 **BRITISH COLUMBIA RETIRED TEACHERS’ ASSOCIATION**

**MEMBER REPORT**

1. **Major Concerns:**

a. BC Provincial Election

b. Strengthening partnerships - Provincial and Federal

c. Strategic planning initiative

The BCRTA has focused on the May 2017 BC Provincial election in the context of the Supreme Court decision finding the current Liberal government cutbacks in education funding since 2002 to be an example of illegal contract stripping. As a result, significant resources will be needed to restore broken contact agreements. The BCRTA is supporting the BC Teachers’ Federation in its advocacy around this issue. The BCRTA produced and distributed a “BCRTA Seniors’ Issues for the 2017 Provincial Election” document modelled on the one distributed before the 2015 Canadian federal election. Further details on the content of the provincial election document are found in section B of this report. Many thanks to the hard work of the Health and Housing Committee for producing this document.

In its desire to strengthen partnerships - both provincial and federal - the BCRTA remains committed to advocacy for a robust health accord and drug formulary that will meet the needs of Canada’s seniors. We continue to value our partnership with The Canadian Health Coalition, remain concerned about the issues around Bill C-27 and the threat to defined benefit pension plans, and support Seniors’ Voice/Voix des Aines and its advocacy work around health, pensions, housing and inequality issues. The BCRTA remains active in the National Pensioners’ Federation and this past September was a major host of a conference on seniors’ issues in partnership with the Council of Senior Citizens Organizations (COSCO) in Richmond, BC. The conference was entitled, “Aging Well, a Quest for All Generations”.

A significant focus of the BCRTA right now is our engagement in a strategic planning process. This revisioning of our association is being led by an Innovation and Strategic Planning Committee (ISPC) and will see significant changes to the organization over the next three years. The process is being supported by the in-put of BCRTA members and committees and the contribution of consultants hired for specific aspects of implementation of strategic goals. The BCRTA is grateful for the willingness of other provincial organizations to show their support by supplying information and expertise.

**B. Main Activities this year:**

1. Our BC provincial election issues booklet was well received by BCRTA members across the province and by several other organizations who used it in all-candidate meetings and community forums as well as to make personal contact with their local election candidates. The booklet contains background information and specific questions to candidates on a number of issues:
2. Access to Health Care:

* waiting lists for diagnostic testing before key surgeries

b. Integrated Health Care:

* establishment of an integrated health care plan for seniors that provides a seamless continuum of care from home care to palliative care that is cost effective and equally accessible

c. BC Medical Services Plan:

* BC is the only province in Canada that still charges a flat rate health tax; this Medical Services Plan Premium needs to be eliminated

d. Dementia:

* the establishment of dementia-friendly communities
* increased support to caregivers
* increased funding for research
* more inclusive care centres

e. Homeowner Expense Deferral Grant:

* introduction of a plan to help needy seniors so that they can afford to stay safely in their homes
* establishment of a program similar to the Property Tax Deferral Plan

f. Transportation:

* standardize or eliminate the fee for the 80+ DMER (Drivers Medical Exam Report)
* improved public transportation scheduling for HandyDART clients
* expanded delivery of health care through interactive video-conferencing, particularly in remote areas

g. Education Underfunding:

* measures to establish a fully funded public school system that meets the needs of all students in all areas of the province

h. A National Pharmaceutical Strategy:

* establishment of a national pharmaceutical strategy within a new Health Accord
* access to affordable and appropriately prescribed medicines for BC seniors and all Canadians

1. Pension Reform:

* encouragement of Defined Benefit pension plans that provide more improvement of CCP

j. Canada Health Accord Renegotiation and Funding:

* renegotiation of a new Health Accord that emphasizes the “five principles” of the Canada Health Act
* a Health Accord that includes national standards for wait times, home care, prescription drugs and team based primary health care
* stable and adequate Canada Health Transfers to maintain an improved Health accord that includes a national seniors’ strategy and a national drug strategy

1. The proceedings of the co-hosted conference with COSCO have been summarized in a booklet “COSCO Conference 2016 Report” that can be accessed on the COSCO website, [coscobc.org](http://coscobc.org). Major BCRTA organizers included Sheila Pither, Barbara Mikulec, Pat Brady and Annette O’Connor who are pictured in the report. COSCO represents 100,000 BC seniors.
2. BCRTA president Patricia Clough and Board member Grace Wilson attended the January 30,31 2017 “Lobby on the Hill” organized by the Canadian Health Coalition. They report that the workshops offered were valuable and that they felt well prepared to meet with the MPs.
3. The BCRTA is continuing its moral and financial support of the BC Health Coalition in the Brain Day court challenge to BC’s publicly funded health system.
4. BCRTA continues to be a participatory member of the First Call BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition and the BC Living Wage Campaign where we are represented on the Advisory Committee and Employers Certification Committee. The Living Wage Campaign is a growing movement in British Columbia. Through First Call, the BCRTA has a seat at a coalition, advocating on behalf of children and families in British Columbia along with the BCTF and several major provincial organizations. We also continue as members of the BC Federation of Retired Union Members and BC Forum.
5. The BCRTA is contributing member of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives - an organization that serves as one of our research sources.
6. Further to the comment in Section A of this report, the BCRTA is a contributing member of the Council of Senior Citizens’ Organizations of BC and have Board member representation on their executive and at their meetings.
7. Under the leadership of past president Bob Taverner, the BCRTA Board has drafted constitution and bylaw changes to be taken to the Annual General Meeting in September in order to be in compliance with the new British Columbia Societies Act.
8. In compliance with Canadian Revenue Agency guidelines, the BCRTA and its branches, in order to maintain non-profit status, have ceased making any kind of charitable donations so that all membership dues and income are used “for the benefit of the members”. To this end, the RR Smith Charitable Foundation will have a separate membership fee while remaining closely associated with the BCRTA. An article on “BCRTA Branches and Fundraising” by First Vice President Stefan Cieslik and Past President Bob Taverner has been published in PostScript magazine.
9. The RR Smith Charitable Foundation has recently given $21,000 to fifteen organizations with BC charitable tax status. Monies administered by the Foundation are now invested with the Van City Foundation. Branches of the BCRTA who wish to make scholarship or bursary awards or support local community causes must have a separate entity to which their members can contribute and the monies must not pass through Branch bookkeeping. RR Smith can serve - through the Van City Foundation - as a holder and administrator of a “designated fund” for these purposes.
10. The BCRTA Heritage Committee has made members aware of the House of Commons bill C-323 that supports the “Rehabilitation of Historic Properties in Canada”. The BCRTA is also supporting the Oral History Project in BC which is creating videos of the key people who led our teachers’ struggle toward collective bargaining.
11. Through a recommendation by theThe Health and Housing Committee, the BCRTA has written to the BC Ministry of Health urging coverage of the shingles vaccine for BC seniors.
12. BCRTA president Patricia Clough was interviewed following the supreme court decision in favour of BC teacher contract bargaining. She warned of teacher movement from rural areas to fill urban teaching positions, a movement of teachers in private schools moving into the public system, and recruitment of teachers for BC from other jurisdictions in order to make up the created shortfall.
13. As part of its strategic plan, the BCRTA is offering a one year's free membership to those joining the association for the first time. The BCTF has offered to do a province-wide mailing on behalf of the association to retiring teachers thus helping us avoid the pitfalls of Privacy of Information legislation.
14. The BCRTA is a sponsoring signatory of the Canadian Mental Health Association’s “b4stage4” campaign urging greater support for the prevention and treatment of mental illness.
15. Through the Advocacy Committee, the BCRTA offered grants of $300 each to branches who wished to organize pre-provincial election activities in their areas.
16. The Excellence in Public Education Committee has researched the area of the inequity public versus private school funding. In terms of this inequitable funding formula, President Patricia Clough commissioned a cartoon by BC cartoonist Bob Krieger. The Committee has again awarded monetary prizes to schools around the province who have ongoing programs that bring together students with seniors in their community. The Royal Canadian Legion is a sponsor of one of these “Golden Star” Awards.
17. The Membership Committee continues to grow the BCRTA Members’ Advantage program. The addition of Endless Savings and More, Merit Travel and Hearing Canada to existing programs has broadened the range of our offerings.
18. The Pensions and Retirement Committee is seeing an increased demand around the province for its workshop offerings. New workshops have recently been developed.
19. President Patricia Clough addressed the Annual General Meeting of the BC Teachers’ Federation in March and received a standing ovation. Delegates to the meeting from the BCRTA took part in the Pensions section of the agenda and had a vote on the resolutions presented.
20. The BC Teachers’ Pension Plan has switched extended health coverage providers from Blue Cross to Green Shield. The BC Teachers’ Pension fund is currently 102% funded.
21. The BCRTA maintains its visibility in branches by having board representatives (one or more of the President, the Pensions and Benefits Committee Chair and a representative from Johnson Inc.) present at branch meetings.
22. Board members have hosted seven Zone meetings with local Presidents and representatives around the province in order to hear branch concerns and address issues that affect us as an association.

Steve Bailey,

BCRTA ACER-CART Representative