



The Steller's Quill

BCGREA New Westminster & District Branch
800

“Fall 2021” Newsletter

Contact info:

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2022 Membership Dues Reminder

Membership dues of \$20 are payable each year by January 2nd (Dues are in arrears after March 15th) 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:

**Lois Ann Daws, Valerie Ann Fabick, Iris Hill, Jacob (Jake) Klassen,
Donald (Don) Murphy, Faye Jacqueline Nidosky.**

Virtual Branch Meetings:

2021/22 General Meeting dates (via Zoom until further notice)

September 21; October 19; November 16; January 18; February 15; March 15; April 19; May 17;
June 21 (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

While we await the return of in-person gatherings we will continue with virtual meetings via Zoom and update the membership accordingly with any changes.

During the past year several of our branch meetings did not attract enough members to conduct business at hand. Consequently, the Executive proposed a resolution for approval at the AGM to amend our branch regulations to comply with the requirements for a quorum.

Meanwhile we addressed the following issues:

- *Branch 800 donations:* Given that Provincial BCGREA is once again endorsing charitable donations, the Executive and General Membership approved a donation of \$200 to the BC Health Coalition in recognition of their advocacy for a broad range of issues benefitting seniors. Additionally, approval was given for \$500 to be distributed equally between three local charitable agencies supporting seniors in need: *Seniors Services Society* in New Westminster, *Burnaby Neighbourhood House* serving North and South Burnaby and *Share Family and Community Services* in Tricities. All three expressed their appreciation for Branch 800's generosity.
- *Query PSPP investment of members funds in private for profit LTC facilities.* This involved a motion from the Branch 800 General Meeting in February. The response received from PSPP Board Chair was that there are "No direct investments or co-investments in for-profit long term care facilities in the private market programs."
- *BC Health Coalition request for membership input on LTC issues* involving "stories" and participation in a Virtual Day of Action for LTC reform on April 27, 2021. This was preceded by having organizer **Audrey Guay** attend our April general meeting to discuss initiatives and action. Several of our members submitted their stories, either as a caregiver, family member or former worker in LTC.
- *BCGREA Logo:* Provincial BCGREA sponsored a contest involving the potential redesign of the Provincial Logo for the website and *the Pen* newsletter as there are some limitations to using the Steller's Jay photograph. This sparked some lively discussion with many of our members voicing preference to keep the Steller's Jay in the Logo "as is". For more info see the Provincial website.

Branch 800 AGM June 15, 2021:

The meeting was held via Zoom with 32 members participating. The proposed resolution to amend Article V of Branch 800 Regulations was passed to change the number of members required to form a quorum at all regular meetings from 4% to 3% of the general membership.

The following executive members were elected by acclamation: Chair: **Bonnie Billington**; 1st Vice Chair: **Navin Goburdhun**, Secretary: **Verna Cadwallader**; Membership Secretary: **Rita Pollock**; Treasurer: **Alfred Malcolm**; Goodwill Convener: **Jean Ing** along with six Directors: **Dennis Ishikawa, Andy McColl, Marilyn Melville, Kathy Nelson, Anna Tremere and Marleine Wagner**. The positions of 2nd Vice Chair and Telephone Convener are vacant. **Thank you to outgoing executive members Sheila Halvorson and Donna Main as well as to all those elected who put their names forward for 2021/22.**

Twenty-two members from the AGM (excluding executive) were entered into a \$50 draw. The winner was **Ross Tremere**, whose name was drawn at the backyard Executive Planning Meeting on July 7th

The Finance Review Committee (composed of **Val Davies** as Chair; **Ross Tremere** and **Loralee Wilkin**) met on July 7, 2021 with Alfred Malcom, Treasurer and Branch Chair Bonnie Billington to review the branch transactions and records for the fiscal year ending June 30. The committee approved all records as presented, including the final fiscal year report to Provincial. Thank you to the committee and to Alfred for keeping our records in good order and balancing the books and reports to Provincial again this year.

More news and announcements:

- *Electronic communication via 'Campaigner'* started in February, initiated by Provincial BCGREA beginning with Branch 800 as a pilot project to expediate messages to the members on email. Our success has prompted other branches to participate.
- *Pharmacare Bill C-213* was defeated in the House of Commons Feb 24, 2021. We will continue to support the BC Health Coalition and COSCO in the ongoing quest for universal public pharmacare in Canada.
- *Branch 800 Telephone volunteer appreciation:* In recognition of long-standing commitment in sending out monthly meeting messages, each volunteer received a canvas bag and pen with the BCGREA logo, courtesy of the Branch.

Telephone volunteer: **Irene Gillis**
April, 2021



- *Goodwill Convenor* Jean Ing has been trying to keep up with acknowledgements and cards to members who have been ill, hospitalized or in bereavement; keeping our members in mind and not forgotten during these difficult times. Birthday greetings were sent to **Dorothy Kristjanson** who turned 102 in June.

- *Provincial has launched the new web site* and members are encouraged to check it out via www.bcgrea.ca Click on 'General News' for info including recently announced changes to the drug plan for retired members.
- ***COSCO Conference will be held via Zoom Sept 27 & 28, 2021.*** The theme is *Life in the 21st Century – a Seniors' Strategy*. Program and registration details are on the COSCO website: www.coscobc.org Early registration is advised.
****Please note: Branch 800 will reimburse any of our members who submit a receipt for the \$25 registration fee.** Contact Branch 800 Chair Bonnie Billington via email at bcgrea800@gmail.com
- *BCGREA Provincial AGM scheduled for Oct 20, 2021* at the Coast Tsawwassen Inn. Given the unique circumstances created by Covid, the table officers are prepared to accept late resolutions (approved by branch members) if received before Sept. 21, 2021. Branches are invited to submit the names of anyone they would like to nominate to serve on the Provincial Resolutions Committee.

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 make your request to **Donna Dunedin Main** via email @ donnaemain@gmail.com and place 'Branch 800 FB page' in the subject line.

2021 Life Membership List

Congratulations go to the following members who attained Life Member status in 2021, reaching 20 years of membership in the BCGREA.

Lorna G. Buchanan, Guy E. Budding, Dr. Barbara E. Copping, Allan R. Cruickshank, Evelyn E. Davies, Guiseppina J. Distasio, Catherine A. Falconer, Norman J. Glover, Patricia J. Hamer, Bente Hansen, Ramona J. Howard, Janet I. Lemaire, Erika M. McCasin, Jean (Monica) Mogg, Dianne Y. Olson, Victor M. Omaye, Verna E. Priebatsch, Donna A. Richards, Daniel H. Scott, Joan Simonsen, Christine Stadler Anna Tremere, Ross L. Tremere, Eric M. Waterfield, Pansy Y. Wong

Pensioner Trivia by Andy McColl

Before I immigrated to Canada from Scotland in 1965, I would see regular newspaper reports of seniors being cloured (pronounced “cloored”, being the Scots word for being struck on the head) with a piece of lead pipe or a half brick on “pension day” and robbed of their cash after collecting it from their local Post Office.

Times change, but people don’t. The Brits fund their Old Age Pension, employment insurance and sickness benefit through an employment tax known as the “National Insurance Stamp”. For each week of employment employees have to pay this stamp over and above income taxes. In the early ‘sixties’ an additional compulsory contribution called the Graduated Pension Scheme was introduced. Contributions were non-refundable. In a subsequent “pension reform”, after my emigrating, this scheme was rolled into the OAP.

The eligibility for the OAP for males was a minimum of 11 years of contributions. For Brits who worked abroad but want to pay NI stamps towards the OAP, there is provision to purchase specific years at sums specified by the Ministry of Pensions.

I had contributed from 1957 to mid 1965, which gave me 8 years. Insufficient to make me eligible for the OAP. If I did nothing it would be as if I had peed those years away. (Facing into a strong wind.) In the years prior to turning 65 I purchased an additional four years, entitling me to a pension based on 12 years. In 2005 I began receiving a pension of 26 pounds a week. Today, 2021, it is still 26 pounds a week.

Although Westminster has no “Act of Embezzlement” in its legislation, they get around that quite well.

Each year they determine how much the OAP should be increased for the 12 million seniors receiving it and pass a resolution to implement that increase. (Just over 1 million of these pensioners reside outside the United Kingdom.) Then they introduce a subsequent resolution to nullify the increase to half of that million. You have to admit, it is more sophisticated than the lead pipe approach. That special resolution has always passed ever since its inception, which, I think, was in the late ‘sixties’. 98 percent of these ‘frozen’ pensioners reside in Commonwealth nations and British overseas territories. Over 125,000 of them live in Canada. The Canadian Alliance of British Pensioners and similar organizations in affected countries has been campaigning for decades for equitable treatment. In 2010 the issue was taken to the EU court who ruled it was a matter for the British government to sort out. Presently, there is an All Party Parliamentary Group in Westminster lobbying for the indexing to be restored.

In November 2020 the Canadian government asked Britain to provide the indexing but has been rebuffed.

The British Parliament, though successive regimes, has refused to restore indexing saying they are not open to negotiating new agreements. In the Fall of 2020, they negotiated 27 such agreements with European Union countries to maintain indexed state pensions for British expatriates living in the EU.

If you walk past the British Parliament buildings when its quiet with not much traffic, and hear fiddling, it is not Faerie music you are hearing.

On another note; some months before I immigrated, there was an incident in Paisley involving a senior citizen (I hesitate to call him an “old fellow” as he was younger then than I am now) who was supplementing his pension by working evening shift in a gas station a couple of blocks from Paisley Town Hall. (**Personal trivia:** Paisley Town Hall’s basement was where I was introduced to my father in the second half of June 1940 when I was 5 or 6 weeks old. The bus trip to Glasgow alone took over 3 hours. My father and those of his Company who had been evacuated from St Valery were billeted there on their return to Britain.) The senior’s last duty of the evening after shutting everything down was to take the evenings’ takings and drop them in the night safe at one of the banks at the junction of High and Causeyside Streets. His shortest route took him on a paved walkway alongside the Black Cart Water (not that it matters, but there is a White Cart Water a few miles to the west) before passing through the town hall’s landscaped gardens. A tall metal railing separated the walkway from the drop into the river.

One dark evening a couple of thugs dashed out of the shadows and slammed him up against the railing and began pummeling him. In what was more an involuntary movement than a defensive one, the senior brought up one knee. By happy chance his knee connected with Assailant Number One’s family jewels. In an involuntary movement of his own, Assailant Number One flopped to the ground clutching his injury. Assailant Number Two, seeing his pal having a “lie-down” and finding himself going one on one with the senior, broke off his attack and ran off in the direction of Paisley Town Hall gardens. Assailant Number One, finding himself abandoned, hauled himself off the ground and lurched off in pursuit of his partner in crime.

The senior continued on his way to the bank, put the takings in the night safe and carried on to the police station to report the attempted mugging. Sometimes news can bring a smile to ones’ face.

In Memoriam

We regret to announce the passing of the following members:

Margaret Luella Anderson Gary Robert Bronson James (Jim) Alfred Cambrey
Maria Lourdes Cruz Marcella Isabella Garneau Theresa Clementine Lloyd
Margaret E.G. McCoach Daniel Leonard Nelson James Pannu Ruth Percy
Phyllis Margaret Pullen Nesta Pickton Puls Lena Turner
Elizabeth Maria Magdalena Willig

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