

**BRITISH COLUMBIA RETIRED TEACHERS’ ASSOCIATION**

**MEMBER REPORT**

**2019**

**Major concerns:**

**Federal level:**

1. Opposition to Bill C-27
2. Protection of retirement income security
3. Support for a universal, single-payer National Pharmacare Plan

**Provincial level:**

1. Privatization of medical service and the danger of the Dr. Day court case
2. Implementation of the Ombudsperson’s report on BC Seniors in Care

**We set the following priorities for 2018 – 2019 fiscal year**:

1. Increase and maintain membership by adding services and improving the member experience;
2. Develop a unified communications strategy that includes print, web and social media;
3. Control and manage BCRTA insurance plans;
4. Enhance and implement internal processes including committee structures; and
5. Increase staff including an Executive Director
6. The goals and priorities for 2018-19 have been mostly inward-facing. The Board in 2017-18 realized that the IT infrastructure and internal processes required a considerable amount of attention during this year.

**Main activities this year**:

1. In 2017 the BCRTA initiated a campaign to increase membership by providing free membership for the first year. The success of free first-year membership encouraged us to offer the same in 2018 -19.
2. An Executive Director was hired, and the office is being renovated to accommodate the additional staff member. The Board of Directors continue to work on the roles and responsibilities of current staff.
3. Our two pension workshops, “There is More to it Than Money” and “Making Sense of Your CPP, OAS and Group Benefits”, are offered to active teachers throughout the province. The greatest demand by prospective BCRTA members is for the CPP, OAS, and Group Benefits workshop. More than 20 workshops were offered around the province. The workshops offer us a way to showcase the health benefit options available to potential members on retirement from teaching.
4. We sent delegates to the National Pensioners Federation conference in Saskatchewan. BCRTA continues to support that national organization financially.
5. Pension income security has been an ongoing concern for the BCRTA. Opposition to Bill C-27, which allows the surrender of guaranteed benefits for contingent benefits, has been a focus of BCRTA advocacy. A written petition was formulated and BCRTA’s 50 branches were encouraged to contact their local MPs and request that each of the 40 MPs in our province present the petition in the House of Commons. To date 15 peti-tions have been read in the house, 10 have been promised to be read, and about 10 are still in the signature collection stage. Our wish is to have at least 30 petitions read into the House of Commons record. We have had support from both the NDP and Conservatives in presenting the petitions to the House. No Liberal MPs have agreed to read the petition.
6. The BCRTA is a participatory member of First Call, the BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition of BC, dedicated to eliminating poverty among children and their families in BC. (BC has the highest child poverty rate in Canada). First Call initiated a letter to the BC Minister of Labour regarding BC child labour standards, which are the lowest in North America. The BCRTA supported the initiative by joining other organizations in demanding changes to those standards
7. BCRTA members engaged in the retirement income security e-petition initiated by Gerry Tiede, our president and ACER-CART’s Pension and Retirement Income Committee Chair. The petition was communicated to members through the branches. Twenty-one hundred plus BC signatures are shown to be endorsing the e-petition as of April 2, 2019.
8. The R.R. Smith Memorial Fund Foundation is a charitable organization associated with the BCRTA. Members of the BCRTA may belong to this organization, which has a separate a Board of Directors and uses BCRTA events to raise funds for distribution to education related endeavors. This year R.R. Smith distributed $35,000 to 25 different causes.

**Relationships with our active colleagues**.

1. We continue to enjoy good relations with our active teacher colleagues. The BC Teachers’ Federation (BCTF) provides subsidized accommodation for our offices in their building, making it easy for us to continue our close relationship.
2. The BCRTA President is invited to address the BCTF Annual General Meeting. As well, 26 BCRTA delegates are invited to participate in AGM debate and to cast 208 votes on behalf of retired teachers on pension issues that arise.
3. The meeting this year reviewed two motions that encouraged the restoration of subsi-dized premiums for health care benefit for retirees. At the BCTF AGM the active and retired delegates agreed to encourage the BCTF to explore ways to subsidize the health care benefits of retirees and report back to the BCTF by winter 2020. [The BC Teachers’ Pension Plan from 1996 to about 2006 had subsidized the retiree premiums for Extended Health Care (EHC) and Dental Plans. The subsidy was terminated be-cause the cost of the subsidy was paid from the Employer contribution to the Inflation Adjustment Account (IAA). This resulted in a significant reduction on the contributions that were eventually entering the IAA and threatened the sustainability of future index-ing.]

Indexing for the retirees in January of 2019 was 2.2%. After granted, the indexing be-comes part of the basic pension guarantee. Each year the Teachers’ Pension Board of Trustees determines if full indexing can be granted from the IAA and if the IAA will sus-tain indexing in the future. BCRTA members in the past have taken the position that full indexing (Canadian CPI) is more important than subsidized extended health care pre-miums. For 2019 the indexing for an average pension is about equal to the annual premium for EHC.

1. The BCRTA is a participant organization in the Teachers’ Pension Plan Advisory Committee (TPPAC). BCRTA has two representatives on TPPAC, joining other repre-sentatives of the BCTF, the BC School Superintendents Association (BCSSA), and the BC Principals and Vice-Principals Association (BCPVPA). All five organizations agree that TPPAC is a good means by which to provide advice and feedback to the BCTF-appointed pension plan trustees. As well, the five organizations work together to up-date and maintain consistent pension policy -- the Common Pension Policy. A nomi-nated BCRTA member and a nominated BCPVPA or BCSSA member are appointed by the BCTF to the Teachers’ Pension Board of Trustees.
2. Some of the BCRTA insurance plans would be beneficial and attractive to active BCTF members. The BCRTA Membership Committee is examining the technical details which would allow active BCTF members to participate in the insurance plans.

**Other Services to our Members.**

1. Following each Board meeting, we provide branch presidents, committee members and all members for whom we have e-mail addresses, with Connections, a written up-date of the main issues addressed at the Board meeting as well as other timely infor-mation on the issues faced by seniors in our province.
2. After each Board meeting, directors communicate directly with the presidents of branches assigned to them in various zones. Zone meetings in our seven regions are held twice a year, once in the spring and again at the AGM, giving branch presidents and other representatives an opportunity to share both successful practices and chal-lenges.
3. We are actively developing Social Media exposure; and our website has been revised to allow branches to easily set up branch websites on our platform.
4. The Excellence in Education Committee, on behalf of the BCRTA, presented six Gold-en Star Awards established to recognize and reward programs featuring intergenera-tional contact between seniors and students in communities throughout BC.
5. We gave grants to Branches who were active in the November 2018 election of Boards of Education in the 60 school districts.
6. We give annual grants to branches who apply for them to support the preservation of educational heritage.
7. Branches often hold meetings in rented facilities. BCRTA has purchased liability insur-ance to insure all Branches rented facilities for liability risks during the meetings.
8. PostScript is the quarterly magazine distributed to members. BCRTA thanks you, our kindred ACER-CART Members, for the inspiration of your informative publications; and invites you to consider using PostScript articles. We would be happy to connect you with PostScript writers to confirm permission to use their pieces.

**Resolutions to ACER-CART AGM**

1. **Motion: That ACER-CART raise the awareness among Members of the efforts by provin-cial governments to privatize health care services in violation of the Canada Health Act.**

**Rationale:** There is little doubt 2019 will be an important year in the fight to protect public health care. With the Doug Ford government in Ontario, the Brian Day Cambie Surgical Centre trial in BC and a federal election in the fall, we public health care advocates have our work cut out for us. The Cambie trial continues to drag on showing us we cannot turn a blind eye to the expansion of private for-profit facilities and a ‘second tier’ of health care. In 2012 when an audit was finally done on the Dr. Brian Day Cambie Surgical Centre it was found that more than 40% of Cambie procedures violated BC law by charging pa-tients directly for service already covered AND being paid for by the provincial govern-ment. These charges amounted to nearly $500,000 in public funds in just a 30-day period. The effort of ACER-CART is needed to keep fighting this two-tier system and counteract the efforts of provincial governments like Doug Ford’s and individuals like Dr. Brian Day who want to pave the way to for-profit health services.

1. **Motion: That ACER-CART join other national seniors’ organizations in urging the federal government to intervene in the practice of kickbacks to pharmacists by pharmaceutical companies.**

**Rationale:** The National Pensioners Federation has recently written to the Minster of Health expressing concern about these kickbacks exposed by CBC Fifth Estate investiga-tion. In Ontario COSTCO was fined $7.25 million for demanding rebates for 29 Ontario Pharmacies. We know that more than 10% of Canadians cannot afford to buy the pre-scription drugs they need to keep well. By demanding and accepting kickbacks that in-crease the cost of drugs, pharmacists as well as pharmaceutical corporations contribute to ill-health and cost of health care in general.

1. **Motion: That ACER-CART continue to work toward a universal single payer National Pharmacare plan**.

**Rationale:** Canadians overwhelmingly support this issue. The 2019 Federal Budget is a start but it will take constant pressure on this and future governments to fully implement a national, universal, single payer plan. The period prior to the upcoming election is an ap-propriate time to have ACER-CART members inform candidates of our stand on this issue and to question candidates on their position.

**Respectfully submitted,**

**Dale Lauber, BCRTA Director**

**ADDENDUM**

**It’s Our Branches, People!**

**BCRTA Activity on the Bill C-27 Written Petition Campaign**

**May 3, 2019**

The BCRTA paper petition campaign opposing Bill C-27 has been most successful. As with most effective advocacy activities, it was the work of the branches that carried the campaign.

Thirty-six of BCRTA’s fifty branches have now completed fifty written petitions which have been forwarded to BC Members of Parliament for presentation to the House of Commons.

Thirty-two branches have had thirty-five petitions read out by an MP. Many branches had collected more than fifty signatures, sometimes more than a hundred and therefore their MP could elect to rise in the House to present their petition again for every twenty-five signatures. The local Langley MP, for example, chose to read the Langley Branch petition twice because it was endorsed by more than fifty signatures.

In addition, seven branches have submitted sixteen more petitions to their local MPs, and these are awaiting presentation to the House of Commons. We continue to monitor the Bill C-27 Open Parliament website to find evidence of action by those MPs.

Sometimes when branches approached their MPs, they received no response, or even a refusal to present the petition. In those cases, the branches had to send their petition(s) to another MP -- to MP Peter Julian or to MP Jenny Kwan -- who graciously agreed to ensure their presentation to the House.

Congratulations, BCRTA branches, on this amazing work! You rock!

Abbotsford – petition had to be sent to MP Julian; was read by him on May 1, 2019\*

Alberni - read by local MP Johns

Bulkley Valley - read by local MP Cullen

Campbell River - read by local MP Blaney

Cariboo-Chilcotin - read by local MP Doherty

Central Okanagan (2 MPs) – one petition was read by local MP Albas; the second petition was sent to local MP Fuhr and is *waiting to be read*

Chilliwack - sent to MP Strahl and is *waiting to be read*

Comox Valley - read by local MP Blaney

Coquitlam (2 MPs) - the first petition was read by local MP Donnelly in April 2018; the second had to be sent to MP Julian and was read by him on May 1, 2019

Cowichan Valley - read by local MP MacGregor

Cranbrook - read by local MP Stetski

Delta – had to be sent to MP Julian and was read by him on May 1, 2019

Kitimat - read by local MP Cullen

Kootenay/Columbia - read by local MP Cannings

Kootenay Lake West - read by local MP Stetski

Langley (2 MPs) – one petition read twice by local MP Warawa because the petition had more than 25 signatures, so two petitions

New Westminster – read by local MP Julian, along with compliments to all BCRTA members

Nicola Valley - read by local MP Albas

North Coast - read by local MP Cullen

North Shore (2 MPs) – a petition sent to MP Wilkinson and another to MP Goldsmith-Jones, both *waiting to be read*

Parksville-Qualicum Beach - read by local MP Johns

Peace River North – read by local MP Zimmer

Peace River South – read by local MP Zimmer

Prince George (2 MPs) - one petition read by local MP Doherty

Prince Rupert - read by local MP Cullen

Quesnel - read by local MP Doherty

Richmond (2 MPs) – one petition sent to MP Wong and *waiting for certification and reading*

Ridge Meadows - had to be sent to MP Julian and was read by him on May 1, 2019

Sea-to-Sky - had to be sent to MP Julian and was read by him on May 1, 2019

South Okanagan (2 MPs) – petitions read by local MP Cannings and by local MP Albas

Shuswap & District - sent to MP Arnold and *waiting to be read*

Surrey (5 MPs) – petitions sent to MP Aldag, MP Dhaliwal, MP Hardie, MP Hogg, and MP Sarai and *waiting for agreement* *to be read*

Vancouver (6 MPs) – local MP Davies read one petition; MP Kwan has agreed to read her petition as well as petitions for MPs who have refused: MP Murray, MP Wilson-Raybould, MP Fry, and MP Sajjan, *waiting to be read*

Vancouver Island North - read by local MP Blaney

Vernon - had to be sent to MP Julian and was read by him on May 1, 2019

Wine Country – read by local MP Cannings

\*On May 1, 2019 MP Benson (Saskatoon) rose in the House with MP Julian to present BCRTA petitions.

Respectfully submitted,

Dale Lauber,

BCRTA Representative to ACER-CART