



The CBC Pensioners
National Association

Preserving our Future, Sharing our Past

L'Association nationale
des retraités de la SRC

Assurer notre avenir, partager notre passé

DURHAM CHAPTER



JANUARY—————**2021**

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE – January 5, 2021



Happy New Year! I hope you've all been able to find some enjoyment in the holiday season despite the challenges we've faced over the year past.

Now that we in Ontario are in temporary lockdown and COVID vaccines are slowly being distributed, we can only hope that the number of cases begins to diminish. Still, many experts predict it will be the fall of this year before things start returning to some semblance of normal.

The really interesting question is, which normal? How likely is it that we will return to life as we knew it? Or will normal be a new normal, where masks and hand sanitizer are much more commonplace, and hugs are reserved for the very few?

While we wait, it would be wise to follow the advice of Dr. Brian Goldman, who was our guest speaker at our November AGM. His recommendations are featured in the AGM report.

Also in this issue, the story of how the Special Assistance Fund (SAF) came to be. This fund helps with medical expenses not covered under health care plans. And health news about the effects of cannabis on older adults.

Later this month, Durham member Karin Wells has written & directed a special event to commemorate CBC legend Margaret Lyons. Be sure to read her feature story. And as always, a news updates on other items of interest. Happy Reading!

Barbara Saxberg, Chapter President

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING REPORT

Our recent AGM was, by necessity, different than previous years and held virtually. We did manage to make quorum despite the challenges and we were pleased to have several members of the National Capital Region join us as well.



The meeting was chaired by Chapter Treasurer Dan Oldfield in the absence of President Barbara Saxberg due to a death in the family.

Members approved both the Treasurer's Report and the proposed budget for 2021. The Chapter is in good shape financially and looks forward to an increase in the quarterly dues payment from the National office.

We also welcomed Dr. Brian Goldman, host of CBC Radio's White Coat, Black Art as our guest speaker. Dr. Goldman spoke about the impact of COVID-19 and recommended that everyone get the vaccine when it becomes available. In addition, he offered the following six recommendations for older adults to stay safe during the pandemic:

1. Limit your contact with others as much as possible.
2. Avoid having strangers in your home e.g. repair people. If you must have someone in, consider leaving the house, or going for a walk outside to limit your exposure.
3. Wear a mask whenever you encounter anyone outside your household, indoors and out.
4. Regularly wipe down all surfaces you come into contact with.
5. Go for walks outside. And don't worry about someone passing you by.
6. Try to maintain a positive outlook. This will end.

CBC PNA NEWS UPDATES

NEW RATES FOR SHCP

New rates for our supplementary health care plan (SHCP) are now in effect. The good news for Ontario members is that our rates for age 65 and over are unchanged.



The overall costs of the SHCP have increased but they were mostly subsidized by using surplus funds.

Premiums did increase in some regions as part of an effort to equalize premiums for all PNA members but thanks to the subsidy, those increases were minimal.

The PNA closely monitors the SCHP in consultation with the CBC and our advisors to ensure the greatest benefits while ensuring the plan remains affordable.

Contact the CBC Pension Administration Centre at 1-888-604-9258 if you have any questions.

PNA CONVENTION NEWS

This year, the PNA's Triennial Convention may be held virtually, although organizers are holding off on a final decision until there is a better indication of the course of the pandemic in 2021.

There is hope that an in-person Convention may be possible in the fall. If not, the virtual gathering is expected to go ahead in early summer.



This year is an election year. All four national positions are up for election.

The National President of the PNA, Denis Collette, does not intend to run again. The other positions are the Vice President - Francophone, Vice President – Anglophone, and Treasurer.

In preparation for the Convention, four teams of PNA members have been working on presentations to build on the action plans developed at the 2018 Convention.

The four topics are recruitment, advocacy, diversity, and communications. Each team will present a detailed action plan for discussion and approval by the Convention.

Watch for Convention updates and details on the PNA website and in future newsletters:

www.cbcpensioners.ca

IN HEALTH NEWS...

CANNABIS & OLDER ADULTS

With the legalization of cannabis in Canada, there are concerns about the impact of its use on older adults.



According to a recent report from Active Aging Canada, the use of cannabis by older adults in Canada is increasing faster than any other age group. 7% of older adults in this country report using cannabis in 2020, up from 1% in 2012. The increase is the result of a few factors: the aging of baby boomers, changes in legislation, and the promotion of cannabis for therapeutic reasons.

It's interesting to note that surveys of older adults show a fair degree of satisfaction in the ability of cannabis to target specific symptoms and improve overall quality of life. Yet the existing research, according to the report, says there's not a lot of solid evidence yet to support this.

One of the biggest concerns about cannabis use among older adults is that cannabis affects parts of the brain that are known to change with age. Also, it metabolizes differently in older bodies. And there are concerns about how it might interact with other drugs used by older adults for chronic conditions.

Cannabis produces two types of cannabinoids: THC and CBD. THC is the one that makes a person feel high and is mostly responsible for the health risks associated with cannabis. CBD does not cause the intoxicating effect and is being studied for possible medical use.

It's important to note that older adults with a heart condition are at greater risk for a heart attack or stroke if they smoke cannabis.

According to public health experts, older adults who have heart conditions, unstable blood pressure, cognitive impairments or problems with balance, or a history of mental health problems or substance use disorders should not use cannabis.

If you do choose to use cannabis for medical purposes, you should consult your doctor or health care provider.

Cannabis has been shown to be helpful in minimizing nausea and vomiting from chemotherapy, muscle contractions or stiffness because of multiple sclerosis, chronic neuropathic pain, and palliative and end-of-life pain. But this research is still emerging and is not specific to older adults.

If you are planning to use cannabis, here are some resources that may be helpful:

<https://www.camh.ca/-/media/files/pdfs---reports-and-books---research/canadas-lower-risk-guidelines-cannabis-pdf>

<https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/topics/cannabis-for-medical-purposes.html>

<https://www.ccsa.ca/guide-cannabis-older-adults>

THE STORY OF THE SPECIAL ASSISTANCE FUND (SAF)

By Dan Oldfield

CBC PNA CCSB Representative

The creation of the Special Assistance Fund (SAF) is an interesting story. Its benefits come from a pool of money that has paid out millions in benefits for CBC retirees and employees for nearly 20 years.

The creation of the SAF is a story that demonstrates the power of co-operation between groups of employees and retirees and what a relatively small amount of money can do when managed well and creatively used.

At the CBC, a committee made up of retirees and employees meets regularly as the Consultative Committee on Staff Benefits (CCSB). The job is to oversee the various benefit plans and to make recommendations or approve changes.

Over the years a variety of staff benefit plans have come and gone or been replaced by newer or different benefits. The insurance industry has also gone through many changes.

Through all these changes, small pots of money primarily from returns on monies held in trust or premiums were created. Over time the sources of those monies were lost to memory and the complexity and cost of doing any sort of refund became impossible.

The money that later created the source for the Special Assistance Fund existed in a variety of these almost forgotten trust accounts held by a variety of insurance companies.

For example, more than a million dollars was held by Confederation Life from a plan once managed by Mutual Life that had been discontinued in 1977. It had resulted from a surplus created during the life of that insurance plan. In total more than \$3.5 million sat in various trust accounts.

From time to time those on the CCSB who were aware of the existence of these various pots of money would bring individual hardship cases to the meetings of the CCSB to seek approval to financially assist those in need.

The approach was an arbitrary and ad hoc approach. In the late '90s, as a representative for the Guild, I wrote a discussion paper proposing the creation of the SAF. The proposal would bring together the various pots of money into a single fund that would be used to assist employees and retirees with costs for medical type expenditures not covered by employer or government insurance plans.

The CCSB, after seeking a legal opinion confirming its ability to disburse money and after seeking financial advice in investing the money, unanimously approved the creation of the fund.

The CCSB resolved to use interest earned to provide to create the SAF. The other key part of the proposal was to publicize the existence of the fund. Use of the money was also expanded to include national and local wellness initiatives.

Since its inception hundreds of retirees and employees have received assistance. And even though millions have been spent for benefits and wellness projects the fund now has a value of nearly \$6-million.

The Special Assistance Fund is a success story. Retirees, employees and their beneficiaries can qualify for up to a life time limit of \$12,500 in assistance.

To qualify the expense must be one recognized by the Canada Revenue Agency as a legitimate medical expense. The application form and the guidelines are available on the PNA website at www.cbcpensioners.ca.

SPECIAL ASSISTANCE FUND

The Special Assistance Fund (SAF) helps CBC retirees, their spouses and dependents with health care expenses not covered by OHIP or the SHCP.

It also offsets the cost of hearing aids and mobility devices. There are some restrictions.

Contact the CBC PNA staff in Ottawa for eligibility requirements and help in applying. More information and application forms are on the PNA website.

www.cbcpensioners.ca

A TRIBUTE TO MARGARET LYONS

By Karin Wells

Keiko – Margaret – Inouye, the woman the CBC knows as Margaret Lyons – was two weeks past her 18th birthday when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. She and her five brothers and sisters lived on a strawberry farm in the lower mainland of BC. There was no electricity, no running water and she hauled water from the creek and cut firewood with a cross cut saw. They were devout Buddhists. She spoke only Japanese until she went to kindergarten. But she knew her mind, was determined – she called herself pig headed – and she was a leader.



When the Canadian government expelled the 22,000 Japanese Canadians who lived within 100 miles of the Pacific coast, it was Margaret who took charge of her family.

As her daughter Ruth Lyons says today, “Of course it was my mother who took charge. She always took charge.”

This is the woman who led CBC radio through what has become known as the Radio Revolution.

In the '60s, Radio was in such bad shape – everyone was watching TV – that the Board threatened to shut it down. The infamous Ward-Meggs report drafted the plan to redefine radio, but it was Margaret who fleshed it out and who made it happen. Doug Ward called her, “a pit bull who could face people down”.



She engineered the rise of Radio Current Affairs with serious journalistic standards. She deliberately hired ‘difficult’ people. Barbara Frum had been dumped by the TV supper hour show, she wasn’t feminine enough; Peter Gzowski had been fired by Macleans, Mark Starowicz by the Toronto Star. Those were the people she wanted, producers and hosts who were not boring.

“What would you do with that,” she would ask Mark Starowicz, “just as long as it’s not boring?” Boring was the kiss of death for Margaret Lyons. Thus, she fostered the creation of *As It Happens* and *Sunday Morning* by Mark Starowicz, and *Quirks and Quarks* by Diana Filer.

Don’t be boring – and don’t be precious.

That was the other touchstone. She had no time for the precious - pompous was even worse. What she wanted, Ward said, were plain speakers and Canadian stories. She instinctively understood why *This Country in the Morning*, later *Morningside*, worked and why Gzowski resonated with the nation.

But her heart was with *As It Happens*. She was a journalist through and through. When *As It Happens* aired Max Allen’s *Dying of Lead*, a program-length documentary on lead poisoning in Toronto, it provoked the largest libel suit in the history of the British Commonwealth. Margaret Lyons was delighted. She couldn’t be happier, said Starowicz. This was journalism that made a difference, that attracted attention. It was what public broadcasting should be about. And she was a fierce advocate of public broadcasting – programs that explored our history; dealt with issues that were important to the people who live here, programs that served the citizenry – and that were never boring.

When Keiko Margaret Inouye and her family were shipped out of BC and their property confiscated in 1942, they were sent to Winnipeg.

She worked as a cook for a wealthy grain family and lived in the then new Winnipeg suburb of Tuxedo, Manitoba. The town council had to pass a by law permitting this 18-year-old Japanese enemy alien to live in their midst.

Many Canadian cities – Winnipeg included – had exclusionary bylaws. Her mother and the younger children lived in a sod hut out on prairies for the balance of the war.



Both Harold Redekopp and Michael McEwen remember her saying very clearly that if the war hadn't come along, she would have been shunted off to lessons in Japanese flower-arranging and married into another Japanese farm family, that the Japanese internment liberated her. In 1944 she walked away from her family, got herself to Hamilton, Ontario and enrolled at McMaster University – one of the very few that would take Japanese students. By 1949 she had an honours degree in economics and a husband - Ed Lyons, son of a Jewish father and Presbyterian mother. They left for England the day they got married.

She wheedled her way into the BBC, was back in Canada by 1960 with two children in tow, put in ten years as a working producer and the rest is history, the stuff of legend.

She pounded on the studio wall in the Radio Building trying to get Glenn Gould not to play so loud; she stepped out of the shower in a Vancouver hotel room, heard something she didn't like on the morning show, picked up the phone and tore a strip off the Regional Director before she was dry. Everyone has a story.

I hosted *Arts National*, the afternoon arts information program out of Ottawa when the Stereo Network launched in 1976. Margaret Lyons by then was running both networks. The chosen host had quit 5 days before the show launched and I was an emergency replacement, quaking in my boots. It was the second or third week and we were on air when from the booth I saw the studio door open and a small figure slip into a chair in the darkened control room. She stayed about ten minutes, then left without a word. Her mere presence struck terror in my heart.

She was fierce, spared no one.

Everyone in the forthcoming tribute said yes, she was brusque, she hurt feelings. But Pamela Wallin, once an *As It Happens* chase producer, said she always judged you on the product you produced. Don Ferguson, originator of *The Air Farce*, added that when the bullets came, she was right because she had thought about whatever it was more than you had.

In paying tribute to Margaret Lyons, the original intent was to stage a live event in the Glenn Gould studio. COVID-19 put paid to that. Instead, it morphed into a video tribute to be transmitted online and on YouTube. There are interviews and a cache of old papers. She kept things – her first contract with the BBC, a photograph taken in Washington with Jimmy Hoffa, pictures of her at receptions looking up – always looking up – at Donald MacDonald, Robert Bourassa, David Peterson.

Peter Herrndorf, who in the '80s was her boss at Bay Street, called her, “the most important radio executive in the last sixty years”, a woman who apart from his mother, he most feared and when it came to public broadcasting a moral compass.



Karin Wells is a journalist, lawyer and author of "The Abortion Caravan: When Women Shut down Government in the Battle for the Right to Choose" published by Second Story Press.

***The Radio Revolution - a Tribute to Margaret Lyons* is produced by Michael McEwen, Harold Redekopp, Mark Starowicz, and Doug Ward. Written and Directed by Karin Wells.**

The tribute will be broadcast via Zoom at 7:00 PM EST on January 28, 2021. Here is the link to register: <http://tiny.cc/mlyonstribute>.

CONTACT US:

Would you like to comment on this or anything else in the Buzz? We welcome letters to the editor. Perhaps you have a story to tell – something from your days at CBC or something interesting you're doing now? Maybe you know of a CBC retiree with a skill to share? Or a retiree we should profile? We're also interested in any photos from your working days you might like to share. We welcome your contributions and story suggestions.



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Please share this newsletter with any CBC retirees or spouses who are not yet members. Encourage them to join the PNA.

It's important that we continue to expand our membership in order to maintain our seat at the table with the CBC.
