



Prime Time

Post Secondary Educators
Branch 95 Newsletter



2013
July/August
Edition



President's Report Summer 2013

This has been an interesting year for our Branch. We have seen some significant turnover in our Branch Executive Committee with the 'retirements' of Sam Lewindon (one of our founders), long term members Craig Runyan and Khatun Siddiqi, and the loss of Mariam Bennett. We have also welcomed a great group of recent retirees, and they bring energy, enthusiasm, and passion. This is life!

In June, representatives of our Executive met with the Board of the BC Retired Teachers Association to propose a re-examination of the relationship of our Branch within the organization. A resolution to review the role of Affiliated members, and of our Branch specifically, was overwhelmingly supported by the Board. We are significantly different from our sister branches in the RTA in that we are provincial in nature, don't meet face to face, and have different pension and benefit plans. We do, however, share common interests in advocacy on behalf of seniors nationally (via the Canadian Association of Retired Teachers, one of the largest organized lobbies in the country) and provincially (BC Council of Senior Citizens Organizations, of which the RTA is a significant member) to name only two very prominent affiliations maintained by the BCRTA. Our members also make use of the RTA's Affinity Programs and some contribute through the RTA committee structures.

The small size of the College Pension Plan and our relatively small number of retirees makes it prohibitive to have a stand-alone retirees' organization along the lines of the BCRTA, with its breadth and depth of offerings and affiliations. The BCRTA is designed to address the needs, concerns, and interests of retired K-12 educators. As post-secondary educators, we share a common community of interest, but our circumstances dictate that we need to have a separate focus at some very significant places – specifically our pension and benefit interests.

The BCRTA has a pensions and benefits committee that on behalf of its members has direct input to and involvement with both the Teachers' Pension Plan Board of Trustees and the Plan Partners. We desire to have the same level of input to the College Pension Plan Partners and Board of Trustees on behalf of our members.

We proposed to the BCRTA Board of Directors that Affiliated status be open only to recipients of a BC College Pension, that our Branch be allowed to have our own Constitution and By-laws, and that we

Continued . . . 2

In This Edition

Article	Page
From Your President	1-2
Executive Update	2
This Issue	3
Our Pensions: College Plan News	4
RRSP or CPP?	5
Moving Online	
Our Website	6
Pension Plan	7
Notes from . . .	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 Valleau al.valleau@shaw.ca. If you would like to receive your copy by email, send an email to BCRTA95@hotmail.com

formalize our own relationships with the College Pension Plan Partners and Trustees. The mechanisms to make this come about will take time and some interest-based negotiations; however, we are excited about the willingness of the RTA Board to hear us and their interest in accommodating our aspirations. The initial vision for our branch – given that we have members from all over the province and that it was not conceivable that we would be able to meet regularly on a face to face basis - was that we would need to be a virtual branch. Our Branch has had an Executive Committee that has met face to face twice a year to conduct business on our behalf; however, while the concept of linking all of our members ‘virtually’ had merit, the technology available didn’t seem to be able to make it feasible. There have been remarkable changes on the technology front in the last few years, and what we dreamed of eight years ago may now be possible. We have made arrangements with BC Campus, and they will host a site on our behalf. By utilizing this new piece of interactive, intuitive, and accessible technology we hope to be able to share information, host discussions, and in the future even possibly hold a virtual AGM. These are exciting times for the Post-Secondary Educators Branch and we look forward to updating you on the progress that we make over the next while.

This is the last time that I will be composing this section of *Prime Time* as I am pleased to say that Mary Griffin (Kwantlen) will be taking over as the Branch’s third President, and I will be moving to the position of Vice President. Al Valteau (Kwantlen) is our new Treasurer – taking over from Sam Lewindon.

Have a great summer!! *Dennis Anderson*

Executive Update

As you can see from Dennis’ president’s report, we have had our usual June elections and the following members are our new Executive Committee who hope to serve you well over the next year and to respond to your concerns and interests. Don’t hesitate to contact your table officers; we need your input no matter where you live in the province or beyond.

Table Officers: Mary Griffin, President marylgriffin@telus.net
 Dennis Anderson, V-President andersond@shaw.ca
 Al Valteau, Secretary/Treasurer al.valteau@shaw.ca

Committees:

Communication: Norah Andrew, Mary Griffin, and Al Valteau

Workshop and Education: Dennis Anderson, Norah Andrew, Judy Wilbee

Pension Liaison: Dan Bradford, Paul Ramsey

Structure and Advocacy: Mary Griffin, Maureen Shaw

Members at Large: Brenda Appleton, Barry Bompas, Peter Clarke, Liz Lindsay, Martin Toren

Really Special Thanks to Sam Lewinden, our outgoing Treasurer, who was one of the founders of our organization, for all the time he has put into building and organizing our group and to Dennis Anderson for all his work as President. Without their efforts and enthusiasm, we would not be looking into the future with as much confidence and enthusiasm as we are!!!

In This Issue

This edition of *Prime Time* is coming to you a little later than normal because our organization is moving forward, and we wanted to have as much information as possible to share with you about these developments. For this reason, too, we have focussed this issue primarily on updates about our organization and on thoughts and information about pensions.



As Dennis explains in his President's Message, we are in the process of refining our relationship with our parent organization, the BC Retired Teachers Association, with whom, as he makes clear, we have a lot in common but some distinct differences such as our separate pension and benefit plans. In terms of communications, the really major difference is that, unlike other branches of the RTA, we are a province wide group not linked to a specific community or region. Therefore, until we are a large enough group to justify having local chapters, we face challenges in both our operations and our communications, challenges that we want to address as we change and grow.



We are, therefore, very excited to tell you that we will soon have a new website that will not only allow us all to keep in contact with our organization on a more timely basis, but also give us a chance to post our thoughts on issues relevant to us. Norah Andrews' article on page 6 explains how the new website will work. This new website will allow us to be far more up to date with information than *Prime Time's* two issues a year allow us to be. It will also enable us to have discussion groups and other shared activities even though we cannot all meet face to face.

Also, the website will allow all members to raise concerns and issues important to them wherever we live in the province and beyond. We are really looking forward to going on line soon.

This issue also includes our usual "Notes From . . ." section, a very interesting update from Jeff McKiel on the College Pension Plan, a brief guide to accessing your pension account on the Plan website, and some thoughts on the ongoing discussion about RRSPs and the CPP.

Mary and I trust that *Prime Time* will be a worthwhile brief addition to your summer reading.

Note from your editors:
Don't Forget! If you have
photos or an article you would
like included in *Prime Time*, just
contact marylgriffin@telus.net
or al.valleau@shaw.ca

Al Valleau



OUR PENSIONS: NOW and THE FUTURE *Some College Pension Plan News*

College Pension Plan Actuarial

As a result of the College Pension Plan's August 31, 2012 actuarial valuation, which was received by the Board in May of this year, contribution rates by employers and Plan members will increase by 0.66% of salary, effective September 1, 2013. This modest increase is to cover the unfunded liability identified in the actuarial report. The actuarial report takes place every three years. The Plan remains financially strong due to strong plan governance and solid investment returns. This change will not affect retired members.

The valuation report also determined that the cap on cost-of-living adjustments will remain at 1.83% until at least 2016.

For details, please go to the College Pension Plan by following the link on the BC Pension Corporation website <http://www.pensionsbc.ca>.

Changing of the Guard

John Wilson will be stepping down as a FPSE College Pension Plan Trustee in 2014 at the conclusion of his current three year term. John has been on the College Pension Plan Board since 2000 and was one of the first Trustees appointed by CIEA (now FPSE). He has served the Plan and our members with great distinction and will be sadly missed.

In preparation for this change, the May 2013 FPSE AGM voted in favour of appointing Candace Fertile as the "Trustee-Designate", meaning that she will replace John when he formally steps down next year. Additionally, as a "Designate", FPSE will cover the costs necessary for her attend pension conferences and trustee Board and committee meetings before she becomes a Trustee. This transition year will allow her to become more familiar with the policies and issues that will face her as a trustee. Candace is well versed in pension issues already as she has been a FPSE Pension Advisory Committee member for many years and has taken advantage of the numerous pension conferences and professional development activities that PAC members have access to.

Pension Survey Results Are In

As the result of a motion passed at the 2009 FPSE AGM, FPSE undertook an extensive online survey of College Pension Plan members, active and retired, to gauge their views of the different options available to improve the Plan. After first conducting an extensive membership education and communications initiative about the Plan and the options for change, Ipsos Reid was hired to conduct the survey - which garnered 1756 responses. This included retired BCRTA members, administrators and active union members. Two non-FPSE affiliated faculty associations – Royal Roads University Faculty Association and BCIT Faculty and Staff Association – also participated.

The changes being considered will not affect members currently retired.

The results of the survey were released on February 4, 2013 and can be accessed on the FPSE website by clicking on the "Member Resources" link at the top of the page, followed by "Pensions & Retirement". You can also access it by clicking on the following link:

http://www.fpse.ca/mbr_resources/pens_rtrmnt

Jeff McKiel Staff Representative, FPSE

RRSPs, CPP and Other Pension Thoughts

I remember about three and a half years ago going to a meeting where the benefits of increasing CPP contributions were being examined as a way of helping more Canadians plan for their retirement. Although, at the time, I realized that the way that tax law in Canada works, you can only put aside a set amount per year for your pension, a formula which takes into account RRSPs, pension contributions and the like, I thought it would be a good way of ensuring that fewer Canadians found themselves with in uncomfortable retirement situations or having to extend their careers to avoid a financial shortfall upon retiring. My view was reinforced when one of the individuals at the meeting commented that she had advised one of her colleagues to retire to Spain where she could live more cheaply than in Canada. To hear someone suggest that you should encourage Canadians to leave Canada once they retire was somewhat shocking. To hear that Spain, a country that, not that long ago, was in need fiscal retrenching, was the suggested destiny was even more shocking and not just for linguistic reasons either, for, as you know, your Canadian Medical Services Plan is only in effect if you reside in Canada for at least six months of a calendar year.

Since that date, I've talked to my older brother who is dependent upon RRSPs to fund the bulk of his retirement and have come to realize how complex the rules are for people reliant upon RRSPs and the rules for RIFs. My brother made the comment that people were beginning to understand that with RRSPs having to gradually be turned into RIFs starting on a taxpayer's 71st birthday, their RIFs would be cutting into their OAS, which is clawed back (an interesting choice of wording if ever there was) once their combined pension, CPP and RIFs hit a certain figure. In effect, some people may find their RRSP savings simply replacing what the government promises every Canadian upon reaching the ripe age of 65, OAS. Oh brave new world indeed with not such wondrous retirement in it, let alone a freedom 55. My brother's remark was that some folks were finding that in their 60s they had more expectations of retirement than they did in their 70s when the money they thought they had set aside to make for comfortable living was simply being drained away. So the debate goes on. Should the government increase RRSP room or increase CPP premiums and payouts, and what consequent changes to taxation may need to be put in place for all this to make sense?

You might want to consider which of these alternatives is more beneficial to retirees. For more thoughts on this topic, consider reading three articles in *The Vancouver Sun*. The first is a July 16th article by Rhys Kesselman entitled "CPP Expansion not Hindered by RRSP Responses," which is a critique of research done by The Fraser Institute.

<http://www.vancouversun.com/business/expansion+hindered+RRSP+responses/8665170/story.html>

The second article, by Jason Clemens, Charles Lammam and Milagros Palacios of The Fraser Institute, appeared in *The Vancouver Sun* on July 18th and is entitled "Criticism of CPP Paper Ignores Basic Concepts."

<http://www.vancouversun.com/business/Criticism+paper+ignores+basic+concepts/8675454/story.html>

It is a response to Kesselman's article. Kesselman responded to Clemens and the others on July 22nd.

<http://www.vancouversun.com/business/Opinion+Sound+research+needed+weighing+pension+options/8693559/story.html>. The three articles together are food for thought, not just for those of us who are retired, but also for those of us advocating on behalf of those who will retire in the future. Read the articles and see what you think.

Al Valteau

MOVING ONLINE



COMING SOON: OUR OWN WEBSITE!

We, the BC Post-Secondary Educators group are currently working on a members website. As soon as we have the URL and the process to register as a member, we will send those to you so you can register and start using the site. We are very fortunate to have this site sponsored by BC Campus, under its SCOPE umbrella web site. You'll see when you log in that the umbrella SCOPE site has many aspects, which may be of interest to you. When you log in for the first time, you will need to set up a user name, password and profile (in as much or little detail as you wish). We will include a log in process for this.

Most web sites are one way in terms of communication; ours will be interactive, a major plus with this site—it gives our group a forum to communicate with one another on issues of common interest to our community, and to share news, ideas, suggestions, experiences and to ask questions. It is also a means of establishing and maintaining our community. This is especially important since our membership is so widely dispersed, mostly across the province, but also across the country. We find this limits attendance at face to face meetings, given the time and costs issues of travel. So this site will be a vital link among the membership and a venue to share and comment on issues of common interest.

We also hope this interactivity will make membership attractive to many more of our college pensioners so that we are able to exert the same level of influence on pension decisions as other pension groups, for instance the retired teachers and retired municipal pension groups, based on their larger membership base. Although there are approximately 4000 retired College Pension Plan retirees, we have about 250 members at any given time. A larger member base would strengthen our ability to be a voice at the table when decisions are made concerning pensions and benefits. So, please encourage your retired colleagues to join our local of the RTA.

This site will also be about other topics of interest to our group and these will be the focus of conversations/discussions on line, for example, travel experiences and out of province medical insurance, health, the BC drivability test for older drivers, retirement experiences, and really, anything else that you would like the forum to discuss. There will be a section set aside for questions and for topic suggestions, to start and/or facilitate the online conversations.

Norah Andrew

Note: Thanks to Norah for all the work she is doing co-ordinating with SCoPE to get our website online.

Visit <http://scope.bccampus.ca> if you want to check out SCoPE. Eds.



Our Pension Plan Accounts are now online

We can now access our personal accounts on the College Pension Plan website just as we were able to do before we retired. We do have to create a profile. It's quite easy.

Go to



http://www.pensionsbc.ca/portal/page/portal/pen_corp_home/cpp_home_page and click on “Retired Member” in the usual way.

In the left column, you will see “Retired Member LOGON” and under that in small letters “Register.”

From then on you will be prompted to create your user name and password after accepting the terms of use. The password is case sensitive. You will also be asked a security question.

Then there will be a pause while you are sent an email with a code and instructions.

When you receive the email, go back to the College Pension Plan website, and you will be given a one-time screen to enter the code. Enter it and follow the prompts, and you will be online in your own account.

From then on, it is easy just to logon and view your account.

USEFUL LINKS

RTA and Branch 95

<http://www.bcrt.ca>

OAS and CPP

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

BC Pensions

<http://www.pensionsbc.ca>

B. C. Forum (Retired Unionists)

www.bcforum.ca

BC Ombudsman

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

Council of Senior Citizens of BC

<http://www.coscobe.ca>

National Pensioners and Senior Citizens Federation

<http://www.npscf.org>

SCoPE

<http://scope.bccampus.ca>

Notes From . . .



NOTES FROM THE SOUTHERN GULF ISLANDS *Christina Stechishin*

- Farmers' markets with tables groaning with beautiful produce are in full swing on all the Gulf Islands
- Summer is a time for festivals, such as the Hornby Music Festival Aug. 1-10 and the Galiano Wine Festival Aug. 10, along with art exhibitions everywhere
- Galiano's new Community Library opening on June 30th was attended by almost 200 people, including Capital Regional District Director David Howe and MP and Green Party leader, Elizabeth May
- Planning meetings are taking place over the summer to develop Experience the Gulf Islands, a cycling and pedestrian trail plan, a collaboration between the Capital Regional District and the Southern Gulf Islands Economic Commission (<http://sustainableislands.ca/>)

NOTES FROM THE LOWER MAINLAND *mlg*

- Transit still concerns lower mainlanders whether suburban or Vancouverites. Road tolling, new bridges and tunnels, the weekend closures of the Patullo Bridge: These issues are very polarizing.
- In Vancouver the debate over whether to close part of Point Grey Road to all but local traffic to make a bike lane is controversial to say the least.
- Also in Vancouver the revised community plans for Grandview Woodlands, Marpole, Strathcona, and Oakridge, especially where those plans call for major highrises, are also controversial.
- The Premier's loss of her Point Grey seat in the Provincial election also elicited lots of interest.
- It's the season for festivals, Children's, Folk, Jazz, and Early Music. There are free lunchtime concerts at the CBC plaza. The VSO played in Deer Lake Park.

