



# The Steller's Quill

BCGREA New Westminster & District Branch  
800

“Spring 2021” Newsletter

**Contact info:**

Branch Chair: **Bonnie Billington** 604-761-5768

Membership Chair: **Rita Pollock** 604-939-8166

Newsletter: [bcgrea800news@yahoo.ca](mailto:bcgrea800news@yahoo.ca)

Editor: **Andy McColl** 604-421-1546



## 2021 Membership Dues Reminder

**Membership dues of \$20 are payable each year by January 2<sup>nd</sup> (Dues are in arrears after March 15<sup>th</sup>)** For members not on automatic deduction from their February pension, your cheque should be made payable to BCGREA and mailed to the Membership Secretary for the Branch: **Rita Pollock**, 302-1110 Howie Ave, Coquitlam, BC, V3J 1V1

## Welcome New Members:

**Patrick DeHaan, Edith Donna MacLean, George Paul Maksym,  
Sharon Margaret Maksym, Catherine Anne Morton, Maria Parrotta, David Stone**

## Virtual Branch Meetings

**2021 General meeting dates via Zoom until further notice:**

January 19; February 16, March 16, April 20, May 18, June 15 (AGM).

## Zoom Meeting Links:

**\*Note: meeting ID & codes are the same for electronic devices and telephone call-in**

**Electronic Devices:** Click on

<https://us04web.zoom.us/j/74691034411?pwd=TFBOYIZKUS9uajhZYnB5c3FJYUphdz09>

**Phone-In: 778-907-2071**

Meeting ID: 746 9103 4411 Press #

Participant ID: Press #

Passcode: 172722

## Report from the Chair

Once again I wish to thank the Branch 800 Executive for their support and contributions throughout the year. All board members agreed to stand again for 2020/2021.

At the Branch 800 AGM via Zoom on October 20, the following executive members were elected by acclamation: Chair- **Bonnie Billington**; 1<sup>st</sup> Vice Chair - **Navin Goburdhun**; 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice Chair - **Donna Main**; Membership Secretary - **Rita Pollock**; Treasurer - **Alfred Malcolm**, and Telephone Convener - **Sheila Halvorson** and **Jean Ing** – **Goodwill Convener** along with six **Directors: Verna Cadwallader, Dennis Ishikawa, Andy McColl, Marilyn Melville, Kathy Nelson** and **Anna Tremere**. The position of Secretary remains vacant. **Myrna Cresswell** remains active as past Chair.

### Announcements:

**Branch 800 AGM is scheduled for Tuesday June 15, 2021 at 1:00 pm via Zoom.**

#### HELP WANTED – Call for Nominations

Under the Branch 800 regulations, elections are held at the AGM in June of each year to fill the Executive board positions as follows:

**Chairperson**

**1<sup>st</sup> Vice Chairperson**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Vice Chairperson**

**Secretary**

**Treasurer**

**Membership Chairperson**

**Telephone Convener**

**Goodwill Convener**

**Six Directors**

The regulations state: "Nominees must be nominated by a member in good standing and will provide written consent to stand for office and may submit background information along with their names."

It is important that we have both some continuity of service on the board and also new people joining the branch executive to provide new ideas and energy to our organization. A number of branches have closed because new people have not volunteered to serve on the executive and long-term board members have refused to take on the tasks until death!

Please consider volunteering to serve or nominate a member to serve on the branch executive. Anyone interested in possibly serving on the board, please contact **Myrna Cresswell** 604-209-0492 Email: [myrna818@gmail.com](mailto:myrna818@gmail.com)

**Pharmacare Bill C-213: Second session and first parliamentary vote will take place in the House of Commons on Feb 24, 2021.** To enact the long awaited **Canada Pharmacare Act**, this Bill must pass before moving to committee and further representation for presentations. **Please keep the momentum going on Universal Public Pharmacare by taking action ASAP to support BillC-213. For more information and link to the petition:** <https://www.peterjulian.ca/pharmacare>

**BC Economic Recovery Benefit:** Provincial BCREA encourages members to apply for this one time tax free benefit to those who qualify. Deadline for application is June 30, 2021.

Online link: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/economic-recovery/recovery-benefit>

Apply by phone: **1-833-882-0020**

**Highlights from BC's Public Service Pension Board of Trustees 2020 valuation shows a funding ratio of 109.6 per cent;** indicating the plan continues to be well funded. The annual inflation adjustment account for retired member pensions remains sustainable within the guidelines of the Canadian consumer price index. Updates to the Joint Trust Agreement with the provincial government and the BC Government and Services Employee's Union will be provided following any changes to the guidelines on how to best use the surplus. However, the optional group health benefits program for retired members has a different funding model that is not related to the valuation results. For the full report, visit [pspp.pensionsbc.ca/valuation-report](https://pspp.pensionsbc.ca/valuation-report).

**DABC** (Disability Alliance BC) Fall/Winter edition of *transition magazine* is available online featuring 'The Power of Communication': [disabilityalliancebc.org](https://disabilityalliancebc.org) see Publications 2020.

**The BC Health Coalition** held two webinars Nov 24 & Dec 1, 2020 on *Committing to Senior's Care* highlighting how many private *for-profit* facilities have essentially failed to provide senior's with adequate safe quality care. Reduced levels of staffing, underpaid workers, high turnover rates and contracting out are but a few outcomes of a system that puts corporate profits first rather than meeting the needs of seniors in care. Health Coalitions across the country are calling for an increase in federal funding and accountability to ensure that money goes to public health care, including the repatriation of home support. For more on these recommendations, visit [www.bchealthcoalition.ca](https://www.bchealthcoalition.ca)

**COSCO's 70th Anniversary Celebration Webinar** was held on November 13, 2020. Branch 800 is one of 65 member organizations that have benefited from the assistance of COSCO's dedicated volunteers, whether it be speakers at our meetings; workshops (3,000 over the years) such as "Staying on the Road" or lobbying for policies and laws to improve the health of all. Five people were recognized for their outstanding contributions, including our own former member and past president of COSCO, **Lorraine Logan** who passed away in 2018. A full video copy of this webinar including tributes by five keynote speakers is available on COSCO's Facebook. The 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary booklet has been printed and is also available online.

A sad post script to the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration: Master of Ceremonies **Pat Brady** passed away suddenly on Nov 21, 2020. Among his many achievements, Pat was a pillar of the COSCO organization, instrumental in organizing numerous successful conferences and events. A letter of condolence has been sent to the COSCO executive on behalf of Branch 800.

**Rent Bank** Info - provided by Branch 800 Member Cheryl Hewitt:

This is a short-term or temporary homelessness prevention tool that helps to provide housing stability for low - to moderate-income renters who are unable to pay rent or utilities due episodes or emergencies that compromise their ability to pay.

Functions:

- A rent bank provides financial assistance in the form of a repayable loan to households at risk of eviction for reasons such as non-payment of rent or utilities. Rent banks can also aid with individuals by providing a damage deposit to make the move.
- Rent banks complement these loans with access to other information and supports – including financial advice, mediations between renters and landlords, or access to other supports and services - to help stabilize their housing in the future.

Three rent banks operate in our BCGREA area:

**New Westminster – co-ordinated by the Purpose Society.** Call (604) 526-2522 for information or check the website at <https://purposesociety.org/events/categories/rent-bank/new-westminster-rent-bank/>

**Burnaby – co-ordinated by the Purpose Society.** Call (604) 526-2522 for information or check the website at <https://purposesociety.org/events/categories/rent-bank/burnaby-rent-bank/>.

**Tri-Cities – co-ordinated by the SHARE Society.** Contact SHARE at [esther.uwimana@sharesociety.ca](mailto:esther.uwimana@sharesociety.ca) or (604) 529-5146 for information or check their website at <https://sharesociety.ca/tri-cities-share-rent-bank>.

The BC Rent Bank website lists contact information for rent banks throughout BC at <https://bcrentbank.ca/>.

### Branch News

If there is any upside to the new way of conducting our meetings, it is that members who did not attend in person are tuning in virtually on Zoom – some for the first time. Having said that, our recent virtual General Meeting on January 19, 2021 did not attract enough members for a quorum so we could not vote on the business items at hand. ***Hopefully more members will join the next meeting on Tuesday Feb 16, 2021 at 1:00 pm. Thank you to Myrna Cresswell for moderating the meetings.***

We strive to keep in touch with those who wish to receive monthly phone calls, and **we thank our dedicated volunteers** who provide an important connection to members, especially during this long pandemic. However due to a dwindling number of phoners, **we are currently revising the phone lists; asking members who have email if they wish switch over or continue receiving monthly calls. Please contact your phone volunteer with your preference if this applies to you.** Many members are already on email so nothing will change for them.

We encourage members with electronic devices to join the **Branch 800 Facebook Page**. This is a great way to share announcements, access up and coming events and connect with other members, especially now that we are unable to meet in person. This page has a high security setting, and you must be invited in. To join, please contact **Donna Dunedin Main** via email @ [donnaemain@gmail.com](mailto:donnaemain@gmail.com)

### Fraud Alert:

Online security is a never-ending issue as fraudsters are relentless in their efforts to extract personal / financial information and ultimately our cash; especially over the holiday season. Fake emails, internet websites and helpline numbers abound for familiar companies such as Amazon, PayPal and Microsoft to name a few. Example: One of our members got an email from "Amazon" advising of an attempted unauthorized access to her account. Since she had been using Amazon frequently for gift purchases, this seemed plausible so she clicked on the link. Then she googled Amazon Customer Service & placed a call to a number from the Internet for

advice. An "Amazon customer executive" asked for her name, address and account number, then told her the account had apparently been hacked but he could fix the problem, offering a "deal because you're a senior" to purchase online security for \$250 American. At this point she became suspicious, ended the call and immediately contacted a reliable source for help. Recently circulating: a fake email from "Microsoft" (with a perfect replica of their logo) advises they are closing all old versions of Mailbox, offering a *New Version* by clicking on the link to update now "or your mailbox will disable within 24 hours."

#### **Reminders:**

- Send or move suspicious email to spam or junk folder. If you suspect unauthorized access to your computer; immediately push the power off switch & hold for 6 seconds.
- Always use BCC (Blind Carbon Copy) when sending an email to more than one person. Multiple contacts on one email attracts "Internet crawlers."
- Check the content of your email address from the sender as well as the sender's email address following the @. Fake example: [Canada Post<contact@buybeautyblogllc.com](mailto:Canada Post<contact@buybeautyblogllc.com)
- Go directly to your own account / previous transaction for authentic customer service contact information.
- "Outlook" users please search Google under *outlook.com block senders* for instructions.

#### **Fun and Games by Andy McColl**

Many years ago I worked on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor of a building in one of the provincial institutions. The 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> floor were psychiatric wards. The ground floor below us was the Occupational Therapy department. The OT had a door which allowed access to a small landscaped area at the rear of the building. Adjacent to this door was a small white painted metal garden shed. One of my colleagues discovered that a 3oz dixie cup, filled with water, when dropped on the shed roof made a sound that had to be heard to be believed.

This provided some lighthearted amusement to relieve boredom on night shift. Around 12:30 – 1:00 am one of these missiles would be dropped from a window directly above the shed. Walking back to the nursing office we would hear West 3's office phone ringing, followed by a minute or two of mumbled conversation. The call would end and our phone would ring. This would be West 2, "Hey did you guys hear anything like a gunshot a few minutes ago?" I would vary my reply; sometimes "No, We didn't hear anything like that up here"; or, "We figured it was just a car backfiring on the highway'.

Another stunt was a variation (or, in this age of coronavirus, 'variant' ?) of something as 'tweenagers' I and my cronies used to torment our neighbours with in the dark fall and winter nights back in Scotland (We were bad wee b\*gg\*rs. All the neighbours said so.). An eraser would be tied on a length of black thread, lowered out our office window until level with West 3's window, and then swung out and in until it was rapping against the glass. There was one night we did it intermittently over 40/45 minutes. A little disconcerting when you are three floors up. Twice in that time the poor West 3 staff turned on their lights and went round their dayroom, gingerly opening their drapes to see if some intruder was lurking in the window recesses.

I don't want to create the impression that all I did was goof off at work. I goofed off on my free time too. 'The Grade 7 Grad Party of 1971' comes to mind. We arrived in BC in the summer of 1968 and moved into a rental townhouse development on the south side of Lougheed Hwy across from Valley Fair shopping centre in Maple Ridge. The 3 bedroom units were just being

completed and over the summer months the townhouses filled up with families with kids much the same ages as our own. The kids attended Golden Ears Elementary. Nadine, our eldest, was one of a group of 5 or 6 girls who were pals through grades 5, 6 and 7. Nadine asked us if she could hold a 'grad party' for completing grade 7. We settled on an evening when Lynne and I would both be home. We sprung for the food and drink – potato chips, crackers and Lynne baked a Duncan Hines (or maybe Betty Crocker) cakemix, and Pop Shoppe and Koolaid. (What can I say? That generous philanthropist, WAC Bennett, was my boss at the time), and the kids would look after their own entertainment. With two responsible adults on hand, the kids would be fine. Right?

With our own three there were about a dozen kids attending the party, some from the townhouses and the rest from north of the Loughheed. Everything went fine and later in the evening the kids closed the living room drapes, set a lit candle on the floor and put out the light. They were going to hold a seance. This was too much to resist. I tipped Lynne the wink and went upstairs to the master bedroom which had a balcony directly over the living room patio. I pulled a reel of thread and a handful of safety pins out of the sewing basket and began tying the pins on the thread. I could hear muted voices down below but couldn't hear what was being said. I learned later that the seance had become more focused during my absence. A classmate had died in a car accident the previous winter and the kids were trying to make contact with that child. It took some trial and error until I had enough weight to swing the pins far enough under the balcony to hit the patio window. One of the girls had just intoned "If you can hear us, give us a sign". That was when the pins hit the glass.

Immediately there was a chorus of yelps and squeals from downstairs, followed by the hammering of eleven pairs of feet in frantic motion. The twelfth pair had dived with their owner under a couch. When the kids had surged to their feet the draft had put out the candle and the kids were colliding with the walls and each other in the dark. I got downstairs just as Lynne got the light on. She was looking at me with a chagrined look on her face, surrounded by a mob of ashen faced, hyperventilating kids. I owned up to giving them the scare, showed them the thread and safety pins and explained this was based on a game I and my pals would play on dark nights when we were their age. To judge from the looks on their faces none of them figured I had grown up any in the time since. Of course, that brought the party to an end. We coaxed the caretaker's son out from under the couch and I had to escort him home. The caretakers' townhouse was three doors away. After that we loaded a bunch of kids into the Bel Air and I did a 'milk run', dropping them off at the sidewalks in front of their homes. They were a pretty subdued bunch. But kids are resilient; they were a bit leery getting out of the car but as soon as their feet touched the sidewalk the spring was back in their step and they were practicably airborne going up the paths to their doors.

### **In Memoriam**

We regret to announce the passing of the following members since the last newsletter:

**Anna Marie Beveridge, Rene Joseph Aristide Gobillot, Margaret N Neville  
Roy Glespie Staples, Sheila Marsha Veller**

The Executive and members of the BCGREA, New Westminster & District Branch 800  
express sincere condolences to these families and their friends.