



Annual General Meeting
June 17, 2015

Report to
2015 Annual General Meeting
from

BC FORUM Board of Directors
Diane Wood, President

2015 Annual General Meeting

Sisters and brothers,

Welcome!

This report to the Annual General Meeting of the B.C. Federation of Retired Union Members covers our activities since the last AGM, held June 11, 2014.

This is a year for action by all our members, and indeed by all Canadians who care about the future direction of our country.

A federal election will be held in October. That will be our opportunity to finally give Stephen Harper his pink slip, and to bring about real, progressive change for working people, retirees and our families.

Jack Layton frequently said, “Don’t let them tell you it can’t be done.”

And in the last federal election, he did it. Side-by-side with his then Quebec lieutenant Tom Mulcair, he led Canada’s NDP to a virtual sweep in a province where the party had barely had a toehold in the past.

Last month we witnessed another political miracle.

With a campaign built on inspiration and hope, Rachel Notley led the Alberta NDP from four seats to a majority government, thoroughly trouncing the conservative dynasty that has ruled the province – in the form of the Social Credit and Conservative parties – since 1935.

Jack Layton lit a spark. And Rachel Notley has fanned the flame even brighter.

If the NDP can win in Alberta, victory in a federal election is clearly and realistically within reach for the first time in Canada’s history.

Going into this year’s campaign, our party is stronger than ever before.

For the first time, Canada’s NDP starts from the position of being the official opposition.

In addition, the party has outlined an impressive series of progressive policy proposals including a plan to strengthen public health care, affordable child care, a \$15 federal minimum wage, and abolition of our scandal and patronage ridden Senate.

Recently, the NDP presented a bill to the House of Commons calling for a national strategy to tackle the pain caused to so many families by the growing problem of dementia among seniors. The Harper majority defeated this sorely needed initiative.

It is one more example of how uncaring and out-of-touch this government is, refusing to take action on issues that could make lives better for Canadians.

Instead, the Harper Conservatives continue to undermine Medicare by refusing the renegotiate the federal-provincial Health Accord that expired last year. The government is threatening the retirement security of our children and grandchildren by raising the age of eligibility for Old Age Security and the Guaranteed Income Supplement, and

refusing to make much-needed improvements to the Canada Pension Plan. It is deepening inequality and poverty by relentlessly handing out tax giveaways to corporations and the wealthy. It is working over-time to intimidate and silence its many critics through political Canada Revenue Agency audits, shutting down scientists and researchers whose findings disagree with Conservative ideology, and giving intelligence operatives powers to pry into the private affairs of citizens in a way that's unprecedented in Canada.

The labour movement, workers, and retired workers are under constant attack. We must work together to fight back and defeat this government.

There are many issues at the provincial level that require our attention. The Christy Clark government continues to drift aimlessly on a sea of empty promises.

But for this year, the focus for BC FORUM and our allies must be the federal election.

Our partners at the Canadian Labour Congress have already kicked off a comprehensive "Time for Change" initiative with a series of rallies across the country. A new website – betterchoice.ca – outlines key issues that we all need to think about as we cast our ballot.

"I don't have to tell you the importance of winning this election. Our movement and our country depend on it," says Hassan Yussuff, President of the CLC.

BC FORUM will stand shoulder-to-shoulder with our sisters and brothers to support this initiative.

We have already begun to highlight federal election issues on our website – bcforum.ca – and in our news magazine *The Advocate*. Our objective is to ensure that our members and the many others who read our communications are fully aware of the impact of Harper's actions, as well as the opportunity we now have to help bring about change.

As the election date grows closer, we will intensify our efforts to motivate and inspire people to vote Harper out of office and elect Tom Mulcair's New Democrats. We will use every tool at our disposal including email, our website, *The Advocate*, person to person contact and telephone calls.

We ask every BC FORUM member to join us in these initiatives. We ask you to help us grow stronger by signing up a friend, relative or co-worker. Take home a few application forms from this meeting. Or use the one that's printed in our news magazine, *The Advocate*.

Remember that membership is open to all members of unions affiliated to the B.C. Federation of Labour who are aged 50 or more, not just retirees.

Canadians deserve a better government, one that cares about the everyday needs of ordinary people. We must help make it happen. Together, we can.

Thanks to our allies and supporters

A major part of BC FORUM activities is funded through the dues contributed by members like you. We are very grateful for your support.

Since most retired workers have limited means, we do our utmost to keep our dues as low as possible.

This makes it essential for us to look to our partners, allies and supporters for funding to keep our organization active, vibrant and alive.

Our friends at WE Consulting and Benefits – which provides the excellent benefit plans that are available to BC FORUM members – very generously contribute \$40,000 a year.

Working Ventures Insurance Solutions is contributing \$8,000 annually.

UFCW 1518 has committed to paying the cost of printing four editions of The Advocate this year.

Other unions, such as BCGEU, provide continuing in-kind support, including the printing of BC FORUM leaflets, travel and accommodation costs for its Board members, and meeting space.

The BC Federation of Labour donates office space and other support.

A growing number of large unions and locals are now paying the first year BC FORUM membership dues for their retiring members.

All of these contributions are helping us to balance the budget, continue our activities, and pay the salary of our one person part-time administrative staff.

They are made, we believe, in recognition of the fact that retired workers can be a powerful force for political change. We vote. We believe in a civil society. And there are more of us every day.

BC FORUM is a vehicle to bring together retired workers. Like the labour movement itself, our strength depends on our numbers.

We must continue to sign up more older workers and retired union members every day. Again, we ask for your help to make it happen.

Our heritage

BC FORUM is unique. We are the only B.C. organization of older and retired workers which is directly affiliated to the labour movement. We are proud of the strong role we play in labour campaigns, and our growing ability to influence and participate in public policy debates. We are a voice for solidarity across generations, and a more civil society.

As you will see throughout this report, our links to the movement, and to those who are working to build a better province, are deep and lasting. It is part of our structure and purpose.

In the last year, the links have grown even stronger. Delegates to the BC Federation of Labour convention strongly supported a constitutional change to give BC FORUM's President both voice and vote at the BC FED Executive Council, the labour movement's highest decision-making body between conventions.

As we all know from our years in the movement, we are strongest when we work together in solidarity, bringing our experience to bear for the benefit of workers both young and old. We thank you for your contribution to building our collective strength, and our ability to press for real change.

Electoral action

Like other seniors organizations, BC FORUM advocates on public policy issues that affect our members and their families. Unlike most other seniors groups, however, we are not non-partisan. We recognize that there is only one party that truly understands the needs of workers. We do not pretend to be politically neutral. We have been active, and will continue to be active, in civic, provincial and federal elections to support candidates who will speak out for working families. We proudly do all we can to help elect the party of labour.

Our election work is closely coordinated with the labour movement. Two members of our Board of Directors – President Diane Wood and Director Gord Larkin – are active representatives on the B.C. Federation of Labour's Political Action Committee.

In the municipal election held last November, we used all available tools – our website, Facebook, e-mail, The Advocate, personal phone calls and face-to-face discussions – to encourage our members to get out and vote for candidates who were endorsed by their local labour council.

As mentioned earlier, we have already begun to gear up for the federal election that will be held on Oct. 19, 2015.

We will speak out for renegotiation of the federal-provincial health accord. We will call for universal public home support services, a national Pharmacare program, fair taxes, and improvements in public pensions. We will work closely with the Canadian Labour Congress, the B.C. Federation of Labour and other seniors' organizations – such as the Council of Senior Citizens' Organizations (COSCO), the Congress of Union Retirees of Canada (CURC) and the National Pensioners' Federation (NPF) – to maximize the impact of our message.

In solidarity with the groups mentioned above, we are part of "Seniors Vote," formed by more than 50 organizations across Canada to demand action on retirement security and health care. This campaign has already hosted an April 20 pre-budget event in Ottawa. Further cross-Canada events are planned, including a flag-raising ceremony on Oct. 1, the International Day of Older Persons.

It is time for progressive change in Canada.

Executive and Labour Council representation

There have been significant changes to our volunteer Board of Directors.

As you know, our former Chair, Jim Sinclair, has retired from his position as President of the BC Federation of Labour. We thank Jim for his many years of steadfast support of retired workers and the work of BC FORUM. In recognition of his contribution, we have presented Jim with a Lifetime Membership in our organization.

As the new President of the BC FED, Irene Lanzinger has also assumed the role of Chair of BC FORUM. We have already met with her on many occasions and appreciate the continued support she is providing.

Two directors have stepped down for personal reasons.

Alice West, former President, has for so many years been a tower of strength on a broad range of issues, and particularly women's rights and retirement security.

Dave Gill, former Treasurer, spent many hours keeping our books in order and helping to maintain our data base.

We extend our deepest thanks to both of them.

Three new directors have joined us.

The BC Teachers Federation has appointed Barb Mikulec, who is also a director of the BC Retired Teachers Association and the Council of Senior Citizens' Organizations of BC.

The Hospital Employees' Union has appointed Donisa Bernardo, a full-time officer of the union recently acclaimed to her fifth term as Financial Secretary.

And COPE 378 has appointed its immediate past president, Andy Ross, to the BC FORUM board.

We look forward to working with them to strengthen the voices of older and retired workers.

The board extends our condolences to the family and friends of Gerry Edwards who has passed away. Gerry gave many years of his time to BC FORUM, serving in a variety of roles including President and Chair of the resolutions committee, prior to stepping down due to ill health. We miss him.

BC FORUM's regional representation through delegate status at labour councils is an important part of building our presence in communities throughout the province.

Coordinating our work at the provincial and regional level is a key priority for the Board. Our delegates are extremely active in their labour councils, building BC FORUM's profile in their communities. Several have acted as local media spokespeople for our organization, speaking out on issues that affect older and retired workers and our families.

We have delegate representation at the vast majority of the labour councils in B.C.

During the period covered by this report, we have appointed Agnes Jackman as a regional representative and delegate to the Vancouver and District Labour Council, Greg McGowan to the North Okanagan Labour Council, and Heather Sapergia to the North Central Labour Council.

We thank Tom Duncan, John Hurren, Iris Taylor and Marjorie Witton who have stepped down after long service to BC FORUM in their communities.

Due to budget constraints, and the high cost of travel and accommodation, we have not been able to arrange a face-to-face meeting between board members and regional representatives for the last three years. Such meetings have been very useful in the past. We have compensated in several ways. We send representatives frequent e-mail updates on board decisions and current issues. We provide background information as needed to assist delegates in maximizing media opportunities when they arise. We seize the opportunity to meet with delegates when board members are in their area for other events. And while we recognize that it's difficult for those who live outside the Lower Mainland to attend, we have extended a standing invitation to regional representatives to attend board meetings as observers.

At the Board level, the volunteer directors appointed by affiliated unions continue to work very hard to meet the challenges we face as an organization and as a movement.

Lists of your Board of Directors and regional representatives are attached to this report.

Liaison with affiliates

Ensuring that every union member has the opportunity to join BC FORUM when she or he retires is essential if we are to build our membership. That's the time when most members join. Getting our message to the right people at the right time is more easily said than done. Many unions do not have the ability to track retirements.

To collectively address this issue, and other common interests, we have established a formal process of consultation with affiliated unions. Twenty affiliates have appointed representatives to liaise with BC FORUM and attend regular meetings.

The affiliate liaisons work to promote our organization in their newsletters and websites, help distribute our brochures to members nearing retirement, extend invitations to attend their conventions and conferences as a guest and set up a display booth, and foster communication between their administrative staff and ours. We are working to encourage even more affiliates to appoint liaisons.

Pre-retirement planning

The manual for our modular course on pre-retirement planning – developed in cooperation with the Congress of Union Retirees of Canada – has been revised with the assistance of our Education Committee to incorporate the most recent information about the issues facing British Columbians who are nearing retirement age.

More than a dozen members of BC FORUM have been trained as instructors.

The course was delivered for the first time in September at a two day session sponsored by the Canadian Media Guild.

The course will be delivered through labour council weekend schools and affiliated unions. We look forward to providing this vital information to more workers who are preparing for retirement.

Outreach

In recent years, BC FORUM has been working hard, with notable success, to increase our visibility within the labour movement.

This work by directors and other volunteers takes many forms.

We presented information on BC FORUM (and Protein for People) at display booths, and reached out to participants at numerous conventions and events:

- Labour Day celebrations in Vancouver and the Fraser Valley.
- Hospital Employees' Union Convention.
- IBEW 213 Retirees luncheon.
- BC Federation of Labour Convention.
- BCFED Executive Council meetings.
- National Pensioners Federation Convention.
- CUPE BC Convention.
- Congress of Union Retirees of Canada (CURC) Executive Council meetings.
- BCFED Ranking Officers meeting.
- HSA Convention.
- FPSE Convention.
- Union Retiree meetings.
- SHARE / BCFED Pension Forum.
- Pension Plan Boards of Trustees.
- CLC town hall meeting on retirement security.
- BC NDP Regional Conference in Penticton.
- BCFED Regional Conference in Terrace.
- BCFED lobbying activities in Victoria.
- National Day of Action for Public Health Care rallies.
- United Way Labour Appreciation event.
- Canadian Labour Congress Winter School.

- We also participated in annual events such as the Day of Mourning for workers killed or injured on the job, and continued to provide support on picket lines.

Benefits

Our partnership with WE Consulting and Benefits Services is one of the core strengths of BC FORUM.

WE Consulting and Benefits provides the excellent group benefit plans that are available to all BC FORUM members, including group rates on extended health and dental coverage insurance. These services are vital to many of our members – indeed, more than half of the hundreds of calls handled by our office deal with group benefits and insurance issues.

The benefits available to BC FORUM members through WE always draw much interest at public events. With some employers making it more and more difficult for unions to negotiate benefits for retired members, or reducing benefit coverage, this is expected to become an even more important part of the services we provide in the future.

WE Consulting and Benefits also makes it possible for BC FORUM to provide members with free \$2,500 AD&D coverage, world-wide, until they reach their 86th birthday (the highest we've been able to negotiate). We have recently expanded this coverage to make it available to the spouses of members, at the low rate of \$5 per year.

Speaking out on issues that matter

BC FORUM speaks out on issues in many ways – through our website, through The Advocate which is mailed to all BC MLAs and Members of Parliament, and in direct contact with opinion leaders and decision-makers.

Isobel Mackenzie, BC Seniors' Advocate, attended a meeting of our board in November.

Maurine Karagianis, the new BC NDP spokesperson for seniors, met with our board in March.

From the time she was appointed until she was replaced by Abbotsford MLA Darryl Plecas as parliamentary secretary for seniors, Michelle Stillwell did not respond to our requests for a meeting.

BC FORUM continued to work with our allies to push for improvements to public health care and pensions, not further reductions as planned by Harper and as Harper's deliberate vandalism of Canada's most cherished public service continues to be eroded we will work to ensure it is a key issue in the 2015 federal election.

The Harper Government continues to support Canada Post's decision to end door to door mail delivery. BC FORUM has spoken out against this decision and has highlighted how the end of this valuable public service will hurt seniors. BC FORUM welcomes the promise from the Federal NDP that they will restore door to door mail delivery when they become government.

We continue to work with the B.C. Health Coalition, CURC, the BCRTA and COSCO to highlight the failure of the Harper government to renegotiate the federal-provincial Health Accord which expired March 31, 2014.

Recent editions of The Advocate are featuring a three-part series of four page special reports, prepared by the National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE), on the challenges facing public health care and what can be done to preserve and improve this vital public service. The series focuses on the need for national home support, residential care and PharmaCare initiatives.

Harper's deliberate vandalism of Canada's most cherished public service must be a key issue in the 2015 federal election. We need a strengthened national public health care system, including universal home support and Pharmacare. We also need a national strategy to help people and families dealing with dementia.

Our organization has a long history of working with the Canadian Labour Congress and the B.C. Federation of Labour in the campaign for better pensions. President Diane Wood has spoken out frequently on the issue, calling for improvements in the Canada Pension Plan, an increase in the GIS, and maintaining OAS and GIS eligibility at age 65.

Our members are frequent participants in rallies, protests and solidarity events, and directors often serve on the planning committees for such events. We have raised our voices on important public policy issues that affect our families and communities and will continue to do so.

Our President represents BC FORUM on the Executive Council of the B.C. Federation of Labour, and our Secretary attends these key coordinating meetings as an Observer.

We are a full member of the B.C. Health Coalition, supporting its important work to improve public health care.

We are partners with Protein for People, supporting that organization's work to feed the hungry, and are represented on their Board by President Wood.

We actively support the United Way as part of labour's involvement. Board member Gordon Larkin is a member of the Labour Participation Committee.

We endorse the \$10 a day child care plan, recognizing that high quality public child care is an important driver of economic growth because it frees parents to go to work and contribute their skills to building our province.

In addition, BC FORUM is active in a number of organizations that represent seniors.

We are the provincial affiliate of the Congress of Union Retirees of Canada (CURC) and are represented on the Executive Council. Through CURC, we are linked to the CLC's political action initiatives at the national level, the Canadian Health Coalition, and the Council of Canadians. CURC meetings also provide an opportunity for us to meet face to face with MPs – including Opposition Leader Thomas Mulcair and various critics – to present our issues to them first-hand.

We are affiliated to the Council of Senior Citizens' Organizations of B.C. (COSCO). President Diane Wood serves as a General Vice-President of COSCO, bringing BC FORUM's perspective to the monthly executive meetings. In addition, five board members attend COSCO's monthly delegate meetings.

We are affiliated through CURC to the National Pensioners Federation (NPF), and attend their annual general meetings as CURC delegates.

In addition, BC FORUM supports the Stephen Lewis Foundation, which is doing much needed work to combat the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Africa. Of particular note is the Foundation's Grandmothers to Grandmothers campaign, an initiative to aid the many women who are raising their grandchildren after losing their own children to this devastating disease.

Communications

The quarterly publication of our news magazine The Advocate was possible due to the generosity of UFCW 1518 which covered the cost of printing. While more and more members are coming onto e-mail, The Advocate remained our primary means of getting out the message. Each edition was mailed to all members, to all BC MLAs and every MP across Canada, and distributed by the BCFED to all affiliated unions and labour councils. The Advocate was also made available to other seniors' organizations and handed out at our booths and seniors' forums.

The number of visitors to our website – www.bcforum.ca – continues to grow. The site is updated frequently to provide the most current information on BC FORUM and labour movement campaigns and events.

David Halme, retired BCTF staff person, administers and posts frequent updates to our Facebook page – www.facebook.com/BCRetiredUnionMembersForum – on a volunteer basis.

Our membership brochure has again been redesigned and updated. We thank the BCGEU for their contribution in printing thousands of copies of this vital tool.

From time to time, we send personal e-mails to our members, particularly on emerging political issues and campaigns. While not all members have e-mail addresses, the number who do is increasing.

Administration

Theresa Couture staffs our office at the BC Federation of Labour four days a week, responding to members' requests, dealing with renewals, and providing administrative support to our volunteer board.

The aging and crash-prone computer used by Theresa in her work has finally been upgraded, and fully integrated with the BC FED's network. We thank the Fed for providing technical support in this process.

On a contract basis, Soren Bech assisted with communications and The Advocate.

Michelle Boudreau provided website management and development services.

Working together

The work that we do is made possible through the solidarity and support of our members, affiliated unions, and the generous contributions made by our allies in the movement.

We particularly extend our thanks to:

- WE Consulting and Benefits for the financial contribution that allows us to keep a part-time administrator on staff, and for the provision of group AD&D coverage to age 85.
- The B.C. Federation of Labour for contributing office and meeting space, advice about information technology, help with mailings and much more. The BCFED also ensures that information about BC FORUM, including The Advocate, is regularly distributed to all affiliates and at their conventions and conferences.
- UFCW 1518 for their generous contribution to help ensure The Advocate is printed on a regular basis.
- BCGEU for their contributions towards printing, mailings, and travel that allows us to fully participate in CURC's national meetings.
- Working Ventures Insurance Solutions, the new owners of the home and tenant insurance division of WE Insurance, for their support towards Advocate printing and mailing costs.

We greatly appreciate the in-kind support that we are receiving from the BCFED and a growing number of affiliated unions. These contributions help us to stretch scarce dollars and advocate more effectively on behalf of older and retired workers.

Conclusion

Our volunteer board is focused and working hard. Our visibility is higher than ever. Union leaders have provided great encouragement and support. Retired workers, and workers nearing retirement, are more aware of our organization.

BC FORUM is recognized as the voice for senior union members and retirees.

Still, we need to do more. We must increase our membership, and help ensure that former union members remain active and aware participants in promoting labour's agenda.

In the years ahead, with the support of WE Consulting and Benefits, the BCFED, affiliated unions, union retiree organizations, our members and activists, we look forward to further expansion of our membership, activities, and even stronger advocacy on behalf of retired workers.

We ask for your help. Please grab a membership card, and sign up a friend, relative or co-worker today. Together we're strong.

In solidarity,

Diane Wood

President, BC FORUM

USW 2009

BC FORUM Board of Directors

Irene Lanzinger, Chair	BCFED
Diane Wood, President	BCGEU
John Savage, Vice President	UNIFOR
Bill Silvester, Vice President	USW
Gordon Westrand, Treasurer	ILWU
Miriam Olney, Secretary	UFCW
Donisa Bernardo	HEU
Dan Bradford	BCGEU
Millie Canessa	BCGEU
Fred Girling	USW
Gord Larkin	CLC
Barb Mikulec	BCTF
Marion Pollack	CUPW
John Radosevic	UNIFOR
Andy Ross	COPE 378
Gord Savard	CUPE
Maureen Shaw	FPSE
Russ St. Eloi	BCYT-BCTC

Regional Representatives

Sandy Bauer	Vancouver and District Labour Council
Suzanne Bennett	Campbell River, Courtenay and District Labour Council
John Colbourne	South Okanagan Boundary Labour Council
Bruce Elphinstone	Sunshine Coast Labour Council
Mary Gay	West Kootenay Labour Council
Doug Gibson	North Okanagan Labour Council
Terry Green	South Okanagan Boundary Labour Council
Ken Isomura	New Westminster and District Labour Council
Agnes Jackman	Vancouver and District Labour Council

Regional Representatives (continued)

Chris Johns	East Kootenay and District Labour Council
Victor Johnson	North Central Labour Council *
Mogens Jorgensen	Kamloops and District Labour Council
Lyle Kristiansen	Sunshine Coast Labour Council
Mike Lang	Port Alberni and District Labour Council
Greg McGowan	North Okanagan Labour Council
Lynda Reid	Campbell River, Courtenay and District Labour Council
Heather Sapergia	North Central Labour Council *
Mona Sykes	Victoria Labour Council
Ron Williams	North Central Labour Council *
Pamela Willingshofer	Fraser Valley Labour Council
Marie Worth	Squamish and District Labour Committee

National representative

Pat Kerwin, President	Congress of Union Retirees of Canada
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Staff

Theresa Couture	USW
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Health Care Resource

Colleen Fuller	UNIFOR
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Communications Resource and Editor of Advocate

Soren Bech	UNIFOR
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Website Resource

Michelle Boudreau	UNIFOR
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CLC Representative to BC FORUM

Ron Stipp	CLC
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* North Central Labour Council results from the merger of the Prince George, Quesnel, South Cariboo and Peace River Labour Councils