums will go down:

	Single	Couple	Family
<u>Extended Health</u>			
- Current (PBC)	\$72.07	\$144.14	\$281.08
- April 1 (GSC)	\$59.45	\$118.90	\$231.87
<u>Essential Dental</u>			
- Current (PBC)	\$24.43	\$46.41	\$65.96
- April 1 (GSC)	\$22.47	\$42.67	\$60.65
<u>Enhanced Dental</u>			
- Current (PBC)	\$47.32	\$89.82	\$127.78
- April 1 (GSC)	\$43.51	\$82.68	\$117.50

Danny Bradford and I both sat on the Inter-Plan Committee that oversaw the review of insurance carriers. Hard work, but worth it, I believe. While premium rates and coverages may well change in the future, we feel College Pension Plan retirees will have access to health and dental insurance at very competitive rates with a national company that has an excellent reputation for service.

If you have questions about the change in carriers, FAQs can be found in the retired member section of college.pensionsbc.ca; the Green Shield Canada website has lots of information (greenshield.ca); or you can ask the Pension Corporation or me.

That's all for this column. I hope this will be a regular feature in *Prime Time*. If you have questions about this column or suggestions for future columns, please let me know.

Paul Ramsey, Retiree Trustee, College Pension Plan. ramsey@shaw.ca

Don't forget the College Pension Plan's Own website.

www.pensionsbc.ca

where you will find information about our pensions and optional benefits. You may also be very interested in the articles collated in the *Straight Facts* section of that website.

Did you know, for example, that our "College Pension Plan has developed a reputation as an innovator and trendsetter in the sector." Check it out.

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS FROM STRATEGIC PLANNING SESSION OF MONDAY 23 JANUARY 2017

Our Reason for Being is to Protect and Enhance our College Pension Plan for the Benefit of current and future retirees.

Challenges We Face

Invisibility for the most part to both our retired colleagues and the Pension Partners
Small membership
Lack of Funds

Main Goals

To clarify who we are and what we do
Formalise our Relationship with the Partners
Increase Membership to increase our voice

To Achieve these Goals, we will

Draft extra language into our Constitution clearly outlining our aim to protect and enhance our pensions

Educate both Active and Retired Members on the realities of our defined benefit pension

Encourage face to face engagement between current and prospective members

Ensure our publications (Membership Brochure, Website, new Facebook Page, and so forth) are lively, up-to-date, and informative about us

Liaise with Faculty Association Locals and with HR staff at our various institutions

Reinforce our relationship with the Partners through already established channels and investigate new ways of ensuring the Partners are fully aware of our activities by

- a) Ensuring material about us in *Pension Life* is current.
- b) Offering Partners an opportunity to publish in *Prime Time* and requesting similar courtesy for us to write in Partner issued publications

Strengthen the information about our group in our various pre-retirement workshops

On Our Notice Board



Are you concerned about



*The Erosion of Defined Benefit Pension Plans such as ours?
 The availability, timeliness, and quality of Health Care?
 The stability of your income in the future?
 The availability and definition of affordable housing?
 The availability and cost of daycare for your grandchildren?
 The cost of your grandchildren's education ?*

then you may want to consider becoming involved in some way by working within the political party of your choice or by contacting your MLA and MP. You can find your MP at <http://www.lop.parl.gc.ca> and your MLA at <https://www.leg.bc.ca/learn-about-us/members>. CPPR is affiliated with the Council of Senior Citizen's Organizations of BC (COSCO) and with the National Pensioners' Federation (NPF). COSCO's mandate "is to promote the well-being of seniors and their families, advocating for policies that allow seniors to remain active, independent, and fully engaged in the life of our province. The organization is non-partisan, but politically active, advocating for seniors' needs no matter who is in power"(COSCO Website). You can join COSCO as an individual member if you want. Check them out at www.coscobc.org. Our Secretary Norah Andrew and Director Jack Finnbogason share the responsibility of attending COSCO meetings on our behalf.

Cycling the Danube River Valley

Twenty years ago, a colleague and her husband took a deferred salary leave, and one of their activities was a bicycle trip alongside the Danube River through Austria. I filed that fact away and determined that at some point I might like to try that trip as well. The opportunity came after a Habitat for Humanity trip in Hungary, and I led a group of eight folks on a shortened version of their trip. It was a wonderful experience. This past year I was encouraged to plan a bike trip in Europe for some friends, so I dusted out the riding guide; Fourteen of us rented bikes and enjoyed a wonderful eight days on the cycle paths associated with the Danube River Valley this past spring.

What had changed over the twenty years? Well actually, not much, but in reality a fair amount. This is still a wonderful trip (probably one of the most popular long distance rides in Europe). The prevailing winds are usually at your back; the bike path follows the Danube - and water always flows downhill; also over ninety percent of the trip is on dedicated bicycle paths. Accommodation is plentiful and relatively inexpensive, and there are loads of bike path outdoor cafes for lattes and wonderful Austrian pastries. Sights include Monasteries, Abbeys, Cathedrals, castles, dams, wineries, and a WWII Nazi concentration camp Memorial. Austrians are welcoming and just about everyone speaks English. If you do the trip in the shoulder seasons it is cheaper and less crowded (July and August are usually to be avoided).

The really good news is that the things that have changed are on the technology front. It is now possible to rent an E-bike to make life just a little bit easier! Our group had a couple of E-bikes, a seven speed, and a fleet of twenty-one speeds. I hadn't encountered the seven speed before; however, it is much easier to ride than a twenty-one speed (no hassling with chain driven gear changes and they don't have a cross-bar to hoist your leg over) and it has the same upper and lower range gearing with five middle gears. It is the ideal bike for a ride like this. The E-bikes just make the trip that much more relaxing and worked well for folks in our group with health and /or stamina issues. Our group averaged about 50KM per day (low of 35 and high of 65). At the end of the trip I asked for feedback (the five minute paper for those who were into that in your careers in the classroom!) and folks recommended the following:

1. Start at Passau, Germany (not Harding which is in Austria and where the rental company has its headquarters). Passau is right on the Danube and you can have your bikes delivered to your hotel.
2. Plan for a max of 40km per day - this leaves lots of time for poking along reading signs, stopping at markets, enjoying coffee breaks and leisurely lunches.
3. End the trip in Tulln (which we did again) and put your bike onto the train for the final half day into Vienna (we rode for the morning and then used the train and subway in mid-day to get to our hotel in Vienna). It definitely isn't as nice riding through the city as it is cruising in the country and through the little towns and villages

There is excellent public transportation that follows most of this route, so if for some reason a 'helper' is required it is possible to put your bike on the cycle friendly trains. Our trip was not guided but our accommodation was pre-arranged by a company that moved our luggage from hotel to hotel each day - you could also in an emergency, get a lift with the luggage conveyer.

A tour company that rents bicycles and moved our luggage from hotel to hotel was used to make our lives a bit easier. We chose the 'half board' option as our meal package. This includes a wonderful breakfast buffet and then a dinner that always included a soup, (and usually a salad or salad bar), a choice of at least 2 main courses and a wonderful dessert. This is recommended as then you don't have to go riding looking for an open restaurant, and our meals were always excellent!

The trip from Passau to Vienna is about 400KM. If you are really keen you can extend the trip for another 400KM then you can continue the ride all the way to Budapest. What a wonderful way to experience Europe as many Europeans do!

Dennis Anderson

But Before you go travelling, Here's a travel tip

MEDOC®
Travel Insurance

Trip Cancellation Insurance Benefits

There are times when the sudden and unexpected arises and you find yourself in a situation where you must cancel your trip. If you are unable to travel outside your province or territory of residence and are eligible for Trip Cancellation benefits under the terms and conditions of your MEDOC policy, there are a few things you should know:

- Your trip must be cancelled before the day of departure
- Only the non-refundable and non-transferrable portion of the pre-paid travel arrangements are eligible
- You must cancel your trip with the travel agent or common carrier immediately but no later than 24 hours or during the next business day following the cause for cancellation
- You must advise the MEDOC Claims Assistance Centre at the same time
- If you are uncertain whether an event or situation may require you to cancel your trip, please contact the MEDOC Claims Assistance Centre for clarification immediately but no later than 24 hours or during the next business day following the event
- At the time you book your travel arrangements or make any initial or additional payments on your travel arrangements, you must not know nor be aware of any reason, circumstance, event, activity, or medical condition affecting you, an immediate family member, a travelling companion, a travel companion's family member, or a close business associate which may eventually prevent you from starting and/or completing your covered trip as booked

Additional requirements, conditions and limitations apply. Please refer to your policy for all of the details surrounding the cancellation of any trip. It is important for you to read and understand your policy so that in the event a situation occurs that causes you to cancel your trip, there will be no surprises.



Medoc is the Travel Insurance Plan offered to CPPR members. For More Information contact Johnson directly at 604-881-8915 or Toll Free at 1-888-412-8822.

Stay Connected with us and with Others

Check Out Our Website www.BCCollegePensionPlanRetirees.ca

CONTACT US via email at info@bccollegepensionplanretirees.ca

or by phone at 1-844-655-6565

or by mail at The Association of British Columbia College Pension
Plan Retirees
C/O FPSE
400-550 West 6th Avenue
Vancouver, BC, V5Z 1A1

USEFUL LINKS

You will also find these links on our website.

OAS and CPP <http://www.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/home.shtml>

College Pension <http://www.pensionsbc.ca>

BC Forum (Retired Unionists) www.bc.forum.ca

BC Ombudsman <http://www.ombudsman.bc.ca/seniors>

Council of Senior Citizens of BC <http://www.coscobc.ca>

National Pensioners Federation <http://www.nationalpensionersfederation.ca>

Federation of Post Secondary Educators <http://www.fpse.ca>

Post Secondary Employers' Association <http://www.psea.bc.ca>

BCGEU <http://www.bcgeu.ca>

Seniors' Advocate <http://www.seniorsadvocatebc.ca>

Nidus Personal Planning Resource Centre and Registry <http://www.nidus.ca>

Pacific Blue Cross <http://www.pac.bluecross.ca/Corp/client/pensionbc/cpp.aspx>

CCPA's Newsletter *The Monitor* <https://www.policyalternatives.ca/monitor/index.php>

