

BCGREA Delegates' Workshop: Proceedings

April 25-26, 2023

Tsawwassen, BC

Prepared for: Table Officers and Delegates of the BCGREA
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Background

On April 25-26, 2023, the British Columbia Government Retired Employees Association ("BCGREA", "Association") held a Delegates' Workshop for the purpose of reaching consensus on six main topics, and to identify any other topics that would arise as a result of discussion of these six topics.

The six main topics were broadly defined as:

1. Charitable Donations
2. Delegate Formula and Voting
3. Officers and Trustee Election / Appointment and Terms
4. Branch Dissolution
5. Plain Language in Documents
6. Active, Honoured, Life, and Associate Memberships

An Extraordinary General Meeting ("EGM") and a Directors' meeting were held in the morning prior to the commencement of the Workshop.

Relevant to Topic 1, at the EGM it was moved, and passed that the BCGREA be registered under the *Societies Act* as a Member-Funded Society.

Also relevant to Topic 1, at the EGM the Constitution Purpose statement of the Association was discussed. It was moved and passed that the Constitution Purpose statement be changed to:

- a) To promote and safeguard the interests and welfare of its members;
- b) To promote the interests of seniors as defined by the Seniors Advocate Act (SBC2013 c. 15);
- c) To advocate protection and enhancement of our Public Service Pension Plan and other related pension benefits for the benefit of current and future retirees;
- d) To communicate to members on the activities of the Association and matters of common interest;
- e) To be non-partisan.

The allotted time was sufficient for all topics to be discussed, and Delegates reached--or moved towards--consensus for all topics. A “Parking Lot” for additional topics identified in the workshop was created, and is included in this document under the heading “Additional Topics Identified in the Workshop”. The following summarizes the discussions of the topics as outlined above.

Topic 1: CHARITABLE DONATIONS

In March 2023, Delegates were provided a written opinion from Michael Miller, legal counsel for BCGREA, regarding the benefits and appropriateness of the Association being a Member-Funded Society.

At the Delegates’ Workshop, Mr. Miller spoke about the use of Branch and Provincial-level funds in light of the decisions at the morning’s EGM that:

- a) Rendered the Association a Member-Funded Society, and
- b) Redefined the Constitution purpose statement.

Mr. Miller advised that though a Branch may hold funds in a Branch account, those funds in actuality belong to the Association, and do not belong to the Branch itself.

Regarding Branch or Provincial-level spending of funds, there should be an over-riding fact-based test that demonstrates that any expenditure of funds at the Branch or Provincial level should be directly relatable to the activities of the Branch; and those activities should in turn be directly relatable to the purpose statement of the Association’s Constitution. Mr. Miller stated that the BCGREA’s “Member-Funded Society” status would be at risk if money is spent inappropriately, i.e., on a donation or activity that is not consistent with its Member-Funded Society status and/or is not consistent with its stated constitutional purpose.

Delegates wondered whether donations collected at the Branch level could in turn be forwarded to various charitable causes. Mr. Miller opined that providing the forwarded donations were not comprised of any funds belonging to the Branch, that a Branch could forward donations to a cause. For example, some Branches collect donations for food banks; because the donations are not sourced from the Branches’ funds, then that would be a defensible action for Branches to take. One Branch queried the appropriateness of it matching donations for certain Christmas events, to which Mr. Miller opined that was something that would likely be found to be acceptable with Revenue Canada and would not likely put the Association’s Member-Funded Society status at risk.

Guidelines for the use of BCGREA funds:

1. Association funds should be spent on activities in keeping with the Constitution purpose statement, i.e., to seniors' focused programs and non-partisan.
2. Association funds should not be used to make donations. However, Branches may collect donations and forward them to charities or causes.
3. Contracts for services are acceptable if the contract provides for a support service (as opposed to a contribution to their cause) for Branch or Association members and is in keeping with BCGREA's Constitution purpose statement.
4. Activities with religious groups are acceptable, providing there is an ability for all to fully participate, e.g., Jewish Senior Services.

OUTCOME: There was consensus amongst the Delegates to accept and operate with Mr. Miller's proffered guidelines, rather than form a committee and report back at the Fall Annual General Meeting ("AGM").

ACTION: The President will ask the Secretary to electronically distribute this report to all Delegates for their reference.

Topic 2: DELEGATE FORMULA AND VOTING

Al Barclay, Membership Secretary, spoke to this topic.

Mr. Barclay suggested that the current Delegate formula within the Bylaws, and Policies & Procedures--drafted decades ago--be updated. With the 2022 membership drive resulting in a membership increase of 50%, he wondered if better representation by branch population was possible. For example, Victoria Branch, 1200, garnered 800 new members but no new Delegates were appointed because the current Delegate formula is capped after any Branch membership exceeds 1500 Members.

Possibilities and questions for changes to the Delegate formula included:

- a) Every Branch, regardless of size, being represented by 2 Delegates.
- b) Some of the larger Branches dividing into smaller branches based on geographic area.
- c) If Delegate number increases significantly, would that pose a logistical and financial problem for EGM's and AGM's?

- d) Can the Association incorporate better use of technology to hold Zoom (or equivalent) meetings and succeed with voting and good discussions? [Note: A provision for the option of Zoom meetings is noted in this document under the heading “Additional Topics Identified in the Workshop”.]

Balancing Members’ and Branches’ interests with an altered delegation formula was discussed at length without reaching consensus.

Voting was also discussed. Delegates discussed the possibilities of:

- a) Remaining with the current model where only Delegates are allowed to vote;
- b) Providing for the full Membership to have voting rights at AGMs.

OUTCOME: With no consensus reached after lengthy discussion and many Delegates speaking to the subject, Mr. Barclay suggested a committee be struck to address Delegate Formula and Voting, and having this newly-formed Committee report its progress at the Fall 2023 AGM. Volunteers for the Delegate Formula and Voting Committee include: Wilf Brodrick (Branch 2100), Pat Dickson (Branch 2400), Ron Kerr (Branch 300), Dan Anderson (Branch 2300), Jerry Gosling (Branch 100), Brian Taylor (Branch 2000), John MacLucas (Branch 2500), Karen Heimlick (Branch 1200), and Ken Pendergast (Branch 1600). Anyone else wanting to be involved with this committee may contact Mr. Barclay directly. In addition, Mr. Barclay suggested, and all present agreed, that the Membership at large be canvassed to determine if anyone else is interested in participating in the Committee.

ACTION: Membership should be canvassed to determine if there are any other Members interested in contributing to the Delegate Formula and Voting Committee. The Committee will make recommendations at the AGM as and when appropriate. Because of a technical problem, Mr. Barclay was unable to display a spreadsheet that he had created to show some options for Delegate formulation. He will share this spreadsheet with the Committee.

Topic 3: OFFICERS AND TRUSTEE ELECTION / APPOINTMENT AND TERMS

Delegates discussed this topic based on the submissions received.

Points raised, comments made, and questions asked include:

- a) This organization is unique in the province in that the Association can appoint its own Trustee.

- b) Rather than by appointment, many agreed it would be appropriate for an association the size of BCGREA (i.e., 11,000+ members) to elect a Trustee.
- c) BCGREA Bylaws do not codify the election of a Trustee. If the Trustee were elected, would the Nominee be a Delegate or from the general Membership?
- d) If the Trustee and other Officers were elected from the general Membership, the election process would need a lot of preparation, including nomination forms and biographies, and would need to be clarified long before the AGM.
- e) The Membership Secretary is not recognized as a Table Officer in the Bylaws. This should be addressed. [NOTE: The Membership Secretary's Officer status is addressed under the heading "Additional Topics Identified in the Workshop"].
- f) The elections at the AGM this fall will be status quo, because any changes in the election process would need to be approved at the AGM before they could take effect.
- g) With regard to the Trustee having been a union member vs. management or union-exempt, the role for the Trustee is the same, to provide for a secure pension for retirees, so any member should be entitled to run.
- h) Appointments for Table Officer positions should be for two years. A longer appointment is too onerous, too big a commitment, and too high an expectation.
- i) Appointment of a Trustee should be for the three years set by the Board of Trustees.
- j) Directors could be regional representatives of four or five regions.
- k) What happens if no one runs for an open Officer's position? Who appoints?

This topic is addressed in Bylaws (11, 30, and 31) and Policies and Procedures (Meetings, Delegate Formula, 1.)

OUTCOME AND ACTION: While there was general agreement that it made good sense to elect three officers in alternating years, there was no consensus on details. Ken Pendergast, Past President, agreed to oversee a committee to be formed that would address this topic and report to the fall AGM, with possible proposed resolutions for amendments to the Bylaws and/or Policies & Procedures.

Topic 4: BRANCH DISSOLUTION

Al Barclay addressed what happens when a Branch is at risk of dissolution. In preparation for this topic, the Recruitment and Retention Committee wrote a framework to address such a possibility (Workshop Workbook, Appendix C "Resolution").

Essentially, if a Branch indicated it was at risk of dissolution, there would be an attempt to "resuscitate" the Branch. The Table Officers would become involved by assisting with a recovery or, in the event recovery is not possible, dissolution.

Bylaws 56, 58, 59, 60, and 61 are relevant to this topic. Related comments made by Delegates include:

- a) Bylaws 56 and 59 (both cite a 25-member minimum) may need to be reconsidered; there was general support for the notion that 25 members no longer seems a sufficient number to run a Branch.
- b) Bylaw 61 suggests that all books and assets of a closing Branch become the property of the Association. Because the assets already belong to the Association, is this needed?

Various Policies & Procedures refer to Branch dissolution. Related comments offered by the Delegates include:

- a) "The Association shall not be liable for any debts incurred by any Branch." Mr. Miller explained that a Branch Chair deemed to be acting with apparent authority can create a liability for the Association. Therefore, this Policy should be amended.
- b) "Fiscal year", Ms. Morrow suggested that the Association might wish to end its fiscal year with the calendar year. This is easily done, and would mean that Dues Check Off ("DCO") funds would be in the hands of the Branches/BCGREA sooner.
- c) Should dissolution be a matter addressed with Bylaws, or Policies & Procedures?

OUTCOME: A motion was made to accept the Resolution of the Recruitment and Retention Committee (Workbook, Appendix C). The vote passed the Resolution with no one opposed.

Relatedly, the topic of new Branches was addressed by Al Coccola, Chair, Branch 2700. Mr. Coccola talked about the processes and considerations for establishing his branch: the newest in the BCGREA. He said there was no process for bringing in a new branch and they "made the rules up as [they] went along with much effort and determination". With no guidelines in place, the process was "harder than it should have been".

Comments and questions regarding the creation of a new Branch were:

- a) It is important to involve the Table Officers, and requires funding from the Association.
- b) There needs to be more than 25 people to establish a Branch.
- c) Who decides on geographic boundaries of a new Branch?
- d) Members can join whatever Branch they prefer. Could there be a detrimental effect on nearby Branches if their members decide to move to the new Branch?

- e) How do you protect privacy of members? (In the case of Branch 2700, they used a list of postal codes for the geographic area they were considering. Al Coccola did not know who they were, nor could he phone anyone, because he couldn't access the private information.)

OUTCOME: Mr. Coccola agreed to document the process and problems he has experienced in creating a new Branch. He will work with the Recruitment and Retention Committee to make a framework for others considering forming a new Branch. No timeline was discussed, and "New Branches" will be added to "Additional Topics Identified in the Workshop".

Topic 5: PLAIN LANGUAGE IN DOCUMENTS

The Constitution and Bylaw Committee sought support for moving to a language format that used simpler language in Association resolutions and formal documents.

OUTCOME: After a brief discussion, it was moved, and passed that use of plain language be adopted by BCGREA.

ACTION: The Bylaws and Resolutions Committee (Constitution) was asked to provide an example of "old" sample of a Resolution, along with a "new" sample of a resolution be provided to the Directors.

Topic 6: ACTIVE, HONOURED, LIFE, AND ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIPS

Al Barclay, Membership Secretary, spoke about this topic, and described the four types of BCGREA Membership. He asked Delegates to note that Members who have been recognized for distinguished service are to be referred to as "Honoured", not "Honourable".

Mr. Barclay said that approximately 70 of 11000 BCGREA Members are Associate Members and that Associate Members are not permitted to hold office.

Points raised in the Delegates' discussion about Associate Members include:

- a) An Associate Member should not be treated as a second-class Member and these Members should be able to vote and hold office.
- b) An Associate Member should not be able to vote.
- c) Why do we need an Associate Member category? There are other ways for those members to get benefits, e.g., COSCO.

- d) Associate Member status was initially provided so those outside of the Public Service Pension Plan but receiving a pension from a plan administered by the BC Pension Corporation could access our affinity programs. Now that there are other public sector retiree associations, is this redundant?
- e) Associate Members cannot go on DCO. Is this a problem?
- f) Let's grandfather, or convert, the Associate Members and dissolve the Associate Member category.

OUTCOME: Mr. Barclay deemed that there was agreement to eliminate the Associate Member category and that Associate Members should be changed to Active Members. Once the new Bylaw is adopted, the BCGREA will not accept new members who receive their pension from other than the Public Service Pension Plan ("PSPP").

ACTION: This matter is referred to the Bylaws and Resolutions Committee (Constitution) because it is a bylaw and should be addressed at the next AGM.

Moving to another area of this topic, Mr. Barclay asked the Delegates to consider whether a surviving partner should continue as a Member, irrespective of whether they get a Survivor's pension. If so, a Bylaw would need to be made to provide for this.

Discussion of the appropriateness of the membership of a surviving partner not receiving a survivor's pension followed. Points raised included:

- a) We should recognize these Members as they have paid dues and may have been involved and contributing Members.
- b) New Members need DCO. Do we have to make exception to take cash for their fees because they are not DCO? Should they even have to pay dues?
- c) A Member's surviving partner will likely have a Survivor's Pension. Do we really need to put a microscope on this?
- d) We should have some way of honouring and recognizing people who have been partners of Active Members. Could we draft language that addresses the humanitarian aspects but preserves the nature of the organization?

OUTCOME: Consensus was that this matter should be reviewed by a working committee. As volunteers for this committee were not solicited during the Workshop, a call for volunteers to serve on this committee will be circulated to the Membership.

ACTION: The working committee will report back at the next AGM.

ADDITIONAL TOPICS IDENTIFIED IN THE WORKSHOP

1. Provision for Zoom and Hybrid Meetings in the Bylaws

During restrictive Covid-19 protocols, BCGREA could hold Zoom meetings. If the Association wants to continue to have Zoom meetings and Hybrid meetings (i.e., a meeting attended in person and electronically) for logistical or economic reasons, BCGREA should provide for the option to do so in Bylaws or Policies & Procedures.

2. Additional Roles for Officers

BCGREA assigns certain duties to Offices that are not reflected in the Policies & Procedures nor Bylaws. This needs attention. Examples include:

- a) The First Vice President being the Chair of the Bylaws and Resolutions Committee as well as the FOI privacy person.
- b) The Second Vice President has historically been the editor of The Pen.
- c) The Past President is Chair of the Elections Committee.

Offices should have a job description and note what the expectations (requirements?) are for these additional roles. One approach is to have these offices for oversight responsibility for an area but not necessarily be the chair of a particular committee or directly administer a service. The Membership at large should be canvassed to see if anyone wishes to become involved in these areas.

3. Office of Membership Secretary

The Office of Membership Secretary is not recognized as an officer in the Bylaws (27). This appears to be an oversight that should be remedied, as it was historically the practice (prior to the current Bylaw rewrite), and the Table Officers have operated on the assumption that the Membership Secretary is indeed a Table Officer.

OUTCOME and ACTION: After a brief discussion, it was moved and unanimously passed by Directors and Table Officers that a recommendation be made to the Bylaws and Resolutions Committee (Constitution) to make a Motion at the AGM that the Bylaws change to indicate that the Membership Secretary be deemed a Table Officer.

4. New Branches

As noted with Topic 5, a framework for new Branches should be prepared and made available for those wishing to establish a new Branch.

5. Review of Bylaws and Policies & Procedures

The Workshop topics discussions revealed that there was overlap of content in the Bylaws and Policies & Procedures and for certain matters, lack of content in either. It is recommended that these documents be reviewed and duplication be removed, or content added, as appropriate. This includes addressing grammatical errors and omissions and removing superfluous content from our current website, i.e., Robert's Rules of Order, and our Privacy policy. As well, the Bylaws need to be reviewed to see if they are contradictory to or do not address provisions in the *BC Societies Act*.



SUMMARY OF WORKSHOP OUTCOMES

WORKSHOP TOPICS		
<i>Item</i>	<i>Assigned to</i>	<i>Action</i>
Charitable Donations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guidelines for use of BCGREA funds be communicated to Delegates and Officers 	Johanna Morrow, Treasurer, and Finance Committee	Forward Workshop Proceedings, containing guidelines, to Membership at large
Delegate Formula and Voting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update delegate formula and Membership voting rights 	Al Barclay, Membership Secretary, to chair a new committee	Report to Fall AGM with progress report from the new committee
Officers and Trustee Election / Appointment and Terms <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review electoral process and position descriptions 	Ken Pendergast, Past President, to chair a new committee	Report to Fall AGM with progress report from the new committee
Branch Dissolution <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The process for a branch at risk of dissolution 	Recruitment and Retention Committee	Effect the Resolution protocol
Plain Language in Documents <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of simple language in documents 	Bylaws and Resolutions Committee (Constitution)	Provide Directors with a sample of an old resolution and a “new” resolution
Membership Types <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Associate Membership Surviving Partners 	Al Barclay, Membership Secretary, To chair a new committee (re Surviving Partners); Bylaws and Resolutions Committee (Constitution)	Report to Fall AGM with (a) Delegates’ decision to eliminate Associate Membership and convert those Members to Active Members; and (b) progress report from new committee re disposition of surviving partners

SUMMARY OF WORKSHOP OUTCOMES (cont'd)

ADDITIONAL TOPICS IDENTIFIED IN WORKSHOP		
<i>Topic</i>	<i>Assigned to</i>	<i>Action</i>
Zoom and Hybrid Meetings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provisions for meeting options 	Patrick Harkness and Communications Committee	Update Bylaws or Policies & Procedures as necessary
Additional Roles for Officers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define additional roles and expectations, e.g., FOI Officer, FOI, Editor of The Pen, Chair of Elections Committee 	Table Officers	Write job descriptions for Officers' additional roles
Office of Membership Secretary <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confirm that this is a Table Officer's position 	Bylaws and Resolutions Committee (Constitution)	Make recommendation at Fall AGM to update Bylaws to render Office of Membership Secretary a Table Officer's position
New Branches <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare framework for new branches 	Al Coccola, Chair, Branch 2700	Work with Recruitment and Retention Committee to write Framework
Review of Bylaws and Policies & Procedures <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review for duplication, lack of necessary content, accuracy, and typos 	Bylaws and Resolutions Committee (Constitution)	[See topic.]