

## President's Report - April 2025

What we have been doing in the past six months is to figure out where we are and start moving forward to ensure we remain relevant and of use to our members.

As I write this, the results of our recent membership survey are being analyzed. We had almost 1/3 of those who received an invitation to respond, take the time to do so. Thank you - this provides us with some strong empirical information that we can factor into our decision making.

While it's too early to comment in any depth on the survey, it is abundantly clear that you value the role of the BCGREA in supporting and advocating on behalf our pension plan and similar ones for all Canadians. Given the economic turmoil going on, it's clear that pension funds such as ours are being looked at by politicians as a way of meeting their agendas. As I have said before, we need to remain vigilant about this, raising our voice when needed and supporting efforts to ensure that both decision makers and the general public understand the nature of our pensions. Our pensions are primarily self-funded and a considerable source of stable income within communities. We are also working with the other public sector retiree groups in BC to ensure this message is out there. Our keynote speaker at the AGM on April 30<sup>th</sup> will focus on the role of investments in ensuring the stability and resiliency of our plan.

I am a broken record on the need to keep up membership. Fundamentally, the larger our membership, the more we get heard. It's that simple. I encourage you to reach out to your former colleagues and invite them to join us or at least look at our website. There are no more in person pension seminars, so our opportunities for reaching those retiring is limited. We are working to enhance our visibility by developing a communications strategy that corresponds to how these folks receive their information, such as social media, YouTube or equivalent. I recognize there is considerable discomfort among some members about operating in this space for a variety of reasons, but I firmly believe we need to do so in order to reach this audience. Our plan will be deliberate, cautious and results focused. To this end, we will be working with a new communications firm to support us along with the other pension associations in producing some videos

– the first of which will focus on recent retirees asking what it is that surprised them about retirement.

We know that loss of a sense of community is often felt by people upon retirement, and we are committed to ensuring that members have a variety of tools to stay in touch, including our branch meetings, social events and webcasting.

The other big-ticket item we know that often surprises people at retirement is the loss of benefits, including cellphone plans, travel insurance and most importantly, extended health and dental benefits. If a pending retiree doesn't pay attention to these, they can be in for a rude awakening. We hope to advise them of upcoming changes so they can make smart choices and where possible, provide some affinity deals for them to consider.

Our extended health and dental plans are optional at the discretion of the Board of Trustees. They are financially capped by the Board and focus on core services with few enhancements. They are not negotiable and the BCGREA has no say in how they are set, other than to pass on the concerns of members regarding the adequacy of coverage – sometimes we get results such as the inclusion of shingles vaccines. There needs to be greater clarity around the role of the claims administrator, GreenShield. They are simply that, an administrator. Greenshield does not set the levels or types of coverage. For those who pine for “the good old days, a change of plan administrator would not change this. There will be a specific focus on the extended benefit plans at our upcoming AGM, which you can stream online by getting a Zoom link from [info@bcgre.ca](mailto:info@bcgre.ca) . As well, the Pen newsletter will be having coverage on this as well.

I usually end by encouraging comments and making a plea for volunteers. On that front , I have very good news. As part of the survey responses, a significant number of members indicated a willingness to volunteer on provincial level matters as well as the branch level. This is great news and we will be in touch with you.

To my fellow table officers, branch officers and volunteers, thank you. To all of you – stay strong, be healthy and enjoy the spring and summer.