



Prime Time

Association of British Columbia
College Pension Plan Retirees'
Newsletter



2017
Summer
Edition

President's Message

By the time you are reading this, we will already be part way through summer. I'm sure one of the things many of us have noticed is just how quickly time passes in retirement. At CPPR, we are already well into planning for our Annual General Meeting, scheduled for 15 November at the Vancouver Public Library. Members will be asked to make some important decisions on the organization of our association, and, as in the past, some funding will be available to help members who live outside the Lower Mainland to attend. More information can be found on page 6.

You may already have noticed that our website has now been updated. Our webmaster worked with Norah, Al, and me (the communication committee) to set something up that we believe will be more immediately informative about us and be easily navigable. The notice included by the Pension Corporation in *Pension Life* has also been updated to remove any reference to the RTA and to include information about access to discounted group insurance plans.

In May, I attended FPSE's Annual General Meeting in Victoria and delivered our greetings to them reiterating that we have shared interests in advocating for those who will one day retire and for being voices for a fair society. For the first time in some years, we were asked to provide a workshop as part of the Program, and our Vice-President Dennis Anderson and Director Kathy Conroy report that the workshop was very well received. Terri Van Steinberg, Secretary-Treasurer of FPSE told me that they have committed to offering us more support for our workshops and continue to encourage FPSE locals to pay for their retirees' first year's membership in CPPR.

In June, table officers together with directors Kathy Conroy and Paul Ramsey had a SKYPE video conference to discuss our relationships with the Pension Partners and strategies for building on what we have. Kathy attends FPSE's Pension Advisory Committee meetings as a representative of retirees and Paul is the Retired Trustee on the Board of our Pension.

As you can see, much of my work for CPPR over the past few months has been with the other table officers, and I really want to thank them for all the work they do individually on our behalf. Norah Andrew, our Secretary, has been navigating the rather challengingly charted waters of the requirements of the Societies Act, a somewhat daunting task. Each time we make an alteration to our Constitution or Bylaws, we have to register the changes. Al Valteau, our treasurer, not only keeps us solvent and ensures our bills are paid on time, but continues to invest considerable time in liaising with Johnson and with representatives of the other BC government pension plans. Dennis, our vice-president, remains a source of experienced advice for me and his and the workshop committee's work continues to be one of the most important elements, perhaps the key factor, in attracting membership. I must also thank all of the directors who take time to come to executive meetings, serve on our committees, and work

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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.

with contacts from our old institutions and colleagues to raise CPPR's profile so that we can become the voice of retired members of the College Pension Plan.

While our association is sustaining itself, we still have a way to go before we meet the goals we set ourselves last year, and we do face challenges. Please encourage your old colleagues to join us. We know there are other organizations offering discounted travel and insurance plans, but our organization is the only one that is focussed primarily on the needs of College Pension Plan members. The stronger our organization is, the more the Pension Partners will take note of our concerns, and as retired members of the College Pension Plan we do have concerns about inflation, costs of living, drug costs, and so forth that are specific to our plan. While there are concerns we share with all other retirees, those issues are dealt with through our affiliations with Council Of Senior Citizens Organizations and National Pensioners Federation. Organizations such as the Ontario Retired Teachers cannot speak for us. They are not members of the B. C. College Pension Plan. Similarly, we became independent of the BC Retired Teachers Association because despite our shared interests we are members of different plans, and they cannot speak for us to our pension partners.

It will be interesting to see what if any the change in political climate in BC will have for retirees and seniors as a whole and for our sector in particular.

Mary L. Griffin

From the College Pension Plan Board Table

It's been a busy six months since my last report to CPPR members; I'm beginning to realize that there are few non-busy times for me and the other trustees.

Crucial to the Board's ability to do effective work for our pension plan members is having good information and good staff. We recently had a change at the top of the Pension Board Secretariat. Dr. Bruce Kennedy, who served as Executive Director for many years, retired at the end of December. The new guy is Claude Marchessault; he is a well-respected lawyer in the pension industry (also an educator). Mr. Marchessault has accepted an invitation to be the keynote speaker at our A.G.M. this fall. He is well worth hearing from.

One Board issue of great interest to me has been the transition from Pacific Blue Cross (PBC) to Green Shields (GSC) as the insurance carrier for the optional extended health and dental plans available to retirees. Participants in those plans have now received ID cards and other information and have been enrolled in the GSC plans. While any transition of this size is bound to hit a few bumpy patches, the concerns seem to have been few and the Pension Corporation reports that the switch-over is going well.

And there are a rapidly increasing number of College Pension Plan retirees who can enrol in those plans. As of August 31, 2016, there were 6,957 retired members, a yearly increase of 545 members (or 8.5%). As a result of that increase and C.O.L.A. adjustments, payment of pension benefits increased by 9%. The age of plan members at retirement increased from 61 to 63 in the 2015/2016 year.

In contrast, at the end of August 2016 there were 13,719 active members, a decrease of 88 members. However, due to (very modest) salary grid increases and salary step movement, contributions to our pension plan rose by 4%, year over year. Due to those salary increases, employee and employer contributions to the Inflation Adjustment Account went up by 0.09% for each side. This—and other small contribution increases should eventually lead to greater inflation protection for retirees. Remember, the cap on C.O.L.A. increases is now at 2.07%; one hopes that cap will be raised after the next actuarial evaluation in 2018.

This, and much other information, is included in the 2016 Annual Report of the College Pension Plan. If you've never browsed through one of these reports, I would encourage you to take a look. Among many other things it details the performance of the Plan's investment (7% average yearly return over the last ten years). The report is available on the College Pension Plan web-site.

The Annual Report also details what investment vehicles your pension savings are in. The investment profile has evolved incredibly since the early days of our pension plan when, it seemed, we were just buying government bonds. Did you know, for example that only 22% of plan assets are invested in fixed income vehicles? Equities account for 50%. And mortgages, infrastructure, and private placements account for the rest.

One last factoid from the Annual Report: the average pension being paid to our fellow retirees from the College Pension Plan is \$22,300 a year. Hardly the “gold-plated” gift from the taxpayers that pension plan critics are so fond of demonizing. Our pension plan is solid; it offers good returns on the investments we made in it; it is well governed; and it is not a drain on the tax-payers of British Columbia.

That's all for this column. This is a regular feature of *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: <http://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.

Extended Health, Travel Insurance, and Other Retiree Associations

As I write this article, there are a number of items that I know members are keen on. The transfer of our Extended Health and Dental plans to Greenshields is on everyone's mind right now. As well, travel insurance and some of the issues around it are always a topic of interest.

Greenshields

When we shifted to Greenshields, the first thing we were told was that Greenshields “goes by the book.” Shortly after the transition, a number of us received letters from Greenshields in regard to some of the medications that Blue Cross had been covering that Greenshields was not going to cover. Compound medications were at the top of the list. Compounds may be cheaper than prepared medications, but as they are not on the Pharmacare list, they are not recognized by Greenshields. If this does affect you, you might want to examine the cost to you of prepared medications covered by Greenshields as opposed to compounds that your pharmacist can prepare for you that you will have to pay for yourself. If you are uncertain about the alternatives, you should talk the issue over with your doctor.

If you are having an issue with Greenshields, please tell us about it. We will compile a list of issues and pass them on to our Trustees.

Travel Insurance

We know that many of you have Medoc Travel Insurance through Johnson, our insurance provider. It certainly has proved to be one of obvious tangible benefits of being a member of our association. Do remember, however, that your travel insurance has a 90 day stability clause attached to it. If you plan a trip and your doctor changes one of your prescriptions, your travel insurance will no longer cover you if you have a problem. We trust all of you are very careful about planning your travel and keep this element of travel insurance in mind. The Medoc travel plan is a good one, and it is less expensive than BCAA travel insurance and travel insurance you can get through a travel agent. But it does have the same 90 day stability clause attached to it that BCAA and travel insurance you get through your travel agent has, so be prudent about this issue.

Your association has been investigating alternate plans that exclude the 90 day stability clause, and we will keep you posted about the issue.

Why ABCPPR is better for retired members of the College Pension Plan than other associations you can become affiliated with

We are aware that some retired members of the College Pension Plan have joined other retired educator associations. The Retired Teachers of Ontario have been aggressive in recruiting faculty, administrators, staff, support staff, and other people who have worked not only in the public school system but also in the post-secondary system. There are, at present, two locals of the RTO in BC. However, although the RTO does offer some interesting travel insurance plans, they cannot advocate on your behalf in regard to anything connected to the most important element of your retirement: your pension, inflation protection, and the extended health and dental plans. Not only has RTO affected us, but it has also affected the BC Retired Teachers Association (BCRTA), the retired teachers associations in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. In fact, the RTO has even come in conflict with The Ontario Teachers Insurance Plan (OTIP) as their aggressive membership tactics are hurting it as well. If people ask you why your association is important and why they shouldn't just become an associate member of another retired educators' association make sure they know that with an associate membership they are buying into an association that cannot advocate for them in regard to pension and pension benefits.

Johnson news

Johnson has offered to put up a prize of an iPad Mini for our AGM in November. When we know more about Johnson's prize, we will tell you. Remember that Johnson offers our association group house insurance rates too. Before you renew your house insurance, you might want to consider getting an insurance quotation from Johnson. You can do this over the phone and get quote from them within a day or so.

Al Valteau, Treasurer

A Book Report?????

I can't remember the last time that I did a book report. It was probably in high school, which would put it somewhere around a half a century ago. However, there is no time like the present to tackle the task once again, especially if it involves a work that might be important for everyone who is reading this Newsletter.

A number of you may have had the opportunity to attend one of the Pre-Retirement workshops that our Association has been presenting for the last decade. If you did, you might recall that the last pages of your *Workshop Manual* contained a list of *Resources Recommended by the Presenters*. You might also remember that one lament that we have always had was that there was always lots of info available (mainly from the financial institutions with their vested interest) about saving for retirement (accumulating assets) but a definite lack of info for folks who were retired or preparing to retire on the subject of de-accumulation - now that you have finished saving how do you plan to utilize your savings in the most effective and appropriate manner to achieve your goal of a fulfilling and lasting retirement experience.

I am happy to say that there is now an excellent work (and it is Canadian) on this very subject. The work is *The Essential Retirement Guide: A Contrarian's Perspective* by Frederick Vettese, published in 2016. The book very thoughtfully and thoroughly addresses this issue, and everyone to whom I have recommended the book including colleagues and folks from different backgrounds, have been impressed.

Vettese is the Chief Actuary of Morneau Shepell, one of the largest human resource consulting and technology companies in Canada and one of the top five defined benefit pension plan providers in North America.

His work is divided into major sections: *The Retirement Income Target; The Wealth Target; The Accumulation Phase; and The Decumulation Phase*. As Vettese is a mathematician who loves numbers, the book is full of interesting charts and graphs, but the text is well written and easy to read and understand. True to his actuarial roots, he also outlines the assumptions that he uses in the book.

Some of you may also want to look at his first work - *The Real Retirement: Why You Could Be Better Off Than You Think, and How to Make That Happen*. This work, which he wrote along with Bill Morneau (our current Federal Finance Minister) in 2013 is an interesting discussion of the state of aging in Canada. Both of these references are well worth a trip to your local library - or in the case of *The Essential Retirement Guide* an excellent planning tool that you might want to add to your own personal library.

Dennis Anderson, ABCCPPR Workshop Committee

On Our Notice Board

KNOW an ex-colleague who's about to retire?

REMEMBER, while other retiree organizations may offer similar travel and other insurance options, they cannot speak on our behalf.

Only CPPR SPEAKS FOR RETIRED MEMBERS OF THE BC COLLEGE PENSION PLAN. Ontario based organizations will gladly take your money so you can be an associate member, but they cannot advocate on your behalf in regard to your pension plan., This is the case with other BC retiree associations as well.

ENCOURAGE your ex-colleagues to JOIN CPPR now and strengthen the voices in support of **our Pension Plan and our benefits**. Membership forms are available on our website.

PROBLEMS WITH YOUR PRESCRIPTION SINCE THE CHANGE TO GREENSHIELD?

Email us at info@bccollegepensionplanretirees.ca with the heading "Greenshield" and we will forward the information to our Trustee.

Find Your MP at <http://www.lop.parl.gc.ca/and> your MLA at <https://www.leg.bc.ca/learn-about-us/members>

Published 19 May 2017
2016 Annual Report on Our Pension Plan. Paste this link into your browser and check it out.
https://www.pensionsbc.ca/portal/page/portal/pencorcontent/cpppage/publications/annualreports/cpp_2

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.coscoba.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>

Greenshield

<https://onlineservices.greenshield.ca/publicfooklets/cpp.pdf>

CCPA's Newsletter *The Monitor*

<https://www.policyalternatives.ca/monitor/index.php>

Formal Notice of Our AGM

Association of British Columbia college Pension Plan Retirees (CPPR)

Notice of Annual General Meeting
Wednesday 15 November 2017
10:15 am

at

Vancouver Public Library
Central Branch - Paul Kaye Room
350 West Georgia Street, Vancouver

Theme: Our Pensions-Our Lives

Guest Speaker: **Claude Marchessault**, Executive Director
Pension Board Secretariat
Introduced by **Paul Ramsey**, Retired Trustee

Lunch Provided

All Members of the Association are invited to attend. Bring a retired colleague with you. Memberships will be available at the door and new members will be entitled to vote.

Travel Funding

Members from areas where the half-price ferry fare or public transit is unavailable (Kamloops, Prince George, the Kootenays, the Okanagan, the North Island, and the North Coast) are invited to apply for up to \$300 travel assistance to attend the meeting. Such assistance will be awarded on a first come first serve basis per area.

To apply for funding, please contact al.valleau@shaw.ca.

It would be helpful if we could have an idea of our attendance.
*If you plan to attend, EMAIL norah_andrew@telus.net with the heading **AGM***

AS A RESULT OF THE STRATEGIC PLANNING ACTIVITY HELD IN JANUARY, THE FOLLOWING CONSTITUTIONAL RESOLUTIONS WILL BE BROUGHT TO THE AGM.

RECOMMENDED CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS

PURPOSE

The purposes of the society are *to protect and enhance our College Pension Plan and other related pension benefits for the benefit of current and future retirees* by:

- lobbying pension plan partners in regard to all aspects of the plan -including benefits and cost of living and
- *advocating on behalf of members on issues affecting our pension and retirement security*
- surveying retired members of the association
- maintaining and improving current levels of participation with the pension partners at the local and provincial level, *and taking other measures to accomplish this purpose.*
- Providing access to affinity programs such as medical travel, long term care and residential insurance
- Providing education to members and future members on matters of common interest through websites, newsletters and workshops,
- Providing means for continuing social connections.

DIRECTORS

RATIONALE

In order to ensure that there is continuity of experience within the executive

Resolved that Clause 3.2.2 of the ABC CPPR constitution be amended to read

3.2.2. (a) (i) *Directors shall serve staggered terms to balance continuity with new perspective.*

(ii) *All directors shall be elected for a two year term except where a director is elected to complete the term of office left vacant by a director unable to complete his or her term, or a change in term is approved by the board to maintain continuity.*

(iii) *The terms of the President and Secretary will run concurrently and be staggered with the concurrent terms of the Vice-President and Treasurer*

Before you go travelling, here's a travel tip

Travel Advisories

As you prepare for your upcoming vacation abroad, the excitement builds. Your flight is booked and your bags are packed. There's just one last thing – check for travel advisories. While there is no way to predict an event such as tsunami, earthquake, or disease outbreak, it is important to be as informed as possible.

Before planning or leaving for any trip abroad, you are encouraged to contact the Canadian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade at www.voyage.gc.ca or 1- 800-267-6788. There you'll find access to destination specific travel advisories, safety and security issues, local consular offices, and more.

How does a travel advisory affect your MEDOC travel insurance? If a travel advisory is issued or in place prior to your departure, any illness, injury or emergency medical condition may not be covered should you choose to continue with your travel plans. In terms of your Trip Cancellation benefits, rest assured that if a travel warning is issued after you've booked your trip advising Canadians not to travel to your planned destination then you're eligible for coverage should you cancel your trip and make a claim. If you do leave on your trip after an advisory is issued you will not be covered if your return trip is cancelled.

If an advisory is issued while you are at your destination, your coverage for any emergency related to the advisory will be limited to a period of 10 days from when the advisory was issued or to a period that is reasonably necessary to evacuate the country, region, or area. Please refer to the Exclusions and Limitations section in your policy for more details.

So whether you are planning to travel today, tomorrow, or next month, remember to check for travel advisories. You can never be too prepared when it comes to safety.

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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

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by phone at 1-844-655-6565 or

by mail at

www.BCCollegePensionPlanRetirees.ca

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