



From the President's Desk - April 2024

For me, April and May are the most beautiful months of the year in Victoria. I have so enjoyed the cherry blossoms, spring flowers and the extra daylight this time of year brings. If anyone needs a pick-me-up in the next week or so, just take a walk through Finnerty Gardens at the University of Victoria (near the Interfaith Chapel), the Lieutenant Governor's Gardens or beautiful Beacon Hill Park to enjoy the magnificent rhododendrons that are the visual feast de jour. These lovely parks are free gifts from the community to us – enjoy.

This time of year also seems to herald a new season of meetings. On April 16th our Branch held a special awards event for BCGREA members who were in good standing for twenty years or more. We invited long term members to receive a certificate, pin and pen to mark the occasion. There were about 25 members eligible for this award (including 2 board members). We had about 65 members in attendance at the Pro-Patricia Legion Hall, where everyone also enjoyed an informative presentation on 'downsizing' from Jane Dewing of 'Changing Places' here in Victoria.

On April 23rd 2024, the BCGREA held its directors meeting, and invited observers to join in the Zoom call where the meeting was held. As Chair of our branch, I am a director of the BCGREA and can vote on resolutions. At this meeting there was a vote to reduce the number of voting delegates attending the Annual General Meeting. I voted against this resolution.

In previous years Victoria could send up to 6 delegates to the AGM, as the delegations reflected the size of the membership in each branch. Victoria has approximately 2750 members (about 25% of the total membership of the Association) and is the largest branch. The motion passed which now means that all branches can send one delegate and one director to the AGM – which will be held in October 2024.

Other issues dealt with at the directors meeting included financial concerns based on narrowing the definition of allowable expenditures by member funded Societies (like BCGREA), the creation of new branches, and our merchandising program. The Provincial Membership Chair reported on a recent survey of branch executives that was looking at the viability of branches as a means of connecting the membership. It raised some questions in some areas about the viability of the branch system as recruitment and retention of new volunteers and board members is becoming increasingly difficult. The Provincial branch will be exploring this further.

For me the Victoria Branch is a way for members to socialize, meet over interesting topics and provide support and recognition. Speaking of which we have a Summer Luncheon coming up on June 12th at Vista 18 in the Chateau Victoria. My apologies I will not be there as I am traveling across Canada this summer (a rite of passage for all Canadians) but would encourage you to join other members of the board and volunteers for this event.

Spring is a special time of year in Victoria, I hope you are able to get out and about to enjoy our city of flowers.

Stay Engaged!

Barbara Golder

President, BCGREA Victoria Branch 1200

Events for 2024

April 2024



Jane Dewing of Changing Places showed us how we can downsize our homes to live our best lives whether we are aging in place or moving to a smaller home.

The important thing is to start small and start now—when experiencing a major life change event like a divorce, or death,

the emotional stress along with this makes it much more difficult to do.

For a further summary of this presentation, please see here:

<https://bcgre.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Downsizing-Info.pdf>



Life Member Presentation



We also recognized some of our long term members, who have been members of the BCGREA for over 20 years!



The complete list of those who were recognized are:

- | | | |
|-----------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| Margaret Arthur | Sylvia Dyer | Brian Warburton |
| Alan Bailey | Tom Ellwood | Rick Williams |
| Robin Brown | Judy Haynes | Marion Woo |
| Gerry Buydens | Dale Jasper | |
| Diane Chenier | Julia Lowood | |
| Wendell Coady | Maureen Lundquist | |
| Peter Crompton | Beverly Morton | |
| Frank Csordas | Sharon Reidie | |
| Bob Curtis | Jane Rutherford | |
| Bill Dexter | Bob Sicotte | |
| Ronald Driedger | Mel Smith | |
| Jim Dumont | David Trodd | |

Congratulations to all on reaching this milestone!

June 2024 Summer Luncheon

Yes, you've heard it here first!

The Executive are very happy to tell you that we are planning a luncheon!

Date and Time: **Wednesday, June 12, 2024**, 12:00 noon - 2:00 pm (Doors open 11:30 am)

Location: **Vista 18 Restaurant @ Chateau Victoria Hotel**,
740 Burdett Avenue

The luncheon will be a buffet and includes coffee/ tea/pop. Also door prizes will be drawn! We are limited to 67 attendees (including guests).

The Branch will be subsidizing only members in good standing so members only have to pay \$30.00 (all taxes and tips included).

Non-members pay \$50.00 (all taxes and tips included).

Marilyn Spencer will be issuing tickets upon receipt of payment so **please contact her first** to discuss payment arrangements. Remember, the tickets are also your door prize number!

To assist Marilyn in confirming numbers of attendees, please **RSVP** your attendance no later than **Monday May 27, 2024** as follows:

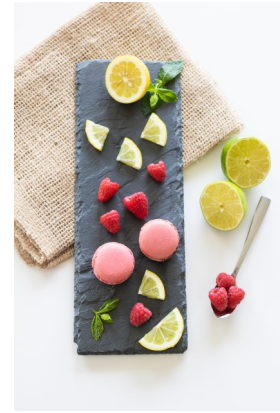
Member's Name:

Guest's Name:

Please email (click below) to our Victoria branch email address:

victoriabranch@bcgre.ca, subject **Summer Luncheon**

Any cancellations due to health or other unavoidable circumstances are requested as soon as possible but before June 8th, 2024 to allow us to offer the space to other members due to limited seating.



The Menu

Unfortunately we don't have the full menu as Chef is finalizing it but it will be the following items:

A Carved Meat

A choice of starch

Assorted Deli Sandwiches

Vegetarian Pasta

Desserts

Tea and Coffee

Bring your appetite!

Speaker Presentations

February 2024

Saanich Police



Community Engagement Division Liaison Officer, Constable (Cst.) Berle Zwaan presented a in-depth look at how we can prevent becoming victims of fraud.

For those who missed the presentation, she has provided us with the following handouts:

Scammer Savvy:

[Be-Scammer-Savvy-One-Page.pdf \(bcgre.ca\)](#)

Cyber Safety:

[Cyber-Safety-Tips.pdf \(bcgre.ca\)](#)

More resources as well as a short version of the presentation (**Beat the Fraudster safety series**) can also be found on the Saanich Police website:

[Financial Crimes – Saanich Police Department](#)

Thanks for attending this important session and to Cst. Berle Zwaan for teaching us how to be safe!

Information Sharing

Please note: this is for informational purposes only and not to be viewed as an endorsement by BCGREA.

Daralynn Wei, Owner/Operator of Orderly Affairs, is putting on a free series at Caffe Fantastico on the first Thursday of the month. For further info:

[Speaking of Death \(8.5 x 11 in\) \(bcgre.ca\)](#)

Mar 2024



Canada Revenue Agency

Lance Vaillancourt, CVITP Benefits and Outreach Officer, Western Region gave us a detailed presentation on benefits and other tax tips that we can use for the 2023 tax season.

He provided us with this file to the presentation with various links:

<https://bcgre.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/CRA-presentation-links.pdf>

Among the questions posed to Lance are the following:

1) Can you recommend any tax software programs?

CRA cannot recommend a specific tax software program in order to avoid any kind of bias. However, Lance in a personal capacity is aware of U-File and Turbotax and found them easy to use.

2) What is the best time to contact CRA in order to avoid lengthy wait times?

The best number to call is our General Enquiries line at 1-800-959-8282. The link below shows the hours of operation, as well as the wait times.

[Contact the Canada Revenue Agency - Canada.ca](#)

3) With regards to a question about CPP and being self-employed and not contributing. The form below should provide the answers you are looking for.

[Canada Pension Plan Contributions and Overpayment](#)

Thanks to everyone who came out to see the zoom presentation !

Members Corner

Long Standing Members



If you have been a member of the **BCGREA for 20 years or more**, please tell us so that we can honour your achievement with a Life Member pin at one of our events in 2025!

Please email your name, and **month** (if known) and **year you joined** to:

victoriabranch@bcgre.ca

Subject: Life Member Pin

Also, if you have a story to share of your time with the BC Government or Broader Public Sector and your retirement life, we would love to hear from you!

Please contact Victoria Branch News, at the email above.

2024 Monthly Gift Card Winners



Our winners for our February and April General Meetings are :

Lin Thompson

Leonor Davidson

Laura Lam

Linda Foubister

Sandy Hall

Dale Jasper

Beth Keepence

Marita Kuehn

Congratulations to all!

Life Member Page

In this edition of our Life Member page, the spotlight is on two members, **Alan Bailey and Ronald Driedger**. Thanks to you both for sharing your stories with us!

Alan Bailey

I came into this world in 1933, at a remarkably early age, much to the disappointment of my mother who, I suspect, had envisioned a human baby instead. In 1940, my life took an unexpected turn when Hitler, apparently envious of my leadership potential, decided to bomb me out of existence. While his aim may have missed, it tragically resulted in the destruction of two neighboring families and their homes. In the aftermath, my family hastily packed up, leaving our home, and sought refuge in the village of Upper Oddington, nestled in the countryside of Gloucestershire near Stow On The Wold and Moreton-in-Marsh in England.

For about a year, we resided in the Horse and Groom, a local public house. During this time, I attended the village's one-room school where a few notable incidents occurred. In 1940, as a local family prepared to move away, their daughter, of my age—eight, if my calculations are accurate—surprised me with a big goodbye kiss. At the time, my view of girls was dismissively "soppy," yet the experience left a lasting impression. Another memorable aspect was the camaraderie with boys like Richard Murdock and a red-haired lad named Norman Neville, both sons of local farm workers.

In 1964, during a visit to England, I returned to Upper Oddington. At the Horse and Groom, I encountered a red-haired farm laborer, whom I recognized as Norman Neville. Initially apprehensive as he thought that I might be a police officer, he relaxed upon learning my identity as an evacuee from 1940. We shared a beer and reminisced. This encounter underscored how our backgrounds profoundly shape our life paths—Norman followed his family into farming, while my parents were resolute about pursuing my father's career as a Chartered Surveyor.

Following our stint in Upper Oddington, we moved closer to London but away from likely bombing targets for the Luftwaffe. In 1942, I enrolled at Watford Grammar School, where I maintained an average academic standing, typically ranking around 10th in a class of 30. About the age of thirteen, my interests shifted to girls, discerned as the ones who danced backwards in ballroom settings.

In 1950, after completed school, I joined a Quantity Surveyor firm as a trainee (office boy). My evenings were dedicated to night school, preparing for professional examinations.

It was during my daily commute to London that I met my future wife, Shirley. My initial attempts at courtship were overly enthusiastic and flirtatious, leaving her unimpressed until a chance encounter marked a turning point. I knew I was getting somewhere when I heard that she had said, "when you're used to Alan's little peculiarities, he can, on occasions, be almost bearable". Shirley and I went out for four years, which was rather like driving a car with one foot on the accelerator and the other on the brakes. We eventually got married despite the skepticism of my mother, who deemed us too young. Our marriage has endured for 68 years.

My professional journey led me to the Air Ministry in London in 1958, with a subsequent posting to Singapore in 1962. Returning to England in 1968, we struggled to settle, prompting me to take a managerial role in a department of a Singapore import/export company. This eventually took us to Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia, where we enjoyed a comfortable life with four servants. However, Shirley's discomfort with sending our children to boarding school led us to seek a new life.

In 1968, we relocated to Toronto, where securing employment became a pressing concern. After passing through customs, I suddenly realized I had no job, a wife and three small children, and nowhere to stay, so I called a taxi and asked him to take us to a reasonably priced downtown motel. This was on a Sunday. On the Monday, I phoned a company whose name had been given to me in England. A senior partner said to come in the next day. I went in on Tuesday and he said that they needed someone in Ottawa, and would I come in on the Wednesday to meet another partner. On Wednesday, we all agreed that I could have the job, but that I needed to get permission from Canada Immigration to work, and that this could take months.

Taking the job offer with me, I went straight to Immigration by late morning, where the receptionist said that the best she could do for me was 6 weeks before I could get an appointment. Crestfallen, I said "oh, dear I guess I will have to send my wife and three children back to England". To which she replied "Really, some people are so irresponsible, come back at 1 pm". By 4 pm I had the OK to take the job. The bosses at the Toronto office were amazed and confirmed that I could start in Ottawa the following Monday. I rented a car and drove on the "wrong side of the road" with power steering and brakes and automatic gear change for the first time from Toronto to Ottawa, which I survived.

After a year in Ottawa, the company transferred me, in 1969, to Regina where we adopted a little Metis boy. In 1971, the major projects at the University of Saskatchewan were suspended due to a fall in the demand for wheat. My company said that they would fly me to Toronto to look for another job. However, on the same day that this happened, the "Construction Economist". the quarterly magazine for the Canadian Quantity Surveyors advertised a job in Victoria with the Public Works Ministry of the Government of B.C. I got the job and remained with the BC Government/BC Buildings Corporation until I retired in 1998.

Since then, I have been teaching Fitness Classes and, at 90 years old, still am. But that's another story.



Ronald Driedger

I retired from government in the first half of 2002 and became a member of the Victoria chapter of the BCGREA, even though I moved from Victoria to Chilliwack in July 2002. Prior to retiring I was the Director of the Pollution Prevention and Remediation Branch for the BC Ministry of Environment. In my retirement I am enjoying golf, pickleball and woodworking. I spent a total of 30 years with the BC Ministry of Environment, in Victoria, Vernon, Prince George and back to Victoria.

In my job what I enjoyed the most was developing policy and programs that were new and innovative. For example, BC was the first province or state in North America to require industry to develop programs to take back what they sell. In late 1996 paint producers were required to have a program in place to collect used paint. Initially there was a lot of opposition to this requirement but now these types of programs exist across most of North America for a whole range of products and packaging. As a result, the amount of waste going to landfills per capita has been significantly reduced.

In the early 1980's I faced a significant challenge in trying to get the many pulp mills in Prince George to reduce their emissions and meet the provincial requirements. I worked with the Medical Health Officer to show that the visits to the emergency hospital increased significantly when the levels of pollution in the air was high. Only then did we get the political support to have the pulp mills install the required pollution control devices.

My first job ever was when I was 16 years old. As a kid living in a small town in Saskatchewan I got a job working on an irrigation farm in Gem, Alberta. I didn't know a thing about farming, but I had to learn very quickly how to milk cows, drive a tractor and irrigate the land. Needless to say there was a steep learning curve. That was about 60 years ago but I kept in touch with the family from Gem until a few years ago.

Ronald, seen at his first job, with the family who lived on the farm.





Understanding Your Pension

If you have questions regarding when your next pension payment is due, or want to track the history of your previous pension amounts, and/or change your beneficiary, you can register for [My Account](#) with the BC Pension Corporation, where you can view payment history for each month, payment dates for 2023, etc. It is very safe and secure and gives you information you need to manage your pension.

<https://myaccount.pensionsbc.ca/web/my-account/sign-in>



Branch Members Contact Update

Keeping track of all our members is no easy task!

So, if you are one of the members that has recently changed carriers or obtained a brand new email, please help us by:

- 1) updating your email address by logging into the new Members Portal.

[Member Portal Access \(findjoo.com\)](#)

The first time you access the portal, you can use any password up to six characters. You can also change your password at any time later.

- 2) For those who prefer to send us an e-mail:

drop us a line to:

victoriabranch@bcgre.ca, Attn: Membership Director

Mailing Address and Phone number updates are welcome too and can be updated via the member portal, emailed above or sent to our mailing address. See How to Reach Us at the end of this newsletter.

Good Will Notice

If you know of any member who is hospitalized, sick, or injured please contact Sonja Ruffell at:

victoriabranch@bcgre.ca with the information.

Thank You!

Share the Fun!

In order to keep the branch strong and growing, please remember to share our website,

<https://bcgre.ca/branches/victoria-branch-1200/>

and tell your retired friends and family who receive a Public Service pension of the benefits of joining the BCGREA.

<https://bcgre.ca/join/>

How to Reach Us

President: Barbara Golder

Email: chair.branch1200@bcgre.ca

1st Vice-Chair: George Bowden

Email: vicechair.branch1200@bcgre.ca

Treasurer: Ed Forbes

Email: treasurer.branch1200@bcgre.ca

Secretary: Karin Heimlich

Email: secretary.branch1200@bcgre.ca

Membership Director: Jane Rutherford

Email: membership.branch1200@bcgre.ca

Social/House Director: Marilyn Spencer

Communications Director: Laura Lam

Program Director : Gerry Buydens

Goodwill/Telephone Director: Sonja Ruffell

Director at Large: Terry Prentice

Director at Large: Sarf Ahmed

To message our team directly please visit our Contact Information on our website:

<https://bcgre.ca/branches/victoria-branch-1200/>

Our general branch email is:

victoriabranch@bcgre.ca

Contact Phone: 250-751-8814 Please leave a message on the voicemail.

Mailing Address:

BCGREA Victoria Branch 1200, PO Box 9017,
STN PROV GOVT, Victoria, B.C. V8W 9L6

Or: <https://bcgre.ca/contact/>

Take care and see you next time!