



National Association
of Federal Retirees Association nationale
des retraités fédéraux

FRASER VALLEY WEST

BC 04
Branch Update (#1)
January 2024

HAPPY ★ NEW ★ YEAR

Christmas at Newlands

Another well-attended event! We welcomed several members attending their first branch meeting—Judith & Carman Hutmacher, Mary Fulton, and BC Whyte. Guests included Kyle Latchford for MP John Aldag, Paul Crump (Langley Seniors in Action) and from the Langley Senior Resources Society, Loretta Solomon (President) and Kate Ludlum (Executive Director). Ian also recognized and welcomed Steve Sawchuk, Branch Services Coordinator for Western BC and Leslie Gaudette (COSCO).

The program this year included a salute to the RCMP on their 150th anniversary, led by Eric Ross. Kate Ludlum brought greetings on behalf of the LS Resource Society. The Centre operates the largest adult day care program in the Fraser Health region, engaging the clients and providing important respite to their caregivers. Kate encouraged the audience to research and participate in the extensive (and continuously improving) services and activities offered at the Centre.

Kyle Latchford brought greetings from MP John Aldag, and spoke of ongoing efforts to improve the administration of the Public Service Health Care Plan under Canada Life. He invited any members needing assistance with PSHCP claims (whether Cloverdale-Langley City constituents or not) to contact their office.



After lunch, we ramped up the Christmas cheer with a beautiful program of seasonal songs sung a cappella by the Crescendo Quartet (Plus One). (Thank you, Judy, for the suggestion!) Then Ilene and Katherine conducted the draw for door prizes and members melted away into the rainy afternoon full of good cheer.

From the president's desk... Looking back, looking forward...

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I wish you a happy, prosperous and peaceful New Year.

The creation of a National Seniors' Strategy, with input from all levels of government, is one of Federal Retirees' four longstanding advocacy priorities. In 2023, we supported that priority from several angles

- We hosted a Zoom presentation to turn a spotlight on the success of the OASIS project, where seniors in multi-unit residential buildings organize themselves to overcome the social isolation that sends many individuals into long term care prematurely;
- In meetings with provincial and federal politicians, we carried the message of the BC Seniors' Advocate in her report 'Home Care—We Must Do Better'. For seniors with low or medium incomes, who could stay in their homes with a little assistance, the cost of home care can be prohibitive, again sending them into long term care prematurely
- We hosted a 'townhall' with the theme 'Aging in Place requires a plan...' Panelists from Fraser Health and Brella Community Services helped us understand the range and the limits of available services and the need to develop a personal strategy for navigating the years ahead.

(continued, page 2)

President goes on...

In meetings with Members of Parliament, branch volunteers continue to promote Federal Retirees' eight recommendations for issues to be addressed in the 2024 federal budget. We want to see budget measures that support (enforceable) standards for long term care and the implementation of a national seniors strategy, that support caregivers by making the caregivers' tax credit refundable, and that address the need for urgent action on cost of living issues for lower income Canadians.

A recent study by the United Way underscores the urgency: it concluded that 15.2 per cent of seniors in BC are considered 'low income', and in 2020, one in four seniors had after-tax incomes below \$21,800 — almost \$10,000 below the minimum wage. Until not too long ago, seniors had the lowest 'low income' rates of any age group, but now the United Way reports that 'low-income' rates among seniors are almost double that of any age group. Inflationary pressures can be particularly catastrophic for low income renters suddenly facing eviction.

All this to say our advocacy work will be front and centre in 2024. We have a provincial election on the horizon in October, and we are already making plans to make sure "national senior's strategy" becomes part of the vocabulary of MLAs and candidates. We will be checking in with our MPs, watching closely as the implementation of the national dental plan rolls out to include seniors, and looking for signs of at least a framework for national pharmacare, and, of course, we will continue to help escalate issues with the transition of the administration of the Public Service Health Care Plan.

We hope to see 'Meet and Chat' meetings continue throughout 2024, some with speakers on particular topics, some just informal coffee meetings where you can get to know the neighbours. If you would like to host a 'Meet and Chat' in your corner of the Branch, contact a member of the Board and we will help find a venue and cover the costs. Stay tuned for news on upcoming information meetings on 'What's New with Medoc?' and 'You and Your Survivors'.

In 2023, we also took time to party—celebrating the Association's 60th anniversary at our Branch Annual Meeting (Elvis and Cher) and again at our Branch Annual Barbecue (cake). The Christmas meeting and luncheon was another success (thanks to Katherine, Ilene, Judy and Sharon and all the branch volunteers who contributed to the event).

Over the past couple of years, it has been a particular pleasure to see a number of members stepping up to volunteer their services. And we always need members who are willing to engage with their MPs—politicians prefer to be speaking with people who can actually vote for them. We hope you will come out and help us do more, better in 2024.

Ian Spence



BC O4 volunteers met with Sukh Dhaliwal (MP, Surrey-Newton, Liberal) on Monday, December 4th, to advance the Association's recommendations for the 2024 federal budget. Mohni Khanna (constituent) and Ian Spence met with the MP for half an hour at his constituency office in Newton. We focused on the need for improved supports for home care and national standards for long term care. Mr. Dhaliwal showed particular interest in the proposal to make the caregivers tax credit a refundable credit to benefit lower income families caring for a loved one at home.

Mark your calendars!

Branch Annual Meeting, Wednesday, March 13th, 2024

Venue: Still working on that. Stay tuned.

All board positions are up for election.

To nominate someone, or get more information, contact Bernd at bh45jh@shaw.ca



CANADIAN ALLIANCE OF BRITISH PENSIONERS

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Indexation vexation for British ex-pats

Canadian pensioners understand and appreciate the value of pension indexing to help them keep up with inflation. The pension indexation rate for Canadian government pensions for 2024 is 4.8 per cent. The Federal Superannuates National Association (as we were known prior to 2014) was instrumental in the achievement of pension indexation in 1970.

The battle for indexation is one ex-pat British pensioners are still fighting—at least those who happen to live in Commonwealth countries such as Canada, Australia and New Zealand. An estimated 1.2 million British pensioners live abroad; for 700,000 of them, including those who reside in the U.S.A., the pensions are indexed. Inexplicably, however, British state pensions paid to the other 500,000 who live in Commonwealth countries are not indexed. Without indexation, the value and purchasing power of a pension erodes rapidly. Indexing for the 126,000 British pensioners residing in Canada would obviously be a benefit for them and for Canada, reducing their reliance on the Canadian social safety net. And, yes, Canada indexes the CPP for Canadians residing in the UK and anywhere else.

The Canadian Alliance of British Pensioners continues to lobby MPs on both sides of the Atlantic. If you or someone you know is affected by this issue, or to lend your support... Their contact info is in the banner above. And there is a local contact in South Surrey: Derek Peters at djp45@shaw.ca

Taking control of your stuff - *Carpe diem, one diem at a time!*



NKR DOWNSIZING SOLUTIONS

Top 10 Tips

HOW TO DOWNSIZE YOUR HOME

Downsizing and moving can be overwhelming, regardless of your age, and even harder for seniors and their families. This is an emotional time for everybody, but it is manageable and doable.

Take a deep breath and lets go.

REDUCE

REMOVE

RELOCATE

20+ members turned out for the 'Meet and Chat' on December 14th to dust off their resolve to confront their collections and/or accumulations in 2024.

Professional 'downsizer' Niki Rapanos (NKR Downsizing Solutions) led a lively discussion, giving generously of her experience with helping people prepare to move to smaller, more manageable spaces. Her 'Top Ten Tips' included—when you're sorting through your stuff, deciding what is essential, what can be sold /donated/

recycled, and what is landfill - 'give yourself lots of time', 'go one drawer or cupboard or shelf at a time' and 'do it in **increments of no more than an hour** or so.' (Which means you should probably start today!)

Niki's company can help you with the decision-making and they run on-line auctions to help your find buyers who will love your stuff next. Our thanks go to Karin Christiansen for hosting this enjoyable and informative meeting.

Protect Your Mail & Packages

Report
Non-Urgent
Crimes Online!

A MESSAGE FROM THE
LANGLEY CITY

CRIME PREVENTION COMMITTEE

Mail theft has increased more
and more with the use of
delivery services.

Packages are often stolen
directly from your door,
however, letter mail is also
targeted for ID theft.



How to discourage letter mail and ID theft?

1. Collect your mail daily from the mailbox.
2. If you are away, use the "Hold Mail" service to suspend delivery until you return.
3. When you Move: File a "change of address" with Canada Post.
4. Shred Documents that contain personal or financial data as well as credit card offers and statements.
5. Deposit mail or gifts at the post office directly, and in street mailboxes as close to the pickup time as possible.

How to discourage package theft?

1. The number one way to prevent package theft is to have them shipped to a place where someone is available to receive it.
2. FedEx and Purolator both recommend having packages set to be picked up at retail courier locations instead of home delivery.
3. Use Amazon Lockers if they are available in your area.
4. Require signatures for delivery if possible.
5. Install security cameras, video doorbells, and monitoring signage at your front door.



Fraser Valley West Branch board (2023)

President	Ian Spence (604) 753-7845
Vice President	Eric Ross
Secretary	Ilene Fika
Treasurer	Rod Tondevold
Directors	Leslie Gaudette Thelma Graham Bernd Hirsekorn Katherine Kettler Arlene Johnston Judy McLellan Sharon Riches Glen (Rocky) Rockwell

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Health Benefits Officer (HBO)

Should you need any assistance getting information on the Public Service Health Care Plan, the Pensioners Dental Service Plan, or dealing with pension contact centers (Veterans Affairs Canada, RCMP Pension, etc.)

please contact our Health Benefits Officer:

Glen (Rocky) Rockwell at 604-496-4426

or email at grockwell@shaw.ca

Keep in touch!

Call Ian (604) 753-7845

or email nafrbc04@gmail.com :

- To update your address or contact info
- To arrange a listing in the "in Memoriam" section in **Sage** magazine.

Login to federalretirees.ca to check your Member Profile and make sure you 'Communication Preferences' and contact info are up-to-date.