



Annual General Meeting  
June 22, 2016

Report to  
**2016 Annual General Meeting**  
*from*

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

## **2016 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 17, 2015.

It has been a year of dramatic political changes. We have seen progress on several of the vital issues that we have been working on, and hints of progress to come on others.

While the federal election was a disappointment for New Democrats, we can rejoice that the Harper government is gone and no longer attacking working people and retirees. Scurrilous anti-union legislation – like Bills C-377 and C-525 – has been overturned. The retirement age for old age security and the guaranteed income supplement has been restored to 65. Canada Post’s plan to eliminate door-to-door delivery has been stopped.

On other issues, we have more to do. All Canadians must be ensured access to quality public health care through a new federal-provincial health accord. Mail delivery must be restored to households that lost it during the last months of the Harper government. The Canada Pension Plan must be improved to ensure our children and grandchildren can retire in dignity. And the relentless push to replace defined benefit pensions with defined contribution plans must be reversed.

At the provincial level, in advance of the May 2017 BC election, BC FORUM will be campaigning for a new government that will:

- 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.

We will be working 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 have neglected the social, intellectual and physical infrastructure people need to succeed.

We will continue to highlight provincial election issues on our website – [bcforum.ca](http://bcforum.ca) – and in our news magazine *The Advocate*. Our strategy is to ensure that our members and the many others who read our communications are fully aware of the harm caused by Christy Clark's decisions, and the opportunity we have to bring about real change just a few months from now.

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 *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.

British Columbians 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 year, the Board continued 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 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. The Public Service Alliance of Canada (BC) kindly makes its boardroom available for BC FORUM's bi-monthly Board meetings.

A growing number of large unions and locals are now paying the first year BC FORUM membership dues – and in some cases three years – for their retiring members. In addition, we thank the affiliates that have made direct donations to support BC FORUM's 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 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.

The links continue to grow stronger. 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. 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.

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

## **Executive 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.

We are very pleased to have added one new director during the last year. Sam Wiese represents the Public Service Alliance of Canada on the **Board**. We look forward to working with her to strengthen the voices of older and retired workers.

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

The board extends our condolences to the family and friends of Lyle Kristianson and Bruce Elphinstone who have passed away. Lyle and Bruce were both strong, passionate and articulate advocates for working people. They both served as BC FORUM Regional Representatives and delegates to the Sunshine Coast Labour Council.

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 on all labour councils in B.C.

During the period covered by this report, we have appointed Raymond Raj as a Regional Representative and delegate to the Kitimat, Terrace and District Labour Council, reappointed Iris Taylor (after a brief hiatus) to the Nanaimo, Duncan and District Labour Council, Ray Haynes to the Sunshine Coast Labour Council, Gerry Townsend to the New Westminster and District Labour Council, and Michael Ferguson to the Victoria Labour Council.

We thank Mona Sykes and Wes Law who have stepped down after long service to BC FORUM in their communities.

Due to the high cost of travel and accommodation, we have not been able to arrange face-to-face meetings between Board members and Regional Representatives for the last four 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. 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. And we have begun to bring together our Directors and Regional Representatives through conference calls.

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 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 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 council weekend schools 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 and events:

- Labour Day celebrations in Vancouver and the Fraser Valley.
- COPE 378 convention (Now MoveUP – the Movement of United Professionals)
- CUPE national convention, Vancouver
- ILUW Local 500 retirees club
- Protein for People AGM
- Living wage rally
- BC Retired Teachers Association AGM
- BC Building Trades annual convention
- 17<sup>th</sup> BC Building Trades charity golf tournament
- National Pensioners Federation convention
- Triennial CURC convention
- Public forum on health care (Achieving Quality Care for Seniors)
- United Way Labour Appreciation event
- BC Fed regional conference in Kamloops, including a meeting with local BC FORUM members
- CLC Winter School
- CUPE BC Convention
- CURC Executive Council meetings
- SHARE / BC Fed pension forum
- Meetings with BC Fed affiliates
- HSA convention

- Fight for \$15 national day of action
- BC Labour Heritage celebration
- 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. For example, the current edition of The Advocate includes 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.

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 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 – through our website, through Facebook, through The Advocate which is mailed to all BC MLAs and Members of Parliament, and in direct contact with opinion leaders and decision-makers.

Ken Novakowski, Chair of the BC Labour Heritage Centre, attended our September Board meeting.

Selina Robinson, the BC NDP critic on seniors issues, met with our board in January.

Representatives of PovNet met with our board in March.

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

We continue to work with the B.C. Health Coalition, CURC, 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.

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 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.

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.

This year, we also decided to formally affiliate to the National Pensioners Federation (NPF) and strengthen our voice in that organization. We will be active participants in the NPF convention, which will be held in September in Richmond. In the past, BC FORUM representatives have attended NPF Conventions as CURC delegates. In addition, President Wood serves on the NPF communications committee and participates in NPF executive council 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. While more and more members are coming onto e-mail, The Advocate remained our primary means of getting out the message. 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. The Advocate is also made available to other seniors' organizations and handed out at our booths and seniors' forums.

Through Michelle Boudreau our website has been redesigned to give it a cleaner look and make it easier to navigate. The number of visitors to [www.bcforum.ca](http://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](http://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 of members who do continues to grow.

## **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.

Soren Bech assists with communications and is Editor of The Advocate.

Michelle Boudreau provides website management and development services.

David Halme provides Facebook management.

## **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 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 expenses for President Wood and BCGEU Board members. This allows us to fully participate in CURC's national meetings 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**

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.

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

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
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	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
Michael Ferguson	Victoria 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

## Regional Representatives (continued)

Ken Isomura	New Westminster and District Labour Council
Agnes Jackman	Vancouver 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
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

Pat Kerwin, President	Congress of Union Retirees of Canada
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## Staff

Theresa Couture	USW
<b>Health Care Resource</b>	
Colleen Fuller	UNIFOR
<b>Communications Resource and Editor of Advocate</b>	
Soren Bech	UNIFOR
<b>Website Resource</b>	
Michelle Boudreau	UNIFOR
<b>Facebook Resource</b>	
David Halme	BCTF
<b>CLC Representative to BC FORUM</b>	
Ron Stipp	CLC