



BCGREA Rocky Mountain Branch #300

Newsletter Fall/Winter 2024

Welcome to the fall/winter edition of our Rocky Mountain Branch Newsletter!

Winter is finally starting to arrive, and we hope you have been enjoying the long fall season.

Our membership is steady at 199 branch members. In this edition we compiled a list of those members that have sadly left us and welcome our new members, including two profiles. You will see information about our provincial AGM and something different; an opinion piece about our intentions when planning social activities.

We hope you enjoy our newsletter and will consider participating in some of our association activities during the holiday season and in 2025.

BCGREA Annual General Meeting Report

This year's Annual General Meeting (AGM) was held on October 16th in Tsawwassen. This AGM was more open and accessible than ever before. Members across the province were invited to watch via Zoom, and many did, including Co-chair Morgan J. Bridger.

Each branch sent two delegates to attend in person. Debbie Kerr and Cathy Phillips represented Branch 300 and attended additional in-person meetings of the Treasurer and Membership committee members, to discuss policies and practices beneficial to our branch.

The AGM's morning session focused on presentations by our **BC Public Service Pension Plan** and **BC's Council of Senior Citizens Organizations (COSCO)**, which we are members of. Benefit partners **Johnson/Bel Air Insurance** and **Hearing Life** provided updates to the services and discounts available to our members.

The keynote speaker Dan Levitt from the **BC Office of the Senior's Advocate** gave us a dynamic presentation focused on "*Ageism*" attitudes that negatively impact seniors in the healthcare system, housing and financial supplement levels that no longer meet our needs due to continually rising expenses. He noted that the growth in our population, the "*Silver Tsunami*", requires better coordination by government and service providers to provide sufficient services. Our ability to live in place in our smaller centres is impacted as community services simply are not there or have gaps. The Senior's Advocate strives to bring these issues to the attention of government leaders and is here to assist individual seniors with issues. Feel free to contact them at [Seniors Advocate of BC](#) or by phone at 1-877-952-3181.

The formal AGM took place in the afternoon, with reports from our Table Officers and the Financial reports. Elections were held and a number of motions amending by-laws were presented, related to membership types and groups, website notices, branch dissolution, quorums and director's meetings. Discussions of some critical changes were lively.

The next AGM will be held in late April as the association's fiscal year end was changed to December 31st.

Further details will be available on the [BCGREA](#) website soon, or feel free to contact us with any questions.

Branch Member News

In 2024 so far, we mourn the loss of fellow members:

**Albert Young
Anita Peters**

**Struan Robertson
Jean Cartwright**

Joseph (Art) Borle

The following members have relocated: **Jack Beloin**

and we now welcome new members:

**Lorraine & Randy Schmidt
Alexander & Sheri Green**

**Ken & Cristine Proskow
Linda Gall**

Darlene Legare

and...

Bridget Hemstead

Bridget grew up in London, England. She became a physiotherapist and worked at St Thomas' Hospital & Queen Mary's Hospital (Rehabilitation for pilots) until emigrating to Canada in 1981.

Bridget worked in Kamloops with Interior Health and had stints in Prince Rupert, Inuvik, Jasper & Fernie (Since 2000) where she now calls home.

Retired after 38 years, Bridget lives with her partner Kay & their 2 cats, Silky & K2. She loves to teach Tai Chi & skiing at Fernie Alpine Resort.



Gary Casperson



Gary grew up in Vernon and worked with the Ministry of Forests and later, when it became the BC Wildfire Service. He had stints in Vernon, Prince George and Cobble Hill for a career spanning 35 years.

Gary's hobbies include chess, listening to music, and cycling. He now lives in Cranbrook.

It's called gravel bike racing, and the photo is from the Belgium Waffle Ride BC held in Duncan. The race is 50 km long (some race 200 km)! You can find more information at [YouTube Waffle Ride BC](#).

Thanks to Bridget and Gary for sharing their stories. We look forward to seeing you and all of our new members!

Local Events

Organizing local events proved to be a bit more challenging than we expected earlier this year. Our events in Kimberley and the Columbia Valley didn't materialize, but we are already planning other social gathering opportunities in 2025.

Nine **Elk Valley** members enjoyed a great lunch in Fernie on May 6th. It was wonderful hearing everyone's experiences and catching up on each other's activities. The group couldn't recall ever

having a local lunch before and is interested in more spring and fall get togethers, so we have organized the next lunch, to be held at the **Fernie Seniors Centre on December 4th**. Invitations have been sent out so please RSVP Cathy soon.

In **Creston**, nine members from both the Rocky Mountain and Kootenay branches met for lunch and great company on October 9th. Members shared good ideas on planning dates for the next spring lunch.

All branch members, and their guests, are invited to join the festivities at the annual **Christmas Lunch** on **December 10th** in **Cranbrook** at East Side Mario's. Last year's lunch was great fun. We enjoyed great food, great company, a 50/50 draw fundraiser for the Salvation Army and lots of BCGREA door prizes. There were even a few out-of-town members from Creston and Fernie that attended. This year we look forward to more fun, more members attending and even better prizes!! Look for your invitation and RSVP soon.

Let's Do Lunch

by Cathy Phillips



I joined the BCGREA two years ago, thinking that having a group to advocate for better pension increases, benefits and the opportunity to catch up with so many people I had worked with, or had similar work experiences with, was a great deal at \$20/year. Who wouldn't like that?

I have learned that a lot of other members feel the same way. We have a seat on the board of the BC Pension Corporation and on COSCO that allows our voice and concerns to be heard. More and more member benefits that save us rates on travel, and other purchases are offered too.

Sitting on our board I learned that our \$20 fee is evenly split between the provincial body and our branch. According to our mission statement, one of our main goals is to provide "**opportunities to share and socialize with fellow retirees**". Further, Canada Revenue Agency requires that, as a tax-exempt non-profit organization, spending is restricted to be spent on its members.

Let's do Lunch continued...

Association President Brian Green has been talking about the organization's challenges with volunteerism and local participation at social events for at least the past two years. Surveys of members and branch executive show that it isn't the highest priority for some members and branches are unable to fill all of their executive positions, leaving very few people to do the work. In fact, one motion at the AGM regarding minimum branch requirements allowed those with only three executive members to stay intact, without having to dissolve the branch. The number used to be four.

Rocky Mountain branch, like most across the province, is struggling to get you out to participate in social activities. A big part of that struggle is the lack of volunteers to plan and organize events. It doesn't take too much time to organize a lunch, coffee or meeting, but only having three very busy people trying to do it has been challenging. We don't all need to be on the executive either, some branches have Goodwill volunteers to reach out to new members and help plan activities. The one challenge we don't have is our budget. Between COVID restrictions and lack of participation at events our branch has approximately \$9,000 of your money that we haven't been able to spend.

I also realized that as retirees we are such a diverse group. Our active members are anywhere from 55 to over 100 years old. Some of us are working full or part-time – hopefully at something they love. Some are very active in sports, travel, family, hobbies and volunteering. Others find that they are more restricted in their abilities and are doing the best they can, given we are aging.

Expecting members to travel long distances, especially from Golden to Cranbrook for lunch is probably unrealistic. The same goes for trying to find times of the year when the most members are available to participate. That is why we are trying to offer local events organized by local members.

Some members worked in the communities they still live in, so have much in common with other members, but that doesn't apply to everyone. I had a great conversation with a local member who never worked in this area but retired here and never thought they had anything in common with anyone here. We happily discovered that we had crossed paths long ago when we worked on a mutual project in another region. At every event I have felt lucky to chat with people that knew what being a public servant was like. Everyone has great stories to tell and are happy to be retired. That is what I see that we have in common and why spending time together is so enjoyable.

So, given the above, our branch is very much about **“doing lunch”**. Currently we need a few members to step up and take a few hours out of their month to join our local executive and/or to support our social activities throughout our large geographic area.

Contact us: We would really like to hear your feedback, and feel free to share pictures and ideas for topics, or write you own opinion piece and send them to:

Co-chairs: Morgan J. Bridger & Cathy Phillips

Membership: Debbie Kerr

Treasurer: Debbie Kerr (position available)

Recording Secretary: **Vacant**

Goodwill Member for Creston Thérèse Rioux

Goodwill Members for Columbia Valley, Cranbrook/Kimberley & Elk Valley: **Vacant**

chair.branch300@bcgrea.ca

membership.branch300@bcgrea.ca

treasurer.branch300@bcgrea.ca

If you are able to offer some time to assist with our vacant positions, please contact a member of the executive.