

# STAYING IN TOUCH



## North Island - John Finn

Newsletter No. 66

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### Branch Name

## President's MESSAGE

Well, it's official. The Association's National Board of Directors (NBOD) has approved our new Branch name. In July we received a new charter to replace the one first issued in 1982.

It looks like this: →  
President's Message  
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## MEETING DATES

September 9, 2015  
December 9, 2015  
March 9, 2016  
June 8, 2016

**Note on the New Branch Name Background** : John Finn began serving on the Branch executive over a decade ago as Health Benefits Officer. He subsequently became Branch Vice President, then Regional Services Officer, National Director for BC & Yukon, Provincial Advocacy Officer and, finally, Third National Vice President. He was in the process of organizing and leading the by-law review process when he was forced to resign for health reasons in late 2013. In early 2014, he lost his battle with an aggressive form of cancer. John was a passionate believer in the Association and worked tirelessly in its service. By way of recognizing his contributions, the Branch executive decided to remember him by naming the Branch after him, hence North Island - John Finn.

## **2015 Annual Members Meeting**

With due apologies to those who have heard this story, I believe Wayne & Schuster used to have a comedy sketch about the assassination of Julius Caesar called "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum". For the 2015 remake, replace "the Forum" with "the June Annual Members Meeting (AMM)" in Ottawa.

In early June, we received notice that the Director of Communications & Advocacy had resigned – this with an election call looming. A couple of weeks later, the national president, Gary Oberg, informed us that the CEO, Sylvia Ceacero, was on medical leave and would miss the AMM. I suspect these events were not unrelated.

At the AMM, the proposed strategic plan was debated in session with some for and some against. One branch strongly criticized the "plan" for not being a plan in that it contained no "deliverables" and moved to refer it back to the NBOD for rewrite. This passed. While the "plan" was an improvement on its predecessor, the criticism of its vagueness had some validity.

Since a proposed 25% fee increase was loosely linked to the strategic plan, it was quickly defeated. This was surprising to me in that the activities listed in the plan (and their associated costs) were not going to go away no matter how you rewrote it. This situation was partly redressed on the final day. A proposal to increase the Defence of Benefits withdrawal limit from \$500K to \$735K (100% of the remaining reserve) passed with surprisingly little debate. Your executive was opposed to this. A motion to provide annual financial information to branches earlier in the year passed without debate. The motion to return to 31 December membership expiry dates for all memberships was quickly defeated.

There ensued a lengthy debate over the inclusion of branch reports in Sage magazine. In the end, semi-annual summer and winter insertions were approved. In elections, Roy Goodall (Calgary) and Ted Young (Guelph) were elected as National Directors. ND Jean-Guy Soulière (Ottawa) and VP Marie Bergeron were acclaimed. Seemingly from out of the blue, one of the branch presidents moved a motion of non-confidence in President Oberg. This was resoundingly defeated.

Membership reported a count of 183,512 members as of May 2015 of whom 62% were PS, 26% CF, 6% RCMP and 0.1% Judiciary. The recruiting mail-out for the CF and RCMP will now go ahead. Permission for a PS mail-out will not be requested until after that happens since Treasury Board played games with the previous approval request.

Proposals concerning new regulations were then considered on an individual basis. Those requiring volunteer commitment agreements and vulnerable sector checks were soundly defeated. The proposal that the agenda and supporting documentation for NBOD meetings be made available to branch presidents before scheduled NBOD meetings quickly got watered down to only the agenda when staff pointed out that the documentation typically runs to several hundred pages. The amended proposal passed.

A special motion was advanced from the floor to reconsider the fees increase proposal. The session went to open forum to debate what the increase should be. The range was 2 – 8%. In a series of votes, 4% was approved. This was a long way from the original request.

The meeting closed on two shocking notes:

- President Gary Oberg said that he was troubled by some NBOD actions and tendered his resignation effective 10 July 2015 (one year early); and
- Vice-President Marie Bergeron said that she would assume the role of Acting President on 11 July 2015 but would resign at the end of August because she did "not want to go through what Gary has gone through".

*Continued on Page 3,*

In mid-July, Marie wrote that the NBOD had appointed Ottawa District Director Mr. Konrad von Finckenstein as chair of Board with the powers of president until a new president and vice president can be elected by the members at the 2016 AMM. Later that month, Marie informed us that Sylvia Ceacero would be leaving the CEO's position as of 31 July 2015.

Since NBOD deliberations and personnel issues are all considered confidential, it has been impossible to find out more about all of these developments and what they might mean. I know that Sylvia's original organization concept called for separate directors of communications and advocacy. Rosemary initially took on communications but then inherited advocacy and the preferred partners program when others left the Association. Her opposition to seeing these portfolios restructured presumably led to her being let go. Your guess is as good as mine as to what transpired after that.

### ***Canadian Coalition for Retirement Security***

In early August, your Association launched a coalition of 22 organizations, representing nearly six million working and retired Canadians, by announcing its campaign to push for legislation to protect the earned pension benefits of public and private sector employees and retirees. Sayward Montague of National Office will chair the steering committee and National Director Jean-Guy Soulière will be its spokesperson. Here is part of the media release.

"The Canadian Coalition for Retirement Security believes a promise is a promise," says Soulière. "A deal is a deal – governments and employers should not be allowed to go back on the promises and commitments made to millions of Canadians, including veterans, police and other loyal public servants when they were working."

The campaign is being launched in response to the federal government's plans to introduce target benefit or shared risk pension plans to Crown corporations and federally-regulated employers. Target benefit or shared risk plans provide a base monthly pension at retirement with limited or conditional indexation – all of which may be subject to change based on the plan's financial performance. This is not what retirees were promised. "Pensions are deferred compensation which employees pay for while working, and which an employer agrees to pay its employees upon retirement in return for the services rendered by those employees," adds Soulière.

The Canadian Coalition for Retirement Security believes that no employer, in either the public or private sector, should be allowed to change the compensation promised to people once they have retired. Together, the Coalition is calling on Canada's next federal government to take steps, including legislation, to protect Canadians from this threat to retirement security. Check out <http://www.honouryourpromise.ca>.

### ***2015 Election***

There is another pension issue that may arise during the current election and that concerns improving the prospects for the majority of Canadians who lack a pension plan and are not saving enough for retirement. After initially being cool to the idea, the Association has gradually come to accept that some expansion of the CPP could be the way to go. Ontario's timing of their move to legislate a similar plan hardly seems coincidental.

We share with other Canadians a number of concerns about our health care system. Many would say it is not really a system but a patchwork of provincial and territorial plans with relatively high costs and mediocre outcomes. It is one of the few such national plans that does not include pharmacare provisions. Since it is geared to acute care, little attention is paid to prevention. The list goes on.

Most studies and observers call for more federal leadership or, alternatively, an end to federal intransigence on this file. And yet the trend is moving in the opposite direction. The federal government is trying hard to bury a \$700,000 report it commissioned on health care innovation. And as I write this, they've announced ending a 30-year old program that finances advanced degree studies for physician-scientists citing cost constraints. The annual saving will be a whopping \$1.8 million!

These anti-science, death by a thousand cuts measures are nothing new. For those of us who care about science in fields like health care, the environment, and the climate, they are disturbing and should be part of the policy debate going into an election.

*Continued on Page 4*

For older folks in particular, the lack of any strategy to deal with an aging population also has a healthcare dimension in that perhaps a quarter of acute care hospital beds may be occupied by elderly folks who don't need to be in a hospital but have no other place to go. This is another patchwork that relies too heavily on family care-givers.

These are issues we need to raise and consider as we approach the fall election. Do that whenever you can. Find out where your candidates stand. And, for heaven's sake, get out and vote!

### **Honour House**

While I was at the AMM, the Veterans' Ombudsman, CWO Guy Parent, visited Comox. Your VP Kathi Brown attended his meeting and came away favourably impressed. For those who know Kathi, that's a genuine compliment. Among other things, he reported on the existence of a facility in New Westminster of which we were not aware. It's called Honour House and it offers free accommodation for veterans going to the Vancouver area for medical treatment as well as their family members. The definition of veteran is quite broad. For us it would primarily include former CF and RCMP members. The contact information is:

#### **Honour House**

509 St. George Street

New Westminster, BC

V3L 1L1

Phone: 778-397-4399

<https://honourhouse.ca/>

*Bill Turnbull—Branch President*

## **Veterans Independence Program**

The Veterans Independence Program (VIP) helps you remain independent and self-sufficient in your home and your community. Depending on your circumstances and health needs you may qualify for financial assistance to obtain [services](#) such as grounds maintenance; housekeeping; personal care; access to nutrition; health and support services provided by a health professional.

VIP does not replace other federal, provincial or municipal programs. Instead its role is to complement existing programs to help meet your needs.

### **Do I Qualify?**

- You may qualify for VIP, if you meet one of the following criteria:
- You have qualified for a disability benefit;
- You have qualified for the War Veterans Allowance;
- You are in receipt of Prisoner of War Compensation;
- You are a Veteran who is eligible for, but is unable to access, a Contract Bed (also known as a Priority Access Bed);
- You have been the primary caregiver for an eligible Veteran or civilian;
- You are a low-income or disabled survivor of an eligible Veteran or civilian

### **Apply for the Veterans Independence Program**

<http://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/services/health/veterans-independence-program>

### **Did you find what you were looking for?**

You can also do a search or contact us at 1-866-522-2122 (toll-free) Monday to Friday, 8:30 to 4:30, local time.

## FSNA NORTH ISLAND — JOHN FINN EXECUTIVE

Past President	Cecile Turnbull	338-1857	cecile.turnbull@shaw.ca
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### Independent Financial Review Committee 2015:

John Renaud	339-7042
Dave Shewchuk	331-0210

## *From the Editor's Desk*

I took the opportunity this summer to experiment with the look of the newsletter. With the number of people getting the newsletter through e-mail increasing and with a copy on our web-site, I thought we could make it more colourful. You will note that this edition is a bit larger than usual.

The president's report on the Annual Membership Meeting which he attended in Ottawa this summer makes for a longer message. The branch name change to honour John Finn, is reflected in a revised branch charter, a copy of which is included in his report. You will note that the branch name change is now reflected in the newsletter masthead.

In this edition you will find the usual information as well as a paid advertisement from Aji Fliss, a travel professional and member of the branch.

I would appreciate your thoughts on the new look, so please take the time to let me know what you think either by e-mail, phone or mail. My contact information is in the text box beside this message or the Executive roster above.



Kevin Weighill—Newsletter Editor

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**Representing retired employees**  
**and spouses**  
**From the Public Service of**  
**Canada, the Canadian Forces and**  
**the Royal Canadian Mounted**  
**Police**

## Luncheon News

The September quarterly luncheon/meeting of 2015 for the Federal Retirees will take place in the Ballroom of the Best Western Westerly Hotel in Courtenay on:

Wednesday, 9<sup>th</sup> September 2015

Meet & Greet: 11:00 a.m.

Buffet Luncheon: 12:00 p.m.

Business Meeting: 1:00 p.m.

Guest Speaker: 1:30 p.m.

Guest speaker – Kevin Holte – Canada Purple Shield – Living Well and Leaving Well...

### **HOT AND COLD BUFFET INCLUDES:**

**Rolls & Butter**

**Soup - Soup of the Day**

**Ham**

**Scalloped Potatoes**

**Seasonal Steamed Veggies**

**Salads - One green, one Chef's choice**

**Assorted Desserts, Coffee & Tea**

**The cost is \$17.00 per person**

The September luncheon is by reservation with the telephone committee with payment at the door. Please call Norma Dean at 250-890-1218 if you would like to attend. If you can't reach Norma, please call Cecile Turnbull at 250-338-3187 to either confirm or cancel your reservation.

**Tickets will be available for our December Christmas Luncheon at \$20.00 per person. Tickets must be purchased in advance of this meeting. No sales at the door.**

Cecile Turnbull —Programs Director

### A Reminder.

If you agree to attend a General Meeting Luncheon and subsequently change your mind, you must inform Norma Dean at (250) 890-1218.

### MEMBERSHIP UP-DATE

**Do we have the correct information on you as a member?** It is important to us and to you that our records are up to date. If the label on this newsletter has your INITIALS instead of your given name, we may not have all the information we need to ensure that you get all the updates from your branch or National Office. Please fill in the following and send it to us (address on Page 1).

Surname ..... Given names:.....

Mailing address: .....

City/town ..... Postal Code ..... Phone .....

E-mail address:.....

Pension is from: CF .... PS .... RCMP .... Other ..... I receive a survivor's benefit Yes..... No .....

## Information from the Health Benefits Officer Clint Halfkenny

### Skipping travel insurance when travelling within Canada could cost you

The experience of an Alberta mother who is facing a hefty air ambulance bill after prematurely giving birth in Ontario should be a lesson to all Canadians about their need for travel insurance -- even while travelling within Canada, [says one expert](#).

Amy Savill, from High Prairie, Alta., went into labour two months early while vacationing in Ontario last month. The hospital where she gave birth was not equipped to handle an infant as premature as Savill's, so they were airlifted to a larger facility in Sudbury. Savill received a bill for the flight Monday, and while she won't disclose the exact amount, she says it's "in the thousands of dollars." She says it never occurred to her that she might need travel insurance within her own country. "Didn't even dawn on me. My family is in Nova Scotia, so I travel the country quite often and I've never purchased insurance," [she told CTV's Canada AM Thursday](#).

But Robin Ingle, the CEO of Ingle International, Novus Health, and Intrepid 24/7, says most Canadians are unaware that not all their medical expenses are covered by the provincial health plans. "I don't think a lot of Canadians understand there are gaps in a lot of areas. Air evacuations are one, land ambulances are another -- anything outside of core services may not be covered," he said.

Ingle, who has worked in the insurance industry for over 35 years, says when Canadians get sick outside their province, most of their medical costs are covered through reciprocal agreements between the provinces, although each province has different agreements. But he says when it comes to air ambulances, which are generally run by private companies, Canadians almost always have to foot the bill.

Canadians may want to consider buying travel insurance when travelling outside their provinces, Ingle advises. That would avoid a \$30,000 air ambulance bill if, for example, they have to be airlifted to Vancouver after getting injured skiing in Whistler.

Ingle says such inter-province insurance is usually easy to get, even for those with existing medical conditions, but he says it's important to ask questions to ensure that air evacuations are covered.

Some Canadians might also have travel insurance from their employee benefit plans, but Ingle warns they might have restrictions requiring employees to seek permission before undergoing air evacuations. "You have to ask your HR people within your company, your benefit administrator. You have to be a good consumer and ask some questions," he says, while also advising getting everything in writing.

As for Savill, [Ontario Health Minister Eric Hoskins told CTV Toronto Wednesday](#) that he has heard about her story and says his office is working with Alberta Ministry of Health, "to see how we might find a resolution." He said he's "hopeful" that Savill will not have to personally foot the bill.

Savill says she's glad her experience has helped the provinces recognize that there's a problem in this area. "This has at least enlightened them that there are some gaps and they're making efforts to fix it, so that's really positive," she said. As for her baby daughter, Savill says she is doing well, but is still not strong enough to travel back to Alberta without a medical flight.

A medical charity is now trying to raise money to pay for an air ambulance to take the family back to Alberta. If that doesn't happen, Savill says they could remain in Ontario until the baby's scheduled due date. That won't come until Sept. 22.

Written By [Angela Mulholland](#), Staff writer - CTV News



### Hello Phoners!



#### Members on the phone committee please remember.....

If you're going to be out of town prior to a general meeting and you're unable to phone the people on your list, please phone Norma Dean (Tel.- 250-890-1218), so that she can re-assign those names to another phone committee member. It is important that members know about upcoming general meetings, and it is important that we know whether or not they intend to come.

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*You're Invited...*



## VIKING RIVER CRUISE PRESENTATION, September 9, 2015!

Crown Isle Resort, Platinum Ballroom, 6:30PM.

PowerPoint Presentation by Kim Lucy, BDM, VIKING RIVER & OCEAN CRUISES!

See Why VIKING RIVER CRUISES in CANADIAN CURRENCY is your Best Value for Carefree,

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