

## **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

**Peter Baumgartner**

### **Branch Annual Meeting (BAM)**

The daylight hours are rapidly increasing meaning that it's time for the BAM. The BAM is scheduled for 2018 April 12, at our usual venue, the Pinawa Alliance Church, at 1:00 P.M. It will be preceded by a complimentary soup-and-sandwich lunch at 12:00. If you have a guest who would like to join us for lunch, the charge is \$10.00 that will be refunded if your eligible guest joins our Branch. Our speaker following the Meeting will be Kara Bissonette from Two Rivers. The title of the talk is "Programs and Services of Two Rivers Senior Resource Council Inc."

### **Branch 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

This year is our 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary which has been served by 38 elected Executive Board Members and dozens of additional appointed Board Directors. Both Jock Guthrie and Peter Cliche had each served for 17 years in various capacities. The Eastern Manitoba Branch received its charter on Sep 16, 1993 from the Federal Superannuates National Association (FSNA) which was renamed as the National Association of Federal Retirees in 2014 when Certified for Continuance under the new Canada Not-for-Profit Act.

### **Association Outcomes**

Our Association has advocated on our behalf as seen by:

- the indexing of our pensions to the Cost of Living;
- the continuance and expansion of the Survivors Benefits;
- the improvement and indexation of the Death Benefit;
- the detection of an error in the calculation of and subsequent increase in our Superannuation income;
- the creation of the Pensioners' Dental Services Plan for federal retirees; and
- the imminent launch of a digital claim service in the Public Service Health Care Plan (PSHCP).

We have unsuccessfully challenged the \$30 billion surplus removal from the superannuation accounts and are currently appealing the 50% increase in our premiums for the PSHCP.

Locally, our almost 700 members have benefited by the information and assistance provided by our Health Benefits Officer, both by articles printed in our Newsletters and by personal requests. We have also benefited by formal subject presentations by guest speakers at our General Meetings.

### **Advocacy**

More importantly, the advocacy for the improvements in our financial security, health and well-being is largely performed by our volunteers. We are the largest national advocacy organization rep-

**National Association of Federal Retirees (Eastern Manitoba Branch)**

Box 219, Pinawa, MB

ROE 1L0

**Telephone:** 1 (204) 753-8270 (Peter Baumgartner); **Email:** baumgarp@mts.net

resenting active and retired members of the federal public service, Canadian Armed Forces, RCMP and retired federally appointed judges, as well as their partners and survivors. We strongly believe every Canadian, today and in the future, should benefit from better retirement income security and a strong, sustainable health care system.

To this end, Gerry Jennings, our newly appointed Provincial Advocacy Officer (PAO) is establishing the Branch Advocacy Liaison role (BAL) as an integral element of the Association's advocacy network to permit Branches to communicate at the grassroots level with our local MPs and MLAs. We'll keep you briefed on progress.

### **Dire Need for Volunteers**

I know that we all appreciate the services and products that are provided by our Preferred Partners and that, in many cases, they helped us to decide in joining this Association.

Our Branch Executive Board needs to be updated. Current open positions are President and Secretary without any incumbents. I no longer can operate as President that includes the obligation to travel to the Annual Members Meeting (Gatineau, Jun 19 to 21), the Prairie District Directors' Meeting (Edmonton, May 9-10) and the Regional Learning Conf. Winnipeg (in Sep). We also need to elect a Treasurer for which we have candidates. Why can't our Vice-President, Wayne Greenlay, fill the Presidency

position? He can temporarily but may be moving to BC in the near future.

Our Branch is in dire trouble without volunteers for these Executive positions. This was also the case three years ago when I was nominated from the floor at the 2015 BAM to fill the VP position with the view to replace Chuck Vandergraaf the following year.

All new Executive Board Members will be mentored and supported by current and past position holders, including myself, as Past President.

### **Risk of Branch Dissolution**

If we cannot find replacement volunteers to advocate for our current and future Branch members, then we need to ask the question of our members, do we consider the amalgamation of our Branch into the Winnipeg and District Branch or find an alternate arrangement? If so, the Branch Board may have to bring a motion to the floor of the 2018 BAM as follows:

*Be it resolved that the Branch Board of Directors shall investigate the potential dissolution of the Eastern Manitoba Branch and amalgamation with the Winnipeg and District Branch if no candidates for Branch Executive, including President, step forward for election.*

Dissolution of the Branch will require, according to our By-laws, the approval of two-thirds of the membership. Without Executive replacement or dissolution approval, the Branch will remain in limbo that may require intervention by the National Board of Directors.



## **RECENT BUDGET NEWS**

Like all federal budgets, the 2018 edition has lots of shiny goodies like merchandise crammed into a store display case.

### **Pharmacare at Last?**

The shiniest object in the display case is the prospect of a national pharmacare plan

or, at least, the creation of an Advisory Council on the Implementation of National Pharmacare. Dr. Eric Hoskins and board members will begin a national dialogue that will include working with experts from relevant fields as well as with national, provincial, territorial and Indigenous leaders.

The Advisory Council will report to the federal ministers of health and finance and will conduct an economic and social assessment of domestic and international models, and will recommend options on how to move forward together. This will happen before the 2019 budget and in time for the next federal election in October of that year at the earliest.

*“Pharmacare is essential, and something we’ve flagged for years in our advocacy work,”* says Association President Jean-Guy Soulière. *“It’s critical for the thousands of Canadian seniors who cannot afford essential medications. We are looking forward to the Advisory Council getting to work and consulting with seniors and seniors organizations like ours.”*

### **Phoenix’s Ashes**

The gov’t used this budget to announce that it will finally scrap the Phoenix pay system, despite having already invested more than \$460 million.

The budget recognized the challenges faced by public servants who have been overpaid by Phoenix who are being asked to repay gross amounts to their employer. It promises that any public servants in this situation will not have to start repaying until after the Canada Revenue Agency processes their tax return and issues their refund (or credits against a tax liability).

*“The Phoenix announcements are a step in the right direction,”* says Soulière. *“We’ll be watching for immediate focus and action on outstanding pay-related issues for*

*employees and retirees, and making sure this doesn’t happen again.”*

### **Focus on Health**

In the seniors display case was A Community based Approach to Dementia, which provides \$4 million/year, starting in 2018–19 to the Public Health Agency of Canada to support these projects.

Projects could include programs that provide mental health supports and information about self-care for family care-givers, or initiatives that help Canadians quickly locate resources in their communities, including information about best practices for providing care for people living with dementia. This new funding will help improve quality of life of people living with dementia and ensure that caregivers—who are pre-dominantly women—have access to the resources they need, including mental health supports.

Ottawa also uses the budget to serve notice to the provinces and territories that it expects compliance with the Canada Health Act and such practices as extra-billing and user fees will be punished with deductions from the erring jurisdiction’s share of the Canada Health Transfer.

Long term- and home-care are missing from the budget. This may be because the feds are still finalizing funding deals under the bilateral health accords it has reached with all 13 provinces and territories. So far just three provinces — New Brunswick, Newfoundland-Labrador and PEI — have resolved their funding deals with Ottawa.

*“On the health and seniors front, we saw a handful of fairly piecemeal measures in this budget. What would make a difference is a seniors minister. We had hoped to at least see plans for one in this budget,”* says Soulière. *“We need a dedicated voice advocating for seniors’ needs within gov’t, ensuring we always view public policy decisions through a seniors’ lens.”*

## Veterans

There is much in the budget promoting what the current government has already done for veterans such as the new lifetime pension option announced in December, but not much new.

To keep up with the rise in demand and ensure that veterans get services and benefits when they need them, the gov't proposes to provide \$42.8 million over 2 years, starting in 2018–19, to increase service delivery at Veterans Affairs.

### Pensions and Income Security

On retirement income security, the budget made passing reference to a need to protect pensioners – people who have spent their working lives contributing to a pension only to see their benefits greatly reduced by employer insolvency as happened with employees at Sears.

The gov't will be seeking feedback from pensioners, workers and employers, focusing on “*a whole-of-gov't, evidence-based approach towards addressing retirement security for all Canadians.*”

“*Retirement security is incredibly important to our members and seniors in general,*” notes Soulière. “*Committing to addressing retirement security for all Canadians is a good thing, but it's not enough – this is another year where we lack national vision on retirement security. I'm particularly concerned that there's no commitment to withdraw the problematic Bill C-27 on target benefits. Retired and working Canadians have been voicing concerns over this for a year and a half.*”



## MEMBERSHIP NEWS

### Maureen Macdonald Membership Chair

Membership (on record as of 2018):

	2018-03	2017-09
Total Double Households	257	258
Total Single Households	171	174
Total Regular Households	428	432
Total Non-DDS* Households	35	33
Total DDS* Households	393	400
Total Active Members	684	691

\*Direct Deduction from Source

Members or spouses deceased since last General Meeting:

I.E. Grant

Wilfred Campbell

Richard Whitehouse

**Note:** Need a new member card? Contact us (see Pg. 1 footing). Please visit our Association's website ([www.federalretirees.ca](http://www.federalretirees.ca)) to keep up to date with advocacy, senior's issues and news and views.