

MARITIME STATION BREAK

FALL 2024

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The Next Surplus - Time to Vote; Canada Post strike could delay process-Oldfield

Another surplus has been declared in the CBC Pension Plan. And the long process of distributing the money to pensioners has started again.

The surplus funds this time are for the 2023 pension year and amount to more than \$55 million. That compares to the payments made last July of \$129 million, which covered two previous years.

The same process will be used by pension plan officials to get approval from pensioners to release the funds.

And according to PNA president Dan Oldfield, the same formula will be used to calculate shares to plan members. "Yes, the same formula will be used. That is, a percentage of surplus will be shared with all 20,000 pension contributors. The payout will be based on your lifetime contributions. At this point we do not know what that exact percentage will be but we know that approximately \$60-million will be shared. We are hopeful that payments will be made sometime in early Spring."

The First Notice is now on the Pension Administration website and pensioners can register their vote electronically. But the documents must also be sent by mail to all retirees, survivors and deferred pensioners.

And that is why the payout date may be affected by the Canada Post strike. In an email circulated on November 19, plan members were told, "...the deadline for returning the ballot forms will be extended, as necessary.... Cont. Page 6

President's Report - November 2024

By Geoff Turnbull



Our payoff year finally arrived in July. How did you like finally getting those transfers into your bank account? Your volunteer leadership put in hundreds of thousands of dollars of your money and thousands of hours of their time over five years to make sure you would share in that surplus. Something to be grateful for. Our gratitude is also aimed at the splendid professionals who manage our pension plan funds. They are recognized as some of the best managers in the country by their peers. And there is more to come, as you will have heard, because they have also turned 2023 into a surplus year. Fittingly, we have a chance to celebrate together, because “Tis the season!” It’s party time, and preparations are in high gear at every chapter in the region for our annual Christmas gatherings. If you haven’t been to one before, maybe this is your year. The food, the familiar faces, the fun of being with folks you’ve spent years with but haven’t seen for a while – it’s like old home week.

These gatherings are highlights of the year, and I encourage you to shed any reluctance and jump in with me. It is also a way of showing your solidarity and appreciation to all the volunteers who make the good times - and the surplus sharing - possible.

Other highlights: our national AGM and Triennial election in May brought a new national executive, headed by President Dan Oldfield, and it was immediately clear this is a dynamic crew. The board meetings in May and October were some of the most focussed, action-oriented sessions I have been part of in the past dozen years. We are even meeting more frequently by Zoom to keep the momentum going.

Our single most important priority is RECRUITMENT! New and old retirees are signing up, but we still need 2,000 more to make sure CBC and federal financial authorities cannot fail to take us seriously. It’s job one for all of us – bringing someone in from the cold. It’s the money, sweetheart!

Another priority: the new executive and board have set our sights on building a better relationship with the CBC, and it seems to be working. It’s no secret that both sides were not happy with each other in recent years. I can report that our meetings with CBC executives have become much more constructive, and we are optimistic that we are finally being heard.

Your local, regional and national executives are here to serve you, along with our part time staff. Don’t hesitate to reach out if you think we can help. In the meantime, Happy Holidays, and all the best in the New Year.

Living with autism: a Moncton family takes the road towards inclusion

by Jacques Hamelin

Two retired Radio-Canada employees decided to embark on a two-month road trip to participate, as a family, in a documentary series on the inclusion of special-needs students in school. The project appealed to them because they have an autistic daughter, Mathilde, who is now 23.



Sophie Désautels and Robert Malenfant met at Radio-Canada Moncton in the early 90s. She was a journalist, he an editor-cameraman. They began dating and are still firmly united after 32 years together. In 2001, they became the parents of a little girl.

When Mathilde was a year old, after several months of consultation with medical professionals, the verdict was in. Their little girl had epilepsy and developmental delays. So began a series of appointments and hospitalizations to find a medication that worked and to try to make up for the motor and developmental delay. At the age of four, she was diagnosed with autism. Although her epilepsy has been under control since the age of six, her parents Robert and Sophie have invested a great deal of time in giving their daughter every opportunity to learn and thrive.

"Raising an autistic child is never easy, and autism was little known at the time. In class, she was accompanied by a support worker, and we had to hire in-home support workers on a regular basis."

The couple even moved to Quebec for three years to benefit from the expertise developed through extensive autism-related research.

Sophie and Robert didn't foresee that their lives would take this abrupt turn 23 years ago. But over the years, they have come to terms with the ups and downs of this new reality, and spare no effort to make their family life easier.

Autism can be a complex condition, as there are major differences between individuals diagnosed with ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder). In general, it is characterized by difficulties in communicating, socializing and understanding abstract concepts. People with ASD also have great strengths such as a phenomenal memory, as is the case with Mathilde.

“We understand and accept that Mathilde will always face challenges. We've lived through several setbacks and we've adapted and remain actively committed to managing the unexpected.”

Last year, along with their daughter, they took an active part in the production of a TV documentary series for TFO and AMI télé, *Imaginons une école pour tous*, filmed in Quebec and New Brunswick. Robert, Sophie and Mathilde spent two months on the road with a film crew, visiting over 25 schools. They also produced a series of six podcasts. In them, they highlight the experiences of families, teachers and special educators who, collectively, have devised innovative experiments and contributed to major advances in Quebec and New Brunswick in the field of inclusive education.

The *Imaginons une école pour tous* series is available on the TFO platform and the *Une école pour tous svp* podcast on Radio-Canada's OHdio application.

Cape Breton Chapter Report

The last meeting of the Cape Breton chapter took place in the spring, when we heard from an investment advisor about the tax implications of the pension surplus.

Our next gathering will happen on December 12, when we meet for our annual Christmas dinner.

Wendy Martin, President

P.E.I. Chapter Report

Our last gathering was held in June at the Brackley Commons again. We enjoyed another lobster roll luncheon on a lovely summer day and also held our Annual General Meeting including sharing the latest information about the pension surplus. Our regional president Geoff Turnbull attended and was able to answer many questions on that topic.

We are getting together on the 6th of December for our Christmas luncheon at the Quality Inn and Suites in Charlottetown at 12 noon.

Kathy Large, President

Fredericton - Saint John Chapter

It has been a busy few months of transition for the Fredericton/Saint John chapter. After two years of leadership, during which time they helped to establish our new chapter, Susan King and Michael Holmes stepped down as co-presidents in May. Connell Smith (Saint John) and Mary-Pat Schutta (Fredericton) are the new co-presidents. Elaine Bateman became a director at large, representing New Brunswick. Joyce Reinhart remains treasurer and Chris Morris remains secretary and a director at large. Our new leadership group has met regularly to clarify our roles, and establish priorities.

We are looking forward to discussing next steps with our members at our seasonal gathering at Fredericton's 12 Neighbours on November 28th.

Mary-Pat Schutta, Co-president

Halifax Chapter Report

The Halifax group continues to meet most months on the second Thursday at the Legion in Bedford. Typically we have a lunch and learn format. Olga Milosevich has been helping us line up interesting guests who tailor their topics and stories to us retired folks. Subsidies for green energy transition, seniors courses at university, and end of life legal preparations are some of the ideas we've learned about.

We have been catering our own lunches for the past year with the help of members who help set up, or bake cookies and make chili. Now we are looking at broadening the kinds of events we hold, and adding to our list of ideas and volunteers.

Geoff Turnbull, PNA Maritime President

45 Years of Making Barbershop Magic

By Wendy Martin

For 38 years, Hal Higgins' voice was familiar to CBC audiences in Cape Breton during his career as a newsreader, announcer and host on both radio and television. When he wasn't on air, Hal was singing



barbershop with the Cape Breton Chordsmen, and his singing voice is still making waves for local audiences. He's been performing barbershop quartet and chorus music with the Chordsmen for 45 years, 42 of them as the choir's director.

He joined his first group in his early 20s in

Amherst, Nova Scotia. And by the time he arrived in Sydney a few years later to work at the CBC, he was hooked.

Barbershop is a style of "a cappella" vocal music, which means there is no instrumental accompaniment, and usually four-part harmony. Higgins says he loves the challenge of barbershop, especially in the traditional four-person quartet, where "you have to carry your part".

And when all 30 members of the Chordsmen perform together, Higgins said he gets "shivers" from the expanded sound. "You don't just hear it, you feel it," he said.

As musical director, Hal says he spends some time every day, ordering music, planning venues or mulling over his approach to a particular piece of music. "It's become my way of life," he says.

Surplus cont. from page one...

to allow all pensioners sufficient time to submit them electronically or by return post.”



Oldfield says there is a strong possibility the process could be delayed by the strike.

“How long is anybody's guess. The challenge we face is that we need about 8200 votes to approve the distribution and the majority of those votes will likely depend on a mail-in return. About 2000 people voted online last time. That may increase slightly this time but probably not enough to achieve our two-thirds necessary for approval. We are keeping close tabs on the situation and the work necessary to make the payment happen is going on behind the scenes.”

Ballots are now scheduled to be returned by December 13, 2024. The CBC will again send the results of the vote to OSFI, the federal pension plan regulator.

As of the end of last year, the CBC pension plan had assets of more than \$8-billion and a solvency surplus of more than a billion-and-a-half dollars.

Based on the performance of the plan, the Pensioners National Association (PNA) is recommending pensioners **VOTE YES**.

OSFI has said this vote will apply to any surplus declared in the next five years.

Moncton Chapter Report

With three new persons on the board of directors and me as new president, the beginning of the year was a period of learning and adaptation for all of us. In June, we had our traditional lobster dinner and over 85 people attended. Again a great success!

In the fall, we were back in full swing with our monthly board meetings and starting the planning of our activities for this year.

On December 20, we will have our Christmas dinner and at the beginning of the year 2025, we plan to repeat the card tournament which was a great success last year. We also plan to hold a few lunch-and-learn sessions on topics of interest to our members.

In addition, we will begin, in collaboration with the regional board, to plan for the Maritime Annual General Meeting to be held in Moncton in May 2025.

Sylvie St-Onge, President

Defending Public Broadcasting

By Connell Smith

Just over a decade ago, we learned that CBC was taking a serious look at downsizing the Saint John station to a storefront.

We knew it was important to get that message to the community before any decisions were made - and that’s how I found myself and two colleagues set up on a Saturday at the entrance to the Kingston Farmers Market.

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As members of the Canadian Media Guild, we were asking people to sign cards addressed to three local Conservative MPs, objecting to CBC budget freezes.

We were pleasantly surprised at the response; nearly everyone we approached signed. Even well-known provincial Conservatives stepped up that day, among them a former speaker of the Legislature. And Saint John area artists staged a Save CBC Saint John concert for an enthusiastic crowd at an uptown bar.

The Saint John station remains open today.

But the tone in national politics and social media discourse has changed. A small number of vocal people online can make a lot of noise.

“They hate us,” a former colleague told me recently. ‘They’, I assume, are not among the millions who follow the news on the CBC website, listen to local CBC Radio, or watch the news, current affairs, investigative reports, and comedy shows. And they certainly do not represent the people we met at the Kingston Farmers Market.

That said, there’s work to be done. And there’s a role for CBC retirees. We’re lifelong communicators who risk nothing by speaking up for public broadcasting.

We can talk about CBC wins in our regions - investigations that led to changes in legislation, music shows that highlight regional talent, and the millions of dollars raised for community causes. CBC Saint John’s Harbour Lights Campaign has raised nearly \$4 million for food banks over the past 25 years.

It is time to shine a light on what CBC represents to communities across Canada.

The CBC Pensioners National Association has created a committee on advocacy, chaired by Ontario region president Barbara Saxberg.

It’s working on background papers on topics ranging from pension issues for all Canadians to the preservation of public broadcasting. The PNA is also talking to CBC unions, who are gearing up for what may be a rocky road.

But the clearest course of action may be to enlist the support of people who’ve dealt directly with the CBC at the local level - callers to our radio shows; those who, as children, collected coins with their classmates for campaigns like Harbour Lights; those who depend on CBC for local news.

CBC retirees across the Maritimes have those contacts, and very likely, friends who are willing to help. Let’s talk about it. It may even be a lot of fun.

We will have to be careful to protect the CBCPNA’s not-for-profit status by avoiding direct political activity. But that doesn’t mean we can’t state our personal views on policies and mobilize people who share our views on the value of public broadcasting.

So where do we go from here? Form a small committee at your chapter. Start by making a list of CBC accomplishments and of CBC friends who could be counted on to help. Make a list as well of community leaders who should be contacted down the road.

A website or public facebook page may also help; as a means to trumpet the local CBC and to list its accomplishments over the past many years. It would also be an excellent way for supporters to find us. We need them now more than ever.

Humour Kept Us Going - Rich Knowles



Around 1960, I finished high school in Toronto and started my long winding road to today. I found a great summer job as a fishing guide at a lodge in Northern Ontario where I learned all about fishing, outboard motors, American men on vacation (an interesting breed), fixing stuff, building canoes, partridge hunting and off-duty RCMP officers who came to the lodge with confiscated beer to unwind. After a summer of great adventures, I returned to Toronto and went to teachers' college.

At Christmas, a group of us decided that we were going to go out for New Year's Eve together and made reservations for dinner at a downtown Chinese buffet restaurant. One of the celebrants produced a fistful of passes for the annual CBC New

Year's Eve show to be broadcast from Studio 4 on Yonge St.

As I recall, the dinner was tasty, and we all overindulged on wine and wonton. The rest of the meal was a blur. After dinner, we meandered up to Studio 4 and had a little tour around before the show. It was my first time in a TV studio. I got a sore neck looking around.

Studio 4 at that time was a fair size room where the Tommy Hunter Show, Night Cap and a host of other regular shows were produced. It was probably 120' x 70' with the set across one end, bleachers for the audience across the other end and a sea of lights overhead.

As I recall we arrived around 23:00 to find the place packed to the rafters with an excited, noisy, well-along crowd. The seating was completely occupied and we wound up sitting in the last couple of rows at the very top of one of the aisles.

The preparations and audience warm-up began and we were very excited with it all. At 2330 the show proper started. It was just great. Music, dancing, singing and comedy; all the right stuff for celebrating New Year's Eve. The countdown began a couple of minutes before the Big Moment. About then, I started to feel a little queasy as supper and wine made its way through my plumbing. I was sitting at the head of the stairs leaning against the pipe railing behind me. There was no escape!! Panic!! 6,5,4,3,2,1. Midnight!!! Lots of cheering, music and lights flashing.

I didn't see any of it as I was hanging over the rail 20 feet above the studio floor with my back to the mayhem. I was making horrible retching sounds into the darkness below and frantically hoping no one would notice. Half an hour later, we left the studio and headed home. The young lady next to me who I had been chatting with had vanished. I wondered why?

Later that spring I decided that I was not going to be a teacher. I applied for work as a technician at CBC and started in early summer.

My first day on the job I was assigned to the lighting crew for Friendly Giant. I was in my element. The beginning of a lifetime of the best career I could ever have had.

Eventually, I got scheduled to work a show in Studio 4 for the first time. I felt a couple of twinges as I parked my old '54 Chev in the lot. I was shown around the studio by the technical director. Everyone was very welcoming and made me feel right at home.

Part of my little tour was a visit to the back of the studio, the scene of my New Year's crime. There, I was instructed never to leave any equipment or cables directly behind the bleachers because "some idiot had barfed all over a camera and other gear on New Year's Eve". I just about bit my tongue off.

This is the first time I have told my sad tale. I feel much relieved.



CBC Pensioners' National Assoc. (Maritimes) Financial Report Synopsis



This is a snapshot of our Financial Report for the period of April 1, 2024 to October 28, 2024. Our bank balance as of October 28, 2024 is \$19,750 with revenue to date of \$28,500. Our revenue is made up of dues for each member in the region, extra dues money of \$100 per each new member recruited along with money collected from members to pay for food at our lunch meetings in Halifax.

A portion of the funds (approximately 50%) supports the Halifax members group, and the balance is used to support regional needs. The new members awards of \$100.00 are distributed to the chapter of the new members."

Expenses to date have amounted to \$19,200 which reflects rental costs for meeting space in Halifax, food, supplies, communication and printing costs, travel expenses for regional representation from the chapters to the Annual General Meeting and visits by the President to various Maritime locations.

If you have any questions, please e-mail Judy at cbcpnamaritimes@outlook.com

Judy Kovacs
Regional Treasurer

New Members

Joy Asher - NB - Surviving spouse of Kevin Ryan

Claire Belliveau - NB - Purchasing agent

Paul Butler - NB - TV Producer

Paul Castle - NB - Host of Information Morning in Saint John also Host Shift NB

Geoff D'Eon - NS - Exec. Producer TV news - Halifax - Producer on 22 Minutes

Merle Emms - NS - Surviving spouse of Colin Cooper

Sheree Fitch - NS - Surviving spouse of Gilles Plante

Don Flatt - NB - Switcher/Director NB

Wayne Gaudet - NB - Senior technician

Lewis LeBlanc - NB - Media librarian

Owen Letcher - NS - Mechanical Rigger at Transmitter in Sackville NB

Norma Lee MacLeod - NS - Television and Radio on air Host

Marilyn Maki - NS - Radio Noon Host, Manitoba

Marjorie Pedneault - NB - Surviving spouse of Michel Doucet

Terry Seguin - NB - Television and Radio on air Host in Fredericton

Deceased Members

Gordon Patrick (Tim) Allen - NS - Regional Finance Director

André Arsenault - NB - Machinist

Blanche Diamond - NS - Production and Operations in Halifax

Gerard (Max) Gallagher - NS - Administrative Staff

Peggy MacDonald - NS - Reporter/ Editor/Exec Producer at CBC Cape Breton

Paul Murray - NS - Cameraperson CBC Halifax

Serge Szpilfogel - NS - Production Assistant TV

Gordie Warren - NS - Video Editor

Mary Wilcox - NS - National Reporter/ Senior Editor, Radio

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