



Annual General Meeting  
June 21, 2017

Report to  
**2017 Annual General Meeting**  
*from*

**BC FORUM Board of Directors**  
Diane Wood, President

## **2017 Annual General Meeting**

Sisters, Brothers and Friends,

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 22, 2016.

It has been a noteworthy year, highlighted by voters' clear rejection of the Christy Clark BC Liberal government.

As you know, the hard-fought campaign ended in a virtual tie between the BC NDP and the Liberals – a hung Parliament with no single party able to govern without support from the opposition. Most significantly, about 60 per cent of British Columbians voted against “more of the same” from a government that was bought and paid for to put corporate interests ahead of everything else.

By contrast, the inspiring BC NDP campaign led by John Horgan put people first, directly addressing the hopes, dreams and aspirations of working families and seniors.

Prior to and during the BC election period, BC FORUM actively campaigned on key issues. We were pleased to see John Horgan champion many of these, including our demands that the next government must:

- Provide quality public services, not further cuts in public health care, education, transit and other key services.
- Build an economy that works for working people, giving ordinary families more opportunities to get ahead through expanded skills training and value-added industries. Our priority must be to create wealth, opportunities and jobs in British Columbia – not to export raw logs or natural gas at rock bottom prices to create jobs in foreign lands.
- Promote public power and conservation, not pile more billions of long-term contract obligations on BC Hydro to guarantee profits for the private power producers that are industrializing hundreds of pristine rivers and streams. Through conservation, investment and innovation, we can create good-paying jobs in every community in BC and ensure British Columbians have access to clean and affordable electricity for generations to come.
- Bring in fair taxes that are based on ability to pay, and scrap flat-rate taxes like the MSP which only serve to deepen the tremendous inequality that the BC Liberals have created in BC.
- Expand public home care services to allow seniors to stay in their homes, and residential care facilities to take the pressure off acute care hospitals.
- Introduce quality, affordable child care services to enable young families – particularly women – to fully participate in building our economy.
- Take action to ensure that British Columbians are paid a living wage, not keep BC's minimum wage at the lowest level in the country.

- Adopt a clear plan, with definite targets, to help lift families and children out of poverty.
- Recognize the right of every worker to choose to join a union and thereby have a real voice in health and safety, wages and conditions at her workplace.

During the election we worked with the labour movement and our allies to hold the BC Liberals to account for their mismanagement of public services, and their failure to stand up for ordinary people. With the BC Liberals' single-minded focus on LNG, they failed to provide the social, intellectual and physical infrastructure people need to succeed.

We were pleased to join with our union partners in their campaigns on issues that affect retired workers and our families. These included the BC Fed's "Better can happen here," the BCGEU's "Seniors deserve better," the HEU's "Care can't wait," and FPSE's "Open the doors" campaigns.

We highlighted provincial election issues on our website – [bcforum.ca](http://bcforum.ca) – and in our news magazine *The Advocate*. Our strategy was to ensure that our members and the many others who read our communications were fully aware of the harm caused by Christy Clark's decisions.

In terms of the popular vote, her policies were resoundingly rejected. Thanks to our first past the post electoral system, the seat distribution is less decisive. There will be interesting days ahead, requiring all of us to remain active and engaged in the public life of our province.

That's why it remains critically important for BC FORUM members to join us in advancing the issues that affect us and our families. 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 *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 approach to 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 both political and partisan. We recognize that there is only one party that truly understands the needs of workers. We do not pretend to be politically neutral. In civic, provincial and federal elections, we actively 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 members of the B.C. Federation of Labour's Political Action Committee. We also participated in the BC Fed's 2017 Provincial Election Working Group.

We 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 of BC (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 also partners in “Seniors Vote,” which brings together more than 50 organizations across Canada to demand action on retirement security and health care.

### **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.

The Board continues to discuss new options to ensure sustainable funding, including advertising and organizational memberships. We will continue to explore ways to strengthen our finances.

We are deeply grateful to our partners, allies and supporters for their contribution towards keeping 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 again committed to paying the cost of printing The Advocate this year.

Other unions, such as BCGEU, provide continuing support including the printing of BC FORUM leaflets, meeting space, and pay expenses for their Board members.

The BC Federation of Labour donates office space and other support. The Public Service Alliance of Canada (BC) kindly makes its boardroom available for BC FORUM's bi-monthly Board meetings.

A growing number of unions and locals are now paying the first year BC FORUM membership dues – and in some cases three years – for their retiring members, and mail out BC FORUM membership information to retirees. In addition, we thank the affiliates that have made direct donations to support our work during the past year.

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

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.

The links continue to grow stronger. Two years ago, BC Federation of Labour convention delegates strongly supported amending the constitution 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, and provide for two BC FORUM delegates to BC FED Conventions. We are now formally integrated in the BC labour movement's decision-making process.

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.

## **Board of Directors and Labour Council representation**

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.

The President of the BC FED, Irene Lanzinger, also serves as Chair of BC FORUM. This reinforces our relationship with the labour movement in working on common issues. We greatly appreciate the strong support she is providing to BC FORUM.

In recent months, two remarkable union leaders have passed away. Millie Canessa and Ray Andrus were both well-loved icons in their unions and continued to speak out for people long after retirement by serving as members of the BC FORUM board of directors.

Millie and Ray made immense contributions to the labour movement, never backing down, and always fighting for what's right. On the BC FORUM board, Millie represented the BCGEU. Ray represented CUPW.

BC FORUM extends our deep condolences to their families and friends. Their vision, dedication and persistence will be missed. Thousands of workers are better off today because of their activism and advocacy.

We have recently welcomed Tom Dufresne to our volunteer Board of Directors. Tom is President Emeritus of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union Canada. He

was elected President of ILWU Canada in 1996 and was re-elected eight times until he stepped down in 2012. He is currently President of the ILWU Local 500 Pensioners club.

Tom takes over from Gordon Westrand who has represented the ILWU on the board for several years. Gordon made a significant contribution to our work, both as a director and as treasurer.

John Savage, UNIFOR, has stepped down as one of our two Vice Presidents. He continues to serve as a director.

BC FORUM's regional representation through delegate status at labour councils is an important part of building and maintaining 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.

Every six months or so, we bring together our Directors and Regional Representatives through conference calls. 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. 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.

We currently have delegate representation on all but one of the labour councils in B.C. We thank Michael Ferguson who recently stepped down as our regional representative in Victoria.

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 frequently consult with affiliated unions, both formally and informally. Twenty affiliates have appointed representatives to liaise with BC FORUM and attend 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 course**

Our modular course on pre-retirement planning – developed in cooperation with the Congress of Union Retirees of Canada and constantly updated by BC FORUM’s Education Committee – provides participants with 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 is delivered through labour councils and affiliated unions, and appears to be generating increasing interest as a result of word-of-mouth from the sessions we have done, and our outreach to the movement. 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, meetings and events:

- Labour Day celebrations in the Lower Mainland, Fraser Valley and Kamloops
- B.C. Retired Teachers Association Conference
- COSCO Conference
- USW Local 1944
- UNIFOR Retirees
- National Pensioners Federation Convention
- BC Health Coalition
- Canadian Medical Association AGM
- MoveUP Executive Council
- B.C. Federation of Labour Convention
- International Day of Older Persons
- BC Fed Executive Council
- New Westminster and District Labour Council 50th anniversary
- HEU Convention
- Labour After Work

- CURC Executive Council meetings
- United Way Labour Appreciation event
- BC Fed Week of Action for a Poverty Free BC
- CLC Winter School
- HSA Convention
- CUPE BC Convention
- Protein for People AGM
- BC Building Trades annual convention
- FPSE Convention
- PSAC BC Regional Convention
- BCGEU Convention
- BC Fed / SHARE Pension Forum
- 18<sup>th</sup> BC Building Trades charity golf tournament
- Meetings with BC Fed affiliates
- 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, and we are promoting it with increasing vigour. Once a year, The Advocate will include a four page supplement detailing 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.

Working Ventures Insurance Solutions provides discounts on home, marine, RV and travel insurance. The benefits available to BC FORUM members always draw much interest at public events. With the rising cost of insurance, and some employers 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 86<sup>th</sup> birthday (the highest we've been able to negotiate). We have 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:

- Our website and Facebook pages are updated frequently.
- The Advocate is mailed to all BC MLAs and Members of Parliament, and distributed by the BC Fed as part of their general mail out to affiliates and Labour Councils.
- Lobbying and direct contact with opinion leaders and decision-makers.

John Horgan, Leader of the BC NDP, and Selina Robinson, the BC NDP critic on seniors issues, met with our board in September.

David Eby, the BC NDP critic on housing, liquor policy, gaming and Translink, met with our board in January.

Ron Stipp, the CLC liaison to BC FORUM, attends most board meetings to coordinate our efforts on common issues.

Together with Lorraine Logan of COSCO, President Diane Wood continued our campaign for a national Pharmacare program in a meeting with Don Davies, MP, the Co-chair of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Health.

We continue to work with the B.C. Health Coalition, CURC, NPF, the BCRTA and COSCO to highlight the concerns of seniors, and particularly the need to strengthen Canada's public health care system, including universal home support and Pharmacare, and 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. When it appeared that the B.C. government was stalling on CPP expansion, we wrote directly to the premier calling for action. We also wrote Bill Morneau, federal minister of finance, expressing our strong opposition to Bill C-27, a dangerous after attack on "Defined Benefit Pensions" of future and current retirees in the federal sector and Crown corporations.

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.

In the last year, we were pleased to support CUPW members as they dealt with the threats of a lockout and cuts to pensions, and battled for pay equity for mail carriers in rural areas. We continue to work with CUPW for the implementation of postal banking.

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, and actively participate in the BCHC Seniors Working Group.

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. Last year, Protein for People distributed protein valued at \$890,000 to food banks, helping more than 250,000 people.

We 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.

We actively support the campaign for a \$15 minimum wage, a key step towards lessening inequality among all generations.

We stand with seniors and allies in calling for restoration of door-to-door mail delivery to communities that have lost it, and have written directly to all MPs on this issue.

With our allies, we will continue to advocate for universal Pharmacare until it is achieved. In the past year, we took this message directly to Jane Philpott, federal Minister of Health, and Don Davies, Co-chair of the Standing Committee on Health.

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 President Wood represents BC FORUM on the Executive Council. Through CURC, we are linked to the CLC's political action initiatives at the national level, the Canadian Health Coalition, Seniors Voice and the Council of Canadians. CURC meetings also provide an opportunity for us to meet face to face with MPs 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 to the National Pensioners Federation (NPF) and were active participants in the NPF convention held in September in Richmond. President Wood serves on the NPF communications committee, task force and participates in NPF Affiliate Leaders meetings held by conference call.

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 is possible due to the generosity of UFCW 1518 which covers the cost of printing. Each edition is 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 through their general mailing. The Advocate is also made available to other seniors' organizations and handed out at our booths and seniors' forums.

Our website is updated frequently to provide the most current information on BC FORUM and labour movement campaigns and events. The number of visitors to [www.bcforum.ca](http://www.bcforum.ca) continues to grow.

Frequent updates are also posted to our Facebook page – [www.facebook.com/BCRetiredUnionMembersForum](http://www.facebook.com/BCRetiredUnionMembersForum).

Our membership brochure has again been 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. For example, in the past year, we sent several e-mail blasts encouraging members throughout the province to attend NDP Town Hall meetings on health care held in their area. While not all members have e-mail addresses, the number of members who do continues to grow.

## **Administration**

Theresa Couture (and in her absence Elsbeth 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.

Soren Bech is Editor of The Advocate, and assists with other communications and publications that promote BC FORUM.

Michelle Boudreau provides website management and development services.

And we are grateful to David Halme, retired BCTF staff person, who administers our Facebook page on a volunteer basis.

## **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 assists us in keeping one part-time office staff person, and for the provision of group AD&D coverage to members up to age 86.
- The B.C. Federation of Labour for contributing office and meeting space, advice about information technology, waiving delegate fees to BC Fed conventions and

conferences, 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 paying expenses for President Wood and BCGEU Board members. This allows us to fully participate in CURC's national meetings, the NPF convention, as well as other provincial and local meetings, events, conferences and conventions.
- Working Ventures Insurance Solutions, the new owners of the home and tenant insurance division of WE Insurance, for their support towards Advocate production 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**

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

Our volunteer board is focused and working hard. Our visibility and impact continue to grow. Union leaders continue to provide great encouragement and support. Retired workers, and workers nearing retirement, are more aware of our organization.

Still, we are determined 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 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
Bill Silvester, Vice President	USW
Dan Bradford, Treasurer	BCGEU
Miriam Olney, Secretary	UFCW
Donisa Bernardo	HEU
Tom Dufresne	ILWU
Fred Girling	USW
Gord Larkin	CLC
Barb Mikulec	BCTF
Marion Pollack	CUPW
John Savage	UNIFOR
John Radosevic	UNIFOR
Andy Ross	MoveUP
Gord Savard	CUPE
Maureen Shaw	FPSE
Russ St. Eloi	BCYT-BCTC
Sam Wiese	PSAC

## **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
Mary Gay	West Kootenay Labour Council
Doug Gibson	North Okanagan Labour Council
Terry Green	South Okanagan Boundary Labour Council
Ray Haynes	Sunshine Coast Labour Council
Ken Isomura	New Westminster and District Labour Council

## Regional Representatives (continued)

Agnes Jackman	Vancouver and District Labour Council
Chris Johns	East Kootenay and District Labour Council
Gary Werk	East Kootenay and District Labour Council
Victor Johnson	North Central Labour Council
Mogens Jorgensen	Kamloops and District Labour Council
Mike Lang	Port Alberni and District Labour Council
Greg McGowan	North Okanagan Labour Council
Raymond Raj	Kitimat, Terrace and District Labour Council
Lynda Reid	Campbell River, Courtenay and District Labour Council
Heather Sapergia	North Central Labour Council
Iris Taylor	Nanaimo, Duncan and District
Gerry Townsend	New Westminster and District Labour Council
Ron Williams	North Central Labour Council
Pamela Willingshofer	Fraser Valley Labour Council
Marie Worth	Squamish and District Labour Committee

## National representative

Len Hope, President	Congress of Union Retirees of Canada
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### **Staff**

Elsbeth Couture	USW
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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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### **Facebook Resource**

David Halme	BCTF
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### **CLC Representative to BC FORUM**

Ron Stipp	CLC
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