



Three Days in June – The Story of the Pension Surplus

By Dan Oldfield, President

It almost didn't happen.

Picture this: June 2008, the Chateau Cartier hotel in Gatineau, Quebec. Representatives from CBC management, the Pensioners National Association, and the unions have gathered to take one last crack at resolving a dispute that's been festering for nearly a decade. Relationships are fractured. Trust is thin. The stakes couldn't be higher.

And then—because apparently the universe has a sense of humour—the hotel's air conditioning dies. Completely.

We're talking a heat wave with the humidex hitting 48 degrees, and all we've got are a few sad floor fans pushing hot air around the room.

But here's the thing about shared misery: it has a way of bringing people together. Three sweltering, exhausting days later, we had a deal.

That agreement—the Memorandum of Agreement, or MOA—created something genuinely unique: a written pension surplus sharing arrangement. To date, CBC pensioners have received four surplus payouts totaling nearly \$300 million. Another payout is expected next year, which would bring the total close to half a billion dollars. We've looked, and we don't know of any other pension plan in North America with a written agreement like this.

So how did we get to that sweltering hotel room in Gatineau?

The dispute

Rewind to the spring of 2000. The pension plan had seen small surpluses before—nothing unusual. But this time was different. CBC announced a surplus of more than \$600 million, and the corporation was taking a three-year contribution holiday—essentially pocketing money that would normally go into the plan. The Pensioners Association and the unions, meeting through the Consultative Committee on Staff Benefits (CCSB), looked at those numbers and said, "Hold on—retirees and employees deserve a fair share of that."

CBC said no.

What followed was years of grievances, arbitration, and lawsuits—all stuck in legal purgatory. Meanwhile, the relationship between CBC and its unions deteriorated. In 2005, the Canadian Media Guild was locked out for eight weeks. By the time the dust settled, trust was at an all-time low and the surplus issue was still unresolved.

New leadership, new approach

Then, in 2007, things shifted. New CBC President Hubert Lacroix and new Radio-Canada Branch President Marc-Philippe Laurin arrived and signaled they wanted to try something different. George Smith, CBC's VP of People and Culture, and I—then chief negotiator for the Canadian Media Guild—were tasked with working out a new approach to labour relations. Critical to building trust: finally tackling the pension surplus issue.

George would lead for CBC. The unions and the PNA asked me to lead our side. The challenge was real. CBC had a clear, unified position. Our side—a coalition with different cultures, competing interests, and distinct relationships—had to find common ground.

The negotiations

If you're imagining formal boardroom meetings with PowerPoint presentations, forget it. These talks were pure hallway diplomacy. George and I would huddle separately with our committees, then meet—literally in hallways or on hotel balconies—to hash out possible solutions away from the pressure of the room. We'd report back, test ideas, get pushback, regroup, and try again. Our committee started calling us Romeo and Juliet, though thankfully no one ever clarified who was who.

Progress was slow. Beyond surplus sharing, CBC wanted to address rising healthcare costs, which they estimated could climb by 10% annually. Emotions ran high. More than once, the whole thing teetered on the edge of collapse.

The breakthrough came when our side floated an idea: What if we used a tiny slice of future negotiated wage increases—just 0.1%—to create a special fund over 10 years that CBC could draw from when healthcare costs exceeded inflation? Actuaries on both sides ran the numbers and confirmed it could work. Suddenly, we had something.

Almost a deal

Hammering out the final details took us late into the evening and into the early hours of the next morning. Everyone was exhausted, overheated, but finally—finally—we had an agreement in principle. And then came the curveball.

The president of one of the Quebec unions, SCRC, stood up and announced he was leaving the table. His union wouldn't be signing. It was one of those moments where you felt the whole thing slipping away—all those hours, all that work, about to crumble.

But here's what saved it: everyone else stayed put. CBC, the PNA, and the other unions held firm and signed the deal anyway. It wasn't perfect, but it was done. (Eight years later, under new leadership, SCRC—by then renamed STTRC—came back and signed on without any changes.)

What it means

The MOA is fundamentally fair: when the sponsor benefits from surplus money, contributors do too. It's also responsible, designed to ensure the pension plan can keep doing its primary job—delivering those monthly pension cheques. Three days in a sweltering hotel in Gatineau, back in June 2008, created something genuinely unique—an agreement that's put nearly half a billion dollars in the pockets of pensioners and employees, with more on the way.

Moving Forward with Purpose

President's Message
by Dan Oldfield

I hope you were able to enjoy the holiday season and spend some good times with family and friends. I am also mindful that the season can be difficult for some and I encourage members to reach out to their former colleagues, not just in the holiday season but throughout the year.

I am excited about the year ahead and you'll get a few hints about what's coming in this edition of our national newsletter, CONTACT.

For the past 25 years, the Pensioners National Association has worked hard to represent the interests of its members. We're proud of what we've achieved — but we're certainly not resting on our laurels.

2026 will bring some exciting changes for the PNA. In the coming months, you'll see a fresh new look for the organization and you'll be hearing more about a more proactive approach to advocacy.

A key objective continues to be growing our membership and we have reached an important milestone: More than 6,000 people are now members of the PNA family. That's great news. Still, there's more to do. More than 4,000 CBC retirees have not yet signed up. Continuing to grow is vital if we're to truly reflect the needs and priorities of all pensioners. A larger membership strengthens our credibility, brings in a wider range of perspectives, and helps ensure a strong future for the organization.

If you're not yet a member, joining the PNA is a simple, meaningful way to show appreciation for the many volunteers who generously give their time, energy, and ideas. It's a tangible way to support their work and show your respect for what they do.

I also want to hear from you. Communication at its best is a two-way street. What's on your mind, what do you think we need to do or do better? You can contact me at info@cbcpensioners.ca.

Wishing all of you the best in 2026.



Dan Oldfield, President of the CBC
Pensioners National Association

Taking our Voice to Parliament Hill

By Barbara Saxberg, Ontario Region President & Chair,
National Advocacy Committee

The new year is bringing fresh energy and real momentum to the PNA. Our National Advocacy Committee has been working hard to develop a strategy and action plan that truly serves our members' interests.

When the PNA was founded 25 years ago, our mandate was clear: protect CBC pensions and benefits, and help our members live better as they age. That mission hasn't changed. But our approach has. We used to be more reactive on seniors' issues—now we're taking a proactive stance to create lasting change and actually influence public policy.

What does that look like? We have plans to raise public awareness of seniors' concerns, empower our local chapters, and partner with external allies to build a strong, respected political voice.

These are ambitious goals for an organization that runs almost entirely on volunteer power. Still, we're committed to being true champions for our members.

This past fall, the National Board approved a six-month pilot project with PAA Advisory, an Ottawa-based public relations firm, to advance our interests on Parliament Hill. PAA Advisory is a recognized leader in arts and culture and brings solid expertise in financial services and healthcare. They're helping us sharpen our strategy, stay current, and get meetings with the political decision-makers who matter.



With Stephen Guilbeault's resignation and Marc Miller's appointment as Culture Minister—plus the federal budget being pushed to spring—we're focusing our initial efforts on advocating for CBC/Radio-Canada. Next month, our national president Dan Oldfield and other PNA representatives will be meeting with Miller and other decision-makers in Ottawa to express our concerns and push for long-term stable funding. It's part of our renewed commitment to expanding our political voice in action, and a chance to show the PNA's strength.

Life In Motion

What Our Members Are Up To - Moving, Competing, and Thriving

Lifting Limits: Wendy Martin's Strength Story

A lifelong athlete and CBC retiree, Wendy Martin discovered Olympic weightlifting through CrossFit more than a decade ago, inspired by her son. After an early silver-medal finish at provincials, she went on to compete nationally, winning gold and setting multiple Canadian records in her age category.

Now training for the world championships, she proves strength and determination have no age limit.



Wendy Martin (Cape Breton) during the National Masters Competition last June



Bridget O'Toole (Mississauga) at the end of a curling game

Back on the Ice: A Curling Comeback

A lifelong curler, Bridget O'Toole first took up the sport in the 1980s before returning after retirement in 2017. Relearning the modern game at Dixie Curling Centre, she rediscovered not only the physical challenge but the friendships, camaraderie, and vibrant community that make curling so special.

Proof that it's never too late to reconnect with a passion — and get fit along the way.

Learn more at : www.bit.ly/44IR75f

A Lifetime on the Ice: Jeannita Richard's Journey

A lifelong athlete, Jeannita Richard describes hockey not just as a passion, but a lifelong obsession. A gold medallist at the Canada Games with her team, the Girls, she compares the victory to winning the Stanley Cup — a defining moment built on teamwork, chemistry, and sheer determination.

From borrowing her brother's stick as a child in New Brunswick to becoming a pioneer of women's university hockey and playing competitively in Montreal for over 25 years, Richard's story is one of perseverance, camaraderie, and love of sport — proof that passion and team spirit never fade.



Jeannita Richard (Montreal) during a hockey game

Learn more at: www.bit.ly/4pDpmCJ



Sign up for a special PNA event on Zoom
February 20, 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. ET

SPECIAL PRESENTATION

NORA YOUNG

“The Promise and Perils of AI”

Nora Young is senior technology reporter for CBC News, author of *The Virtual Self*, and former host of CBC Radio's *Spark*. She will talk about navigating a world in which Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a reality, with all its potential and its risks. A question-and-answer session will follow.

You must register to attend.

Write to info@cbcpensioners.ca by February 13.



REGISTER
NOW

Care to get engaged?

By Talin Vartanian, Chair of the PNA's new Member Engagement Committee and Ontario VP

The saying is there are people in the parade; people who are watching the parade; and most people don't even know a parade is happening. In this case, the parade is a metaphor for the CBC pensioners' association. And I'm in it.

For 43 years I worked as a CBC Radio producer on programs such as *Morningside*, *As It Happens*, *Canada Reads*, and *The Sunday Edition*--and my life was stressful, sometimes infuriating, and often exhausting. Most often it was fascinating and stimulating.



In the next chapter of my life, I couldn't imagine putting up my feet and doing nothing. That's why I tell people I'm rewired, not retired. I've been freelancing as a writer, editor, and producer (with some interesting clients), a member of the Board of two non-profit organizations, and an active volunteer.

The problem with most non-profit groups is that there aren't enough people in the parade. The PNA is no exception. Our new Standing Committee on Member Engagement plans to tackle that problem. Our goal is to convince members who are sitting on the sidelines, or unaware a parade is happening, to get involved... even if it's to do just one thing.

Any member who's aware of what the PNA has accomplished (pension surplus, anyone?) knows how much it matters. Those of us making a difference by marching in the parade can't do it forever.

If you want the parade to go on, consider this your official invitation to put on your fancy boots and join us, even for a short stretch.

Email us at info@cbcpensioners.ca and be part in making a real difference!

Preparing for the Big Reveal

This year, you're going to notice some changes in how the PNA looks and communicates. We've been working hard on integrating a fresh brand identity across everything we do, and our new website design should be ready to launch this spring. We're updating our written materials, brochures, membership cards, social media—even our lapel pins. We'll share more details as we get closer.



Here's how this came about: Last year, we brought in Aubs & Co., a brand and design studio, to help us clearly define who we are and what we stand for. We wanted a look that reflects a vibrant, credible organization that resonates with today's members and the ones who'll join us down the road. At the same time, we wanted to honour our shared CBC history while making sure the PNA's distinct identity comes through.

The themes we landed on? Life continues beyond the CBC. Retirement can be full of optimism and energy. And the PNA is an organization built on confidence, trust, respect, and security—one that's genuinely worth being part of.

Our new identity reflects that shared spirit—embracing where we've come from, recognizing that our lives have meaning beyond the CBC, and moving forward with energy and optimism.

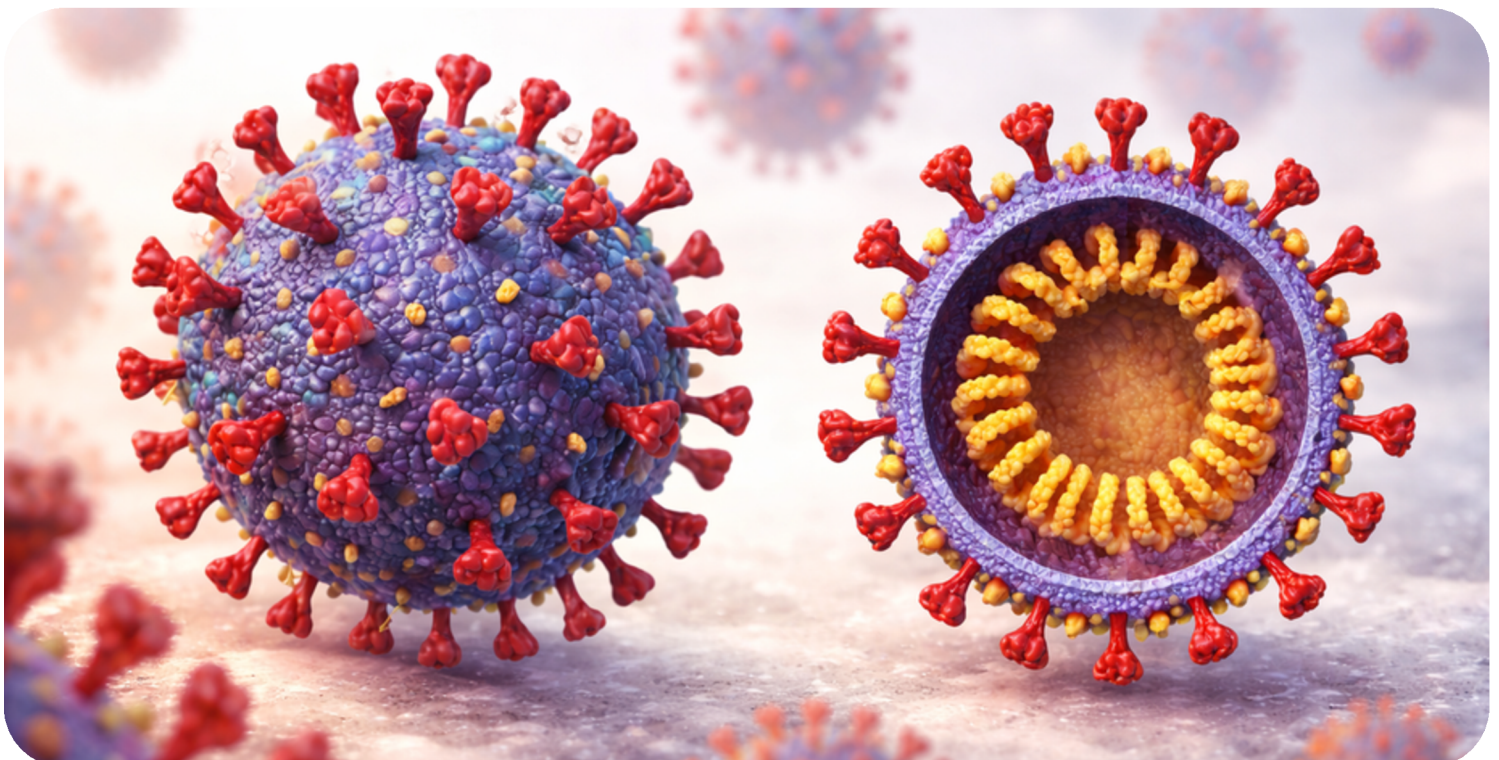
We're looking forward to this next chapter. We think you will be too.

A Shot in the Arm: Recommended vaccines for older adults

By Maureen Brosnahan, Contributor

It's winter and as many of us spend more time indoors and in confined spaces, we are more likely to come in contact with a plethora of viruses. Research, especially since the pandemic, has seen the rapid development of many new vaccines meant to counter these viruses.

Here's a summary of what Health Canada and infectious disease experts across Canada now recommend for older adults.



COVID

Yes, that nasty disease is still with us, although it gets less attention than in the past. Since our immune system ages as we do, it's not as strong in older adults. That's why Health Canada continues to recommend that those over 60 get a COVID shot every six months. The vaccine, which is tailored to the latest strain, boosts the immune system and protects from disease.

RSV

Its official name is Respiratory Syncytial Virus. It may sound new but it's actually been around for years. At onset, it resembles the common cold. It causes lower lung disease which can lead to pneumonia and congestive heart disease. But for the first time Health Canada has approved a vaccine that can prevent it. It's recommended for adults over 60. It may still be in limited supply across the country. And it's only covered under Medicare in some provinces and territories.

PNEUMONIA

Pneumonia is among the top 10 causes of death in Canada, especially among those over age 65. It's a one-time vaccine that's available across the country.

INFLUENZA

The flu shot has been around for decades. It's an annual shot that changes each year anticipating the strain that will be circulating.

Thousands of Canadians, young and old, die from the flu. This year experts are predicting a bad year.

They acknowledge that this year's vaccine is not a great match for the virus that's now circulating. But they all strongly recommend older adults get the shot as it will offer some protection and prevent severe disease.



SHINGLES

Shingles is caused by the same virus as chickenpox. So if you had chickenpox as a child, the virus has remained in your system. It can reactivate later in life causing debilitating nerve pain. Studies show one in three people will develop shingles in their lifetime. It's a two-dose vaccine that is available across Canada.

Overall, these vaccines are recommended for older adults. The biggest problem is a patchwork of programs when it comes to funding. Some provinces will cover the cost of the vaccines. In other jurisdictions, patients have to pay. In the case of RSV, that can be a couple of hundred dollars. Best to check with your local public health officials to find out what is covered under your provincial medicare plan.

Maureen Brosnahan was a Senior National Reporter who covered numerous health and social policy issues over her 30-plus years with CBC. Before that, she was the Medical Reporter for the Winnipeg Tribune and the Winnipeg Free Press.

CLARIFICATION

In last fall's edition of CONTACT, we published an article on steps to be taken by the relatives of a retiree if the latter became incapacitated or died. This article has been updated.

In several provinces, funeral services include cooperatives and alternative services in addition to funeral homes.

In Quebec, a protection mandate is required in the event of incapacity to take over the power of attorney. The Déclaration de décès (Declaration of Death) is the document drafted jointly with funeral services. Finally, the Chambre des notaires du Québec Web site (Quebec Chamber of Notaries) can be consulted on these issues.

The correct address of the Pension Administration Centre:

CBC/Radio-Canada Pension Administration Centre
2200 – 630 René-Lévesque Boulevard West
Montreal, Quebec H3B 1S6.

The entire updated article can be read online here: www.bit.ly/3Y3awtR

Letters to the Editor - Your Voice Matters!

We'd love to hear from you.

Whether it's a response to an article, a personal story, or thoughts on issues that matter to our community, share your perspective with us.

Selected letters may be featured in a future issue of CONTACT.

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