

Contact



The CBC Pensioners
National Association

Preserving our Future, Sharing our Past

April 2021

President's Message



VIRTUAL 2021 TRIENNIAL CONVENTION PLANNED FOR MAY

Erring on the side of caution, the Board of Directors decided on March 5th to cancel all in-person meetings planned for 2021 and continue its policy of holding virtual gatherings throughout the year. This would include the Association's triennial Convention as well as the Annual General Meeting.

The Convention will be held in two stages, the first on May 18 to develop a three-year strategic plan – as explained by Dave Jeffrey in the following article - and the second at a later date to elect the national officers of the Association. Both meetings will be attended by members of the National Board of Directors as well as delegates chosen by each region. Regional representation at the Convention is based on the total number of members in each region.

Exceptionally this year, additional participants, selected by regions as observers from diverse groups, will be invited to the May 18 meeting.

As noted above, the AGM will be held virtually for a second consecutive year. The proposed date and time are September 10 at 1:00 p.m. (Eastern time). An official notice to members and the meeting agenda will be published in the next newsletter.

With reference to the strategic plan approved by the PNA in 2018, I am pleased to report that we have achieved most of our stated goals in the areas of communications, governance, and recruitment. Our most notable achievements have been the introduction of our new website, the revision process of the national by-laws, and a steady increase in membership numbers due to continued efforts in all regions, as well as a recent initiative promoting recruitment in last fall's issue of Contact distributed to all CBC/Radio-Canada

Cont'd page 2

pensioners. The presentation of regular pre-retirement meetings - held in-person in the Quebec Region and in Toronto prior to pandemic restrictions and virtually in Quebec since November 2020 for employees considering retirement - has also been helpful in attracting more members.

Like other not-for-profit organizations with a similar demographic, the PNA continues to experience difficulties in filling Board positions at all levels with a diverse group of individuals. Unfortunately, we are perceived as a white-male-dominated club. Hopefully, our strategic plan for the coming three years will contain innovative strategies that will help in attracting more retirees from under-represented groups willing to serve in leadership roles.

The electoral process to fill the positions of National President, Vice-President (Anglophone), Vice-President (Francophone) and Treasurer is ongoing, and I encourage all members to consider running for the above offices.

Last June, I informed Board members that I would not be seeking a second mandate as president of your Association. My involvement with the PNA at the national level began in 2004 when I was appointed as the EAP representative, followed by my election as treasurer for two 3-year terms and as president at the 2018 Convention. After 17 years of active service, it is time for me to focus on new projects and for our organization to be led by someone with new energy and ideas.

I am truly grateful for the confidence shown to me by Board members with whom I had the pleasure to serve during my different mandates. As well, I am very appreciative of the assistance received from our staff, Dianne and Suzie, in carrying out my duties. I enjoyed working with all of you and wish you continued success in your respective roles at the PNA and good health in your retirement years.

By the way, April 1st was the date for my first dose of the vaccine that will be protecting me and others against the COVID-19 virus. Hope you had or will soon have the opportunity to be vaccinated .

Stay safe!

Denis

MAY 2021 TRIENNIAL CONVENTION - PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

The creation and adoption of a new 3-year action plan will be the focus of delegates to the Pensioners National Association triennial convention, set for May 18, 2021.

The delegates will be presented with recommendations for addressing the four key areas of communications, advocacy, recruitment and diversity. Work on these issues first began at the convention in 2018 and this is the latest step in addressing these vital issues.

For the past several months four sub-committees have met via Zoom to examine these topics in detail. Guided by a process that seeks to understand what is happening now, why it is happening and what we can do better, the committees have been asked to report on and make recommendations that if adopted will guide the PNA for the next three years.

Among the recommendations to be proposed is:

- the establishment of a Director of Communications and a communications advisory board
- the creation of a standing committee on diversity to ensure the leadership and structures of the PNA reflect the make-up of the membership
- the renewed efforts to improve and enhance our relationships with CBC management and the Unions
- the establishment of a National Recruitment Committee to ensure that we continue to engage non-members and deferred pensioners

Due to the current travel restrictions, the convention will be conducted virtually via ZOOM. Details along with reports and recommendations will be provided to delegates in the weeks before the convention.

We will provide more details about the convention and action plan in the next edition of Contact.

If you are interested in volunteering your time to help the PNA achieve its objectives in the 3 year plan then please send us a note at info@cbcpensioners.ca.

Dave Jeffrey
Chair – 2021 Convention Planning Committee

A TV REPORT (IN FRENCH) ON SPOUSES DEPRIVED OF A SURVIVOR PENSION

The CBC/Radio-Canada French TV program, **La Facture**, covering consumer issues, has produced a report on the case of spouses who are not eligible for a survivor pension due to federal legislation on pension benefits.

Two criteria are used to exclude those spouses :

- 1- The marriage or common-law union began when the pensioner was **over 60 years of age**. Applied in the pension plans of the Canadian Armed Forces and the RCMP.
- 2- The union happened **after the date of retirement**. Applied in the pension plans of the Public Service, the Crown Corporations, and the private sector under federal jurisdiction.

To illustrate the two exclusion criteria, the report presents the testimonies of two retirees and their spouses: Mr. Robert Demers from RCMP and Mr. Pierre Sasseville from Canada Post. A trade-union point of view is given by Ms. Magali Picard, former national vice-president of the Public Service Alliance of Canada. And the legal aspect is discussed with Mr. Louis-Philippe Lampron, Professor at Laval University Law School.

It is a fairness issue. The CBC-PNA has long fought for a change to these unfair laws on pension and continues to fight as a partner of the **Surviving Spouses Pension Fairness Coalition** (www.pensionfairness-sspfc.ca).

CBC/PNA CONTRIBUTION - Our Association collaborated with the La Facture's researchers in response to their request for historical and legal information on the surviving spouse pension issue. The English Network program Marketplace (the parent program) also does investigations about issues like this. If the Marketplace team should hear from surviving spouses about this pension issue and decide to cover it, our Association will gladly cooperate in the same way.

CBC PENSION PLAN VERY HEALTHY

The CBC Pension Plan has had an impressive year finishing 2020 with its best results in more than 20 years. It's total assets now sit at more than \$8 billion and reported a going-concern surplus of \$3.3 billion and a solvency surplus of \$381 million. The results of the annual valuation were verified at the March 29th meeting of the Pension Board of Trustees

By way of background, the performance of the plan is measured in two ways – going concern and solvency. Both represent the difference between what assets the plan needs to provide pensions and meet the promise made to existing employees against the assets of the plan. In simple terms going concern is basically the book value of the assets. On that front the surplus represents 161% of assets against liabilities. The solvency calculation is theoretical and based on an assumption the plan is being wrapped up and existing assets are sold and long-term investment vehicles purchased. The current low interest rates will yield a lower return. However, in both cases the plan is reporting a surplus.

WHY DOES THIS MATTER

This latest report is important for a couple of reasons. First it demonstrates the overall health of the plan. In this case the results demonstrate the plan is in solid financial shape due in large part to its competent plan management and the application of its long-term investment strategies.

Secondly, the results are important in terms of the Memorandum of Agreement signed between the Pensioners National Association, the Unions and the CBC on the sharing of pension surpluses. The agreement reached in 2009 provides for a sharing of surplus once the lower of the two calculations exceeds 105% of liabilities. We aren't quite there yet but in this case the lower of the two figures now sits at 104.6%.

COUPLE OF NOTES OF CAUTION

While the current overall picture is positive there are a couple of things that need to be appreciated.

The CBC is attempting to renege on the deal it signed in 2009. The PNA and Unions have advised the Corporation that they intend to take the dispute to binding arbitration and the process of selecting an arbitrator has begun. We are confident the deal will survive the challenge.

One final note of caution comes from Alain Pineau, the retirees' representative on the Pension Board of Trustees, who notes: *"Markets continue to show a lot of volatility, and according to some, cannot continue to go up like they have over the past several months, especially if the current health crisis goes on. It is therefore totally possible that the year-end results for 2021 not be so stellar, but one thing is sure: you can rest confident about your pension cheques coming in! All our thanks go to the Pension Plan staff who work in difficult circumstances because of Covid."*

In other words, there is no guarantee the past will represent the future. We will keep you apprised on the status of the plan and with regards to progress on our dispute with the CBC over the surplus sharing agreement.

Dan Oldfield
PNA representative on the CCSB

DIALOGUE PILOT TO END

The pilot project that allowed CBC retirees and employees on-line access to a virtual health network is coming to an end.

Dialogue was introduced on a trial basis last April and provided access to services such as the filling and renewal of prescriptions, request blood work or a referral to a specialist, consultation for minor conditions (allergies, UTI, infections, etc.), and consultation with a medical team for any questions related to stress, insomnia and anxiety.

The one-year pilot cost approximately \$600-thousand to deliver, with 25% being paid by the CBC. The remaining amount came from a fund managed by the Consultative Committee on Staff Benefits (CCSB).

An examination of usage revealed that only about one percent of retirees took advantage of the program. So, based on the cost and the usage it was felt continuation of the program in its current form could not be supported.

We remind PNA members that, while the services may not be the same, most provinces provide some sort of on-line and phone health services.

Dan Oldfield
PNA representative on the CCSB
