



Annual General Meeting
June 11, 2014

Report to
2014 Annual General Meeting

from

BC FORUM Board of Directors
Diane Wood, President

2014 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 12, 2013.

We start this year's report with a call to action. The labour movement, workers, and retired workers are under constant attack. We must work together to fight back.

At the federal level, the Harper government has launched a stealth attack on Medicare, refusing to renegotiate the federal-provincial Health Accord that expired March 31, 2014. It is pressing ahead with plans to raise the age of eligibility for Old Age Security and the Guaranteed Income Supplement, threatening the retirement security of our children and grandchildren. It is cutting postal service and raising rates, steps that disproportionately affect seniors on fixed incomes. And it is negotiating with Europe a Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement that threatens to significantly raise the price of prescription drugs (again).

Provincially, the Christy Clark government continues to deepen inequality. By steadily increasing regressive taxes such as Medical Service Premiums, her government has created a tax structure that benefits only the rich – they pay a lower share of income in taxes than everyone else. Minimum employment standards remain woefully inadequate. And for people in ferry dependent communities, her government is raising rates, slashing the seniors' discount and cutting service.

We ask every BC FORUM member to join us in taking on these foul government actions. 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.

Our friends in the labour movement face challenges in organizing. Unfriendly governments make it more difficult with anti-union laws and trade deals designed to drive down wages and benefits. These difficulties are compounded by the trend to smaller workplaces, with frequent staff turnover.

It is even more difficult to organize retired workers. There are no workplaces. There are no lists of employees to contact. There are no paid organizers. Finances are limited. There is no dues checkoff. Dues must be collected and processed from members who must be renewed on a regular basis.

Our financial challenge grew this year. Working Enterprises, the labour sponsored capital fund which has supported BC FORUM financially since its inception in 1995, is facing economic challenges of its own. This has left a \$60,000 a year hole in our budget.

WE Consulting and Benefits has stepped up to the plate big time with a funding commitment of \$40,000 a year.

Working Ventures Insurance Solutions, another member of the WE Group of companies, is contributing \$8,000 annually.

UFCW 1518 has committed to paying up to \$10,000 for the cost of printing four editions of The Advocate each year.

CUPE BC has contributed \$2,000; the HEU \$1,000; and FPSE \$2,500.

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

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

Many of the unions mentioned above, and others, also pay 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 workers 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 not a casual relationship. It is part of our structure and purpose. 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.

We are now preparing to participate in the municipal elections that will be held on Nov. 15, 2014, and the federal election that will be held on Oct. 19, 2015.

As we have done in past municipal campaigns, we will use 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, and to vote for candidates who have been endorsed by their local labour council.

In the federal campaign, we will use these tools to 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.

Executive and Labour Council representation

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 now have delegate representation at 15 of the 18 labour councils in B.C.

During the period covered by this report, one delegate resigned for personal reasons. We thank De Whalen for her many days and hours of service.

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 two 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 process of regular consultation with affiliated unions. Following a request from Jim Sinclair, Chair of BC FORUM and President of the BCFL, twenty affiliates have appointed representatives to liaise with BC FORUM.

Meetings are held quarterly. The affiliate liaisons have agreed to promote our organization in their newsletters and websites, to help distribute our brochures to members nearing retirement, to extend invitations to attend their conventions and conferences as a guest and set up a display booth, and to establish 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 – is being 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 will be delivered through labour council weekend schools and affiliated unions. We look forward to delivering this vital information to 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:

- Sept. 5 – Labour Day celebrations in Vancouver, the Fraser Valley and Kamloops.
- Sept. 25-27 – National Pensioners and Senior Citizens Federation (NPSCF) Convention.
- Oct. 7 – BC Yukon Building Trades Annual Conference.
- Oct. 8 – Labour Leadership Luncheon with the Federal Official Opposition Critic for Labour along with several other BC NDP MP's.
- Oct. 21-24 – Congress of Union Retirees of Canada Executive Council and Convention.
- Oct. 28 – BC Federation of Labour Vancouver Town Hall meeting (election de-brief).
- Oct. 28-29 – United Steelworkers, District 3 Health, Safety & Environment Conference.
- Nov. 4 – Union Sisters Event to promote the \$10 a day Child Care plan.
- Nov. 25-27 – BC Federation of Labour Together 2013 Conference.
- Dec. 5 – ILWU 500 Retirees.
- Dec. 5 – United Way Labour Appreciation event.
- Jan-Feb – Canadian Labour Congress Winter School.
- March 15 – BC Teachers Federation annual general meeting.
- March 20 – Presentation to FPSE Presidents' Council.
- March 26 – BC Federation of Labour Defence of Public Services/Strategic Planning Summit with Executive Council members and Senior Union staff.

- March 31 – National Day of Action Rally for a New Health Accord at MP Wai Young’s office.
- April 1 – International Longshore and Warehouse Union Convention.
- April 9-12 – Canadian Union of Public Employees BC Convention.
- April 10-12 – Health Sciences Association Convention.
- April 25-27 – Public Service Alliance of Canada BC Convention.
- May 5-9 – Canadian Labour Congress Convention, in cooperation with the Congress of Union Retirees of Canada.
- May 28-31 – BC Government and Service Employees’ Union Convention.
- June 6-7 – 2014 BC Federation of Labour Regional Conference, Kimberley.
- We also participated in annual events such as May Day celebrations, the Day of Mourning, and continued to provide support on picket lines.

Benefits

Our partnership with Working Enterprises 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, 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 continued to work with our allies to push for improvements to public health care and pensions, not further reductions as planned by Harper.

We worked 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. We were signatories to a full

page ad in The Province newspaper on this issue, and participated in demonstrations that took place across the country.

The June edition of The Advocate features a four page special report on this issue, as well as a survey of our members. This is part of a joint action with the BC Retired Teachers Association (BCRTA) and COSCO. The Advocate's special report and survey will also be featured in their publications and websites. In short, we are working together to reach as many people as possible and to lobby politicians on this vital issue.

Harper's multi-billion dollar cuts in federal funding, along with the end of the health accord, will effectively end Medicare as a national program. Without federal leadership and standards, the system will be fragmented with different levels of care in different provinces. In 2013, President Wood wrote to Rona Ambrose, minister of health, calling on the government to maintain federal transfer payments for public health care. She also called on the government to maintain the Health Council of Canada, which monitored the state of Medicare across the country and suggested best practices to maintain equitable access to care for all Canadians.

The proposed Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) between Canada and Europe will further increase the pressure on public health care. This trade deal will add billions of dollars to the cost of prescription drugs. We have spoken out in favour of fair trade agreements, and against deals that will hurt ordinary Canadians, including raising the issue with the federal government and MPs through our national body, the Congress of Union Retirees of Canada.

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 eligibility at age 65.

Canadians were shocked when Canada Post announced a massive price increase and the elimination of home mail delivery. Paying more for less is a business strategy that seems designed to drive Canada Post into the ground. We have called on the federal government to recognize that these drastic actions will disproportionately hurt people with disabilities and seniors. President Wood sent a letter to Lisa Raitt, Minister of Transport, urging her to stop the cuts.

The BC Liberals have adopted an identical pay-more-for-less approach to BC Ferries, raising rates, slashing the seniors' discount, and reducing service. It is a blow to individuals and the local economy in ferry dependent communities.

We also criticised the \$25 a month wheelchair tax imposed by health authorities with the blessing of the BC Liberals. This inequitable tax on our most vulnerable citizens has been partially reversed – the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority has put the idea on hold, but the Fraser Health Authority still collects the tax.

In years past, we have criticised the BC Liberal government's decision to cave in to the demands of big pharmaceutical companies, placing private profit ahead of the interests of patients by eliminating all funding to BC's independent drug watchdog, the Therapeutics Initiative. This long campaign by advocates of public health has borne fruit. Funding has now been partially restored.

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 endorsed 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 federation 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, as well as all B.C. MLAs and every MP across Canada. 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 – continued to grow. The site was 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

Our new staff person, Theresa Couture, began work on April 14. She 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.

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, and the generous contributions made by our allies in the movement.

We particularly extend our thanks to:

- Working Enterprises 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 BCFL also ensures that information about BC FORUM, including The Advocate, is regularly distributed to all affiliates.
- 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 BCFL 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 Working Enterprises Consulting and Benefits, affiliated unions, 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

Jim Sinclair, Chair	BCFL
Diane Wood, President	BCGEU
John Savage, Vice President	UNIFOR
Bill Silvester, Vice President	TWU
Dave Gill, Treasurer	COPE
Miriam Olney, Secretary	UFCW
Dan Bradford	BCGEU
Millie Canessa	BCGEU
Fred Girling	USW
Gord Larkin	CLC
Marion Pollack	CUPW
John Radosevic	UNIFOR
Gord Savard	CUPE
Maureen Shaw	FPSE
Russ St. Eloi	BCYT-BCTC
Alice West	PSAC
Gordon Westrand	ILWU

Staff

Theresa Couture USW

Health Care Resource

Colleen Fuller UNIFOR

Communications Resource

Soren Bech UNIFOR

Website Resource

Michelle Boudreau UNIFOR

CLC Representative to BC FORUM

Ron Stipp CLC

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
Tom Duncan	Nanaimo, District and Duncan 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
John Hurren	North Central Labour Council *
Ken Isomura	New Westminster and District Labour Council
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
Lynda Reid	Campbell River, Courtenay and District Labour Council
Mona Sykes	Victoria Labour Council
Iris Taylor	Nanaimo, District and Duncan Labour Council
Ron Williams	North Central Labour Council *
Pamela Willingshofer	Fraser Valley Labour Council
Marjorie Witton	West Kootenay Labour Council
Marie Worth	Squamish and District Labour Committee

National representative

Pat Kerwin, President Congress of Union Retirees of Canada

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