

National Pensioners and
Senior Citizens Federation



La fédération nationale des
retraités et des citoyens âgés

Winter 2012

NEWSLETTER

Volume 12 Issue 4



***Tis the Season** - This is the time of year that makes us aware of the less fortunate. Please give all you can over the holiday season to make someone else's Christmas memorable.*

Season's Greetings to you and your family for a safe and healthy holiday season.

THE NATIONAL PENSIONERS AND SENIOR CITIZENS FEDERATION INCORPORATED

Executive for NPSCF 2012-2013

President: Herb John

249 Peters Road
Walpole Island, ON
N8A 4K9
Phone: 519-627-0555
Cell: 519-350-3221
Email: president@npscf.org

Treasurer: Sandra Carricato

2389 Head Road
Port Perry, ON
L9L 1B4
Phone: 905-985-8170
Email: sandy.carricato@gmail.com

1st Vice President: John Gatens

1 Joshua Blvd.
Brooklin, ON
L1M 2J1
Phone: 905-655-6314
Email: johngatens@rogers.com

2nd Vice President: Sheila Righi

315 28th St. E.
Prince Albert, SK
S6V 1X4
Phone: 306-922-8238
Email: frerig@sasktel.net

3rd Vice President: Mary Fleck

Box 575
Margaree Forks, NS
B0E 2A0
Phone: 902-248-2838
Email: maryteapot@hotmail.com

Past President: Barry Thorsteinson

4635 Whispering Willow Dr
Navan, ON
K4B 1J1
Phone: 613-835-3495
Email: past_president@npscf.org

Secretary: Pat Brady

27681 - 56 Avenue
Abbotsford, BC
V4X 1J9
Phone: 604-856-2430
Email:

Member at Large: Winnie Fraser-MacKay

75 Cape Rd. RR #1
North Lake Harbour, PEI
C0A 2B0
Phone: 902-357-2224
Email: winniesbeachhouse@pei.sympatico.ca

Member at Large: Paul Boisvert

4334 49 Avenue
St. Paul, AB
T0A 3A3
780-645-3409
Email: hawkowl4@telus.net

**“Don’t Plan For
Seniors, Plan with
Seniors”**



President
Herb John

Since this is my first article as president of our Federation I think it is appropriate to give some personal background. My strong belief in social activism began at home as a result of my fathers' activism. My participation in the California Grape Growers protest was a strong beginning for a 13 year old. From 1970 till today I have supported and volunteered in many environmental issues. I also have supported First Nations issues for many years. I retired from Ford Motor Company in 2003 after 30 years of service. For 20 years in that workplace I was elected to various positions including Plant Chairperson, Local Executive Board and Bargaining Committee. Since retiring I was elected as Chairperson of our Retired Workers Chapter and to our National C.A.W. Retired Workers Advisory Executive Board. I am also on our local Health Alliance Board of Directors.

Seniors and Retirees need to continue raising a strong voice in Ottawa to change the direction of policy development, financial funding allocation and respect and understanding for the issues we face as we age. I believe this Federation is a great way to do that. During the 1950s' 60s' and 70s' there seemed to be a consensus that everyone shared. That consensus was that as Canada grew its' manufacturing base, resource development and technological prowess that all Canadians would continue to benefit by sharing and participating in stronger and improved social plans; especially health care and education. This has somehow been replaced with a consensus that we are hanging over a cliff by our fingernails. This change has developed over 30-35 years of continuous improvements in GDP and the amount of capital generated by our manufacturing sector and from our National natural resources such as oil and mining. Even though we have an innate feeling that this is unnecessary and unfair we must ask some questions. How did this happen? To who's advantage was it? How do we turn it around?

The simple view is this. The government enacts the legislation we all must live by. They get political and financial pressure from many different groups and individuals. The legislation that has been passed since the early 80's has clearly been to the advantage of the wealthiest people in our country. They have clearly had more of an influence in Ottawa than 99% of Canadians. To change the distribution of wealth in this country we must be more vocal, pay attention to which elected politicians support legislation that benefits us and vote accordingly.

In the upcoming months you will see improvements to our website and the development of an email based information update system which will provide new information to your email address.

Together we can create the changes that will benefit all of us.

Merry Christmas and All the Best of the Holiday Season!

THE NATIONAL PENSIONERS AND SENIOR CITIZENS FEDERATION INCORPORATED

Website: www.npsc.org
Toll Free: 1-877-251-7042

OBJECTIVES

The National Pensioners and Senior Citizens Federation is an organization devoted entirely to the welfare and best interests of Canada's elderly.

1. To promote and establish and foster Seniors' Centres (called Clubs or Groups) and Regional and Provincial Seniors' groups throughout Canada.
2. To provide education for persons in the retired and senior citizens age group and other individuals interested in aging, and the status and well being of seniors.
3. To reach out to seniors who are lonely, or isolated, or at risk.
4. To provide programs which promote healthy active lifestyles for seniors, thus sustaining mental and physical health.
5. To assist in developing the knowledge that seniors should learn during their aging process, through promotion of educational experiences.
6. To research the aging process, and any problems and benefits pertaining to the aged that might be of interest to the Federation and to use the knowledge gained from that research to educate seniors and any other party or parties who are or might become interested in these concerns.
7. To provide opportunities for seniors to utilize their volunteer and leadership skills for the benefits of all persons.
8. To consult with other private and public organizations which offer similar services in order to gather any educational information that will add to knowledge and be of use to seniors and the public.

**** Notice ****

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All editorial matter published in this NPSCF newsletter represents the opinions of the authors and not necessarily those of the publication's editor or the NPSCF. Statements and opinions expressed do not represent the official policy of NPSCF unless so stated.

Deadline for NPSCF Newsletter

submissions is

March 1, 2013

Have you got an article you would like to submit for consideration? Please send it to the Newsletter

Editor Jean Simpson npscnews@gmail.com

In



Past President
Barry Thorsteinson

Moving On

“Gone too soon. Why are you leaving?” These are typical of many comments that I received at our last Convention after deciding not to re-offer for President in the Federation. I enjoyed the many warm moments working with other active seniors on the many matters requiring attention across the land during the 2 years since being elected in 2010.

As I have explained to many, I am busy with other pursuits as well. Last January, I was appointed as an Investigator/Mediator with the Canadian Labour Congress. This is an on occasion specializes position to sort out internal disputes within the CLC. To my surprise, I have already concluded 5 cases this year. I did not expect it to be that busy.

The bottom line, as time went on this year, I felt that the Federation's priorities were no longer receiving my best concentration and focus. The NPSCF deserves better from the President. Some duties I loved doing, especially the lobbying of Members of Parliament in Ottawa. Other duties, however, became less compelling as my available hours shifted to new challenges. The responsibilities were too numerous to be fully effective in achieving the desired results.

I hope to still make a strong contribution to the Federation's progress in my new position as Past President. I will continue to work on select files that can be done effectively from Ottawa. This will be done in full consultation with our new President, Herb John, and with the approval of the Executive. The first initiative will be to take the lead in helping to organize the “Think Tank” of leaders of Seniors' organizations at the National level. [Resolution 12 at our last Convention]. I believe that seniors have to be heard with as much influence as possible. Even though there remains separate organizations apart from ours, they likely have common objectives for their members. We have to come together, informally as required, to maximize our impact on government policy on common issues. I look forward to working with the Executive on developing the full program on this priority.

At this time I would like to thank all the activists that I met over the past two years that offered their kind words and advice. I learned a lot from them. I would especially like to recognize the fine contributions from representatives with other (than my own) backgrounds of experience during their careers prior to retirement. I have done my best to have all working together. We cannot afford the luxury of maintaining internal differences to weaken our potential. I deeply appreciate all of those that I have met who agree and did their very best to work as one. This is our Federation and it will be whatever we collectively make it to be. I'm proud to remain on the Executive and offer what I can.



FROM THE DESK OF THE
TREASURER

Sandy Carricato

A very big thank you to COSCO for hosting our convention, their hospitality was very much appreciated and they were great hosts.

I want to thank all of the committees and volunteers that gave their services at convention. We couldn't have had better people to work with. The convention was a show of democracy in action. It is so good to reacquaint, socialize and express our thoughts and differences with so many caring people and come away with a sense of renewal.

I want to share with you an experience that I unfortunately had to be subject to this past summer. The experience left me feeling violated and frightened. I've never experienced such complete vulnerability at the whims of others that I didn't even know!

We had a great weekend planned; we were going to a concert called "Boots and Hearts". Our daughter's house was closest to the venue, so we were going to stay there for the weekend. The weather wasn't good it rained every day, downpours in fact but that didn't dampen our spirits we were having a great time.

The concert lasted for three days and would start at noon and end around 10 pm. By the time you were out of the parking lot and drove home it was around 1am in the morning. We were wet, cold and hungry when we arrived home on the Saturday night, we just wanted to unload the car, get out of our wet clothes and have a hot cup of tea and a bite to eat and go to bed.

Around two in the morning after laughing and talking about the concert we succumbed to our tired bodies. We were exhausted and we all slept soundly, until the loud knock at the front door woke us up.

A police cruiser was in the driveway and two police officers were standing there when the door was opened. My daughter's son stayed at a friend's house that night and fear gripped us, thinking something could have happened to him. That fear was soon dismissed. When the police were making their rounds they noticed that my granddaughter's car door was ajar and knew that something wasn't right.

As we were sleeping soundly, strangers had entered the house and stole a number of items.

How did they enter? Through the garage door, the remote for the garage door was in the car or possibly through the patio doors. The police showed us how easily the patio doors could have been lifted off their track for easy entry. The police told us that usually this kind of intrusion is young offenders looking to steal something of value that they can sell and get money for quickly. They work fast and leave as fast.

We all learned from that experience, and we were frightened that those strangers could have raped, or murdered us that night. The police told us about house security and the steps that need to be taken **to insure as much as possible** your safety and the precautions that you have to take. Please take these suggestions seriously and follow through with them every night as you retire for the evening. My son-in-law replaced the locks and the hardware on the patio doors.

- Never leave your keys in the car, intruders can steal the car, but more importantly your key ring usually has your house keys on it as well giving them easy access for entry.
- Never leave your garage remote in the car especially if you have a door with direct access to the living area. (also the garage has tools etc. that make entry easier)
- Close drapes in the living areas. The intruders cannot see items that they might want to steal.
- Don't get into the habit of leaving purses and valuables near an entry door.

Check to make sure all your doors have proper locking systems on them. Patio doors can easily be opened without proper hardware all they have to do is lift them up of their track. The police officer showed us how easily it is done.


We consider ourselves lucky that all they took was my granddaughter's knapsack containing her wallet with all of her personal information, cash, credit cards and her computer.

It's hard to be kept up to date on everything that goes on around you, but being current with locking systems for your home, could save you a lot of heartache and headaches too. Home burglaries are on the rise, and you will never know when someone will try to break into your house to steal, or worse. Take some time to learn about some of the ways a burglar will break in, and what they consider faults for easy access.

Please get your home assessed by a professional. Most security companies will give estimates at no cost and your life and the safety of your loved ones is the most important.

When you have had a negative experience and learned from it, it is important that you share the happening. You could save someone else from a similar situation or possibly worse.

Please have a very happy holiday season and a Merry Christmas to those who celebrate this festive occasion.



**The BCRTA
values the
Federation's work
on Pensions,
Pharmacare
& Housing**



1st Vice President

John Gatens

Greetings: Unfortunately like many of our readers and members, my past year was interrupted with multiple medical problems within my immediate family. As mentioned in my Convention report I had to return to Scotland in February owing to the serious medical setback and final demise of my old mum. Subsequently I was unable to attend our annual lobby of the Government and presentation of the brief containing the demands, objectives, concerns and criticisms submitted to us through your various delegates from all across the country and discussed at our previous convention. My information regarding the reception your executive members received in parliament is therefore second hand, but as I understand from my colleagues, the reception from the ruling party was rather cool to say the least. So much for a majority government! Fortunately we still have some friends in parliament.

The next big event I missed was the convention held in Richmond B.C. Once again having arrived at the convention centre and looking forward to meeting some old friends and delegates, I had a family medical emergency call to return home immediately which I did. I know most, if not all seniors have, or will have these incidents in our aging lives that visit us at the most unpredictable times, this is just a fact of life, and we have no choice but to accept it.

Well thankfully we have overcome these setbacks and continued to represent our organization in other ways for example as your vice president, I sit on the Seniors Advisory Board of Service Canada and recently met with them on November 14th. We heard some very important speakers, Dr. Rob Maden Chief of Psychiatry from Baycrest Centre for Geriatric Care in Toronto who described to us the increasing numbers of seniors suffering from Mental Illness that go untreated and undiagnosed. Dr. Rob Maden was described as the Canadian leader in this field; i.e. Seniors Mental Health. If I may lay out the program or presentation he made to us, it is as follows:

Outline: **Aging in Canada Geriatric Depression Dementia The future in geriatric health care.**

Aging baby boomers. Numbers of seniors will double between 2009 and 2036 (outnumbering children) 9.9 – 10.9 million seniors in Canada 2036. Compared to 4.7 million in 2009. Seniors will account for 23-25% of the population in 2036. People over 80 years old will triple by 2036.

Major Depression: Major Depressive Disorder described as **four** of the following: Depressed or empty mood, Anhedonia (loss of interest), Sleep impairment, Guilt/ worthlessness, Low energy, Poor concentration, Appetite changes, Psychomotor slowing, Suicidal thoughts.

To be diagnosed as having Major Depression one has to display (1 of these symptoms) to have Major Depressive Disorder one has to have (four of these)

To be considered to have Minor Depression one displays (1-3 of these)

MYTH: “It is normal for the elderly to be depressed” NO! This is an ILLNESS!

The learned doctor went on to give us statistics on the Prevalence of Geriatric Depression, discussed the pros and cons of the use of Antidepressants, and discussed the methods of treatment. Surprising to most of us was the fact that the most effective therapy was still Electroconvulsive Therapy. Not much different than the treatment used in the famous Jack Nickelson movie "One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest." Of course the difference is the patient has to consent and is anesthetized to prevent injury through convulsion. The doctor talked about Dementia and the Prevalence of Alzheimer Disease.

Stats: One in eight people aged 65 and older (13 %) has Alzheimer's disease. Nearly half of people aged 85 and older (43 %) have Alzheimer's disease.

From: Alzheimer's Association, 2011 Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures, Alzheimer's & Dementia, Volume 7, Issue 2

The doctor described the many forms of Dementia, the statistics, the rising tides, the projected costs, the Cognitive Symptoms and the Behavioural Symptoms;

Examples: Delusions, Hallucinations, Aggression, Screaming, Restlessness, Wandering, Depression, Anxiety, Disinhibition, Sexual behaviors, Apathy Sleep disturbance, Compulsive or Repetitive Behaviour.

There was much more to take in at this session, however the bottom line was, there are not enough physicians taking up this speciality, and it is his opinion that owing to the tremendous increasing number of seniors, this or these mental conditions will be a major problem within our society.

There were more directors and experts who presented updates on various subjects; Old Age Security and Canada Pension Plan updates, at which I expressed critical objections in the strongest terms. Employment Insurance, Call Centre updates, Department of Veterans Affairs, Connecting Canadians to available Jobs, and Office of the Public Guardian and Trustee of Ontario. Many of these subjects provoked criticism from our committee, with the request that the messenger take it back to the authors; the various ministers in government.

I requested, and was granted permission to have our new president Herb John, to attend the next meeting so that he may get to know the other leaders from the many organizations representing seniors in Ontario.

I have just returned from meeting with another branch of Service Canada; New Horizons. New Horizons was established in 2004 to recognize and fund worthy projects set up for, and by seniors to enable them to participate in their community events and to allow them to be a real part of their community. As a member of a review committee we met to discuss 2013/14 Provincial funding priorities based on the Committee members knowledge of seniors and community needs. Our committee members are from various organizations representing seniors and are from north, south, east and western Ontario, and are made up from a mixed ethnic background representing the multi cultures in our great land. I believe there are similar committees in each province who are appointed to review and direct funds to the various projects who request funds to help and assist seniors groups and who meet the terms and conditions outlined by the government mandate.

This committee meets later in the New Year when all the requests have come in for funding their various programs. We then review and assist the New Horizons officers regarding the allocations. Last year the maximum amount allowed to any project was \$25,000 and many organizations were awarded full requests through this valuable program. My position within our organization allows me the privilege to speak for, and represent our members with the views and directives expressed at our conventions, and as long as I am elected by you, I will continue to do so at every opportunity for the benefit of our seniors.

I think I have babbled enough so without further ado, I will bid you all a happy and healthy New Year.



3rd Vice President

Mary Fleck

This year is drawing to an end. Does it seem to happen quicker each year now!! It sure does to me!!

On the ninth of December is the first day of Hanukah and on the twenty-fifth is Christmas day. So, "Happy Hanukah and Merry Christmas"! I have looked, carefully, on a few calendars and don't find any other religious holidays listed for this month. It certainly is a great time, during the dark days of December, to have some brighter days of celebration.

Looking back on 2012 I find a lot of things to remember, a lot to be thankful for, and a few surprises, too! Mostly I am so thankful for the safety of two of my daughters. One had gone to New Jersey to visit her sister, go shopping and to see a couple of shows. Along came "Sandy" (the storm, NOT Carricato!) and several days without contact. She got home safe and sound, one week later. No shopping done, no shows seen, and happy to be back in Cape Breton!

Now; back to business, and what we are doing to assist in some way, to solve some of the problems that enter into the lives of us Senior Citizens.

With such a huge membership, and with us all working together, we should be capable of achieving this. I feel the biggest steps we take is in consulting, sitting down and talking with our Federal Ministers of affairs concerned with Senior Citizens. They discuss just what the problems are, how they affect seniors in a negative way, and what change is needed to correct the situation. This is where those RESOLUTIONS come into play. Resolutions tell us just what problems exist, and what outcome is desired.

If you have never written or sent in any resolutions, please search your surroundings, your life-style or your own situation. There must be something that needs improving. Maybe you have a friend or neighbour who is going through a bad time that could be remedied. If it is a problem which may be solved by your Provincial Federation PLEASE send in a resolution to them. If it has to do with FEDERAL government send your resolution(s) to the National Federation.

I have found when writing out a resolution that it is sometimes easier to write out the "Therefore be it resolved" section first, then think back on the "Whereas" sections. Please keep the "Whereas" sections to a minimum, no more than three or four, unless, of course it is really necessary.

When these resolutions are received the committee reads each one, sometimes there are several on the same subject, presented from varying points of view. These may, and probably, will be combined, with credit given to each group addressing the same situation.

The resolutions are then put into booklet form. The booklet is divided into sections, such as Health, Housing, Safety, etc. This is included in the Convention booklet and all delegates vote on each resolution.

If your group has sent in resolutions that have not been carried through by government, do not let that stop you from presenting it, or them, again and again.

We hope to see you at the 2013 Convention next fall, in Ontario so a lot of us should be able to get there. I really hope to see YOU there!

A Memory

I grew up in a small village which had several factories producing wood furniture, made of maple wood. My home was, as I told people who asked about where in the town I lived, "three houses up and across the street", from the largest factory. Close enough that in the summer, when it would be hot and muggy, the windows of the factory would be open and so would ours. This made it possible to hear the saws, humming and buzzing.

I had been inside the factory with I was young, about eight (the same as my age at the time) friends. They would be bringing a note from school or home, or may be bringing a supper-lunch because they were told they had to "work over-time " that evening.

A part of each day, except Sunday, was THE WHISTLE, a very loud horn. It blew at seven in the morning to tell the men to start their saws , thus the days' work. It blew a very sort little "toot" at eleven-forty-five. At twelve it blew again, noon hour and lunch time! At one o'clock a large loud one, and at five p.m. it blew to end the days' work for all except those who were told to work overtime. Note: not asked, but told!

As I write this I can well remember the smell of fresh wood taken to be dried, and again when it was being sawed. These smells only carried through in the heat of summer.

Remember I told you that the horn was blown fifteen minutes before noon? Well, there were also women working there. They did not work on the machines, they did "womens work"; upholstering, assembling and I don't know what else. That horn, that short "toot" was to remind the women it was time to go home and put on a hot meal for your husband, son, or whoever. They were both, male and female to be back at work for one o'clock. The same thing occurred at five p.m. These women lost one-half hour of pay for each work day.

I left, to the last, the hardest thing to remember, not that I lost the memory, it's just the awful feeling of remembering. With the factory windows open, we would also hear the yells, sometimes screams, followed by the shut-down of the saws. This almost always meant a "man got cut", this was the phrase used by adults so as to not upset the children. Believe me we very well knew what it meant! Usually it meant a finger or two. Remember this was a time when saws were without the safety shields', or any other protection for those running them.

We had a neighbor who had worked there since his youth and was always afraid of being "cut". Imagine working every day with fear of your work. A good and hard working man, and on the last day he ever worked, he lost the four fingers of one hand. I have no idea how his family managed financially, after this.

These memories are from about 1938.

Mary Fleck

21 ACTIVE YEARS
1991 – 2012

SOUTHWEST MARGAREE
SENIOR CITIZENS CLUB



**Member at Large:
Winnie Fraser Mackay**

**CANADIAN NATIONAL SENIORS
ORGANIZING FOR CHANGE**

There are many strong senior organizations across Canada but we must remember that an organization is empty and formless until people and their work give it life and meaning.

I have just returned from British Columbia, attending, as a delegate, the Senior Citizens Federation 68th Annual Convention and the Council of Senior Citizens Organizations of B.C. Health Conference titled *The Joys & Tears of Living Longer*. The energy and the enthusiasm was always present - both volunteers and delegates demonstrating their great organizational skills and team work that took place over a twelve month period organizing the conference. The Health Conference attracted over 300 people, largely B.C. residents and National Pensioners and Senior Citizens (NPSCF) members.

The power of the aging population is so well demonstrated throughout Canada and it's crucial that all Canadians understand the value of seniors to our communities.

There is still a perception that this group is least likely to contribute to society and draw heavily from social programs. The fear is that seniors will become more of a social economic burden than an asset. But the facts and research about the contributions of seniors to Canadian society tell a much different story.

Many of the professional presenters at the Health Conference, spoke up strongly to set the record straight about the value of seniors to our communities. Seniors certainly do contribute, and live longer, healthier and very busy lives. In fact they are the most socially engaged citizens in the country. While some seniors continue to be gainfully employed many others contribute to their families, friends and communities through activities such as spending time in children's classrooms, caring for ailing friends and actually working to influence public policies.

Seniors social participation benefits Canadian society as a whole. It is very important that all three levels of government along with volunteer organizations avoid adopting ageist attitudes that discount the diversity, interest and needs of seniors. Otherwise Canada may overlook, at its own peril, one of its most precious natural resources.

Presenters at the Health Conference demonstrated that we have a new breed of seniors with new ways. Recently the rate of older adults who volunteer has decreased, but upon a closer look this is simply a reflection of the changing volunteer landscape. Gone are the days of seniors looking for ways to fill up their time. The challenge for senior organizations is to capture the interest and accommodate the needs, busy schedule and ambitions of would-be volunteers. Today's average mature volunteer is in the 55 to 65 age group, likely to be a man and as likely to be an immigrant. However, the older volunteer, 70 years plus, is equally active and playing an important role in community work. Also, many Aboriginal communities have been attracting seniors.

In general this new breed considers time to be a valuable community commodity, has high standards and expectations, is seeking interesting and meaningful experiences and isn't likely to stop volunteering or to accept the status quo. For organizations that count on contributions of older volunteers there are a lot of retirees that can continue to contribute to organizations once barriers are removed, for example, low income, inadequate transportation especially in rural areas, and adequate language.

Some organizations are being forced to consider amalgamating or merging because of difficult times and increasingly competitive vying for funds. Today the challenge for two Canadian organizations, Canadian Pensioners Concerned, National and NPSCF is to create an effective national structure. This process has begun. CPC National and the NPSCF have been in discussions for the past couple of years. I have had the privilege of being involved with many senior organizations and dedicated members across Canada. As President of CPC National and a member at large of NPSCF, I know we can have a stronger voice with one national organization.

The delegates of the NPSCF Convention have put forth a motion that the President of NPSCF convene a "Think Tank" to begin development of an organizational vision and a plan how to accomplish it. This vision and plan would be sent to member organizations for discussion/debate/feedback, with a full report being made to the 2013 Convention.

There are very strong senior clubs across Canada - let's start working together.

Five surgeons

Five surgeons who trained together have met in the pub.

The first, a Manchester surgeon, says "I like to see accountants on my operating table, because when you open them up, everything inside is numbered."

The second, a Liverpool surgeon, responds "Yeah, but you should try electricians, everything inside them is colour coded."

The third, Newcastle surgeon, says "No, I really think librarians are the best, everything inside them is in alphabetical order."

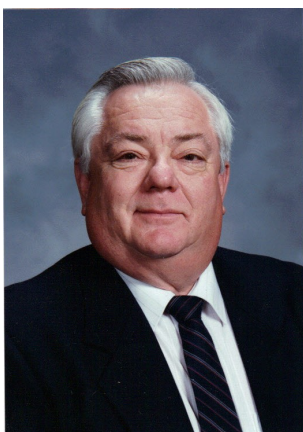
The fourth, a Birmingham surgeon, chimes in " You know, I like construction workers, those guys always understand when you have a few parts leftover."

But the fifth, a London surgeon, shuts them all up when he observed: "You are all wrong, politicians are the easiest to operate on. There's no guts, no heart, no balls, no brains, and no spine, and the head and the #\$\$%\$ are interchangeable.

You can make up your own mind what the #\$\$%\$ refers to!

Did you know, you may advertise in this newsletter?

- Business Card \$ 25**
- One Quarter Page \$ 40**
- One Half Page \$ 75**
- One Full Page \$ 150**



Member at Large

Paul Boisvert

DOES THE EXPIRATION DATE ON A MEDICATION
CONTAINER MEAN ANYTHING?

Are medications manufacturers being honest with us when they put an expiry date on their packaging? Or is this simply another ploy to get consumers to buy more drugs when the old ones that purportedly have “**expired**” are still very usable? Those who have led the research in trying to get an answer to this question blame a federal law passed in 1979 and mandated by the US FDA for the dilemma of the validity of expiry dates on medication. As is usual with many of these types of laws or regulations, Canada Health was quick to follow the FDA in these matters. In effect, to adhere to this regulation, manufacturers of medications of all types simply put an **expiry date** that they are willing to guarantee the intended usefulness of the drug in question. This is done totally in an arbitrary manner and not based on clinical tests or comprehensive research.

Any reasonable person would find it hard to believe that a medication with a December 31st expiry date would suddenly be unusable on January 1st. If a bottle of aspirin contains either of the statements, “**Best Before June 30, 2012**” or simply, “**Expiry Date June 30, 2012**”, and it is now December 1, 2012, should you take the aspirin? Should you discard it? Can it be harmful for you if you take it? Or will it mean that while not harmful it may have lost its potency to the point where it will not give the results it previously did? Many of us will remember having taken an “**expired**” medication and report that we enjoyed the same relief as the medication had provided before its “expiry” date. Some may wonder if these results might just be the consequences of the “placebo effect”?

Dr. Richard Altschuler who has written largely about this question of expiry dates or shelf life of drugs, bases his comments primarily on research carried out for the US Department of Defense which maintains an inventory of drugs worth a billion or more dollars as part of the Strategic National Stockpile. Replacing a stockpile of drugs of this magnitude every 2 – 3 years is hugely expensive and deemed wasteful. In an effort to determine what might truly be the “shelf life” of its drugs, for more than 20 years researchers monitored 122 drugs commonly held in the stockpile.

What has been discovered through this program? Altschuler writes that about 88% of the 122 drugs tested in a conglomerate of 3000 test lots over the 20 years were determined to have an extended shelf life of more than 5.5 years beyond the original expiry date. Some pills especially and powders were totally stable and reliable for 10 years beyond the stated expiry date. Only 10 of the 122 drugs failed to get an extension beyond the original expiry date. Within this group of 10, many liquid drugs did not earn an extension not because they could not provide the results of their original intent, but rather because of a change in consistency or colour.

Dr. Lorne Brandes, a Canadian medical practitioner, writing in *The Mednews Express Blog* of July 8, 2011, states that some caution must be exercised when looking at these results, for unlike the in-home medicine cabinet, the stockpile of drugs of the US Department of Defense are generally stored in the manner prescribed by the drug manufacturer. There is no doubt that storage can be a very vital factor in determining the shelf life of any drug. Brandes states that **opened** eye drops for example should be dis-

carded after a month or two, not because of decreased potency, but because of concern over **bacterial contamination**, especially at room temperature. He goes on to say that the majority of **opened** prescriptions and over the counter medications such as aspirin, Tylenol, antibiotic pills or capsules, blood pressure pills and assorted pain relief pills, will remain safe and effective for months and even years beyond their expiry date if stored properly in a closed container.

Dr. Brandes concludes his comments with the following caution: “However, there is an important exception: if any drug falls into the category of **“lifesaving”**, its expiry date should be heeded irrespective of any potential for longer shelf life. In serious disease situations, no one should take a chance with the effectiveness of their medication”.

Almost 75% of expenditures by health benefit plans with the drug option are for drugs. While it remains easy to simply discard drugs when the costs are borne primarily by a benefits plan, the savings which might accrue from a prudent observance of shelf life versus expiry date could result in lower benefit plan costs or enhanced benefits.

Those interested in reading more about these matters can go to:

<http://healthblog.ctv.ca/post/Drug-expiry-dates-should-you-use-outdated-medicine.aspx>

or search USFDA Expiry Date on Drugs.

Our Next Great Debate

“ Power is power. It exists of and for itself. And the power to sway the human mind is the greatest and most lethal power of all.”

Jack Whyte – The Eagles’ Brood

Language has been called the most powerful drug known to humanity. The words we hear and speak have a distorting effect on our points of view as well as our inner most feelings. Consequently words **understood clearly** or **misunderstood** have a greater impact on our lives and relationships than we sometimes want to admit. This is most poignant in our times when the conversation is centered on either the quality of living or dying with dignity.

There was a time in the not so long ago, when we knew that certain illnesses were an absolute death sentence indicative of a very limited life-span. Upon the receipt of the “bad news”, preparations began for the arrival of that final heartbeat or breath. And generally the duration of ones suffering, while perhaps more arduous than it is currently, did not last over protracted periods of time. Death seemed to be more readily accepted as a fact of life.

In our times, the practices of treatment for ailments and afflictions to which we are subjected have risen to the point, where unconsciously, we begin to believe and act as if we will live forever. This possibility lies either in the advances made through conventional medicine, the overabundance of drugs or amid the plethora of non-conventional treatments, which cover the entire spectrum from naturopathic medicine to Aunt Martha’s chicken soup to outright quackery!

As the senior population grows, the discussion of these two dignities, life and death, has become more prevalent among us. As a result of these discussions, the belief systems which are maintained as part of our culture are being tried in a manner such as not experienced previously. Sociologists are quickly to remind us that our belief systems are for the most part anchored in a defined religious dogma. And then the Dalai Lama states: “ Our behaviours are greatly different if we believe that humans are spiritual beings on a human journey, or human beings on a spiritual journey.”

Looking closely at the history of our Canada over the past 100 years, we will easily find numerous examples where “royal battles” have been fought on matters that are rooted in our diverse belief systems. To mention just some of these issues, let us consider military conscription, motherhood of the unwed, abortion, same-sex marriage and divorce. My commentary in this instance is not intended to demonstrate which side of the issue is correct and justifiable. Rather we must simply admit that each of the issues mentioned have in their time created a significant change in the general belief system of our nurtured Canadian culture.

Conscription was sold as the responsibility of it being a divine absolute that war was fought for God and country equally. Unwed motherhood condemned the victim to a life of shame which often caused the collapse of an entire family let alone prejudging for ever the innocent newly born. Abortion was sold on the “right” of the woman to have total responsibility of her physical being. Same-sex marriage is permitted in our country because our courts have deemed that this is a matter which supports “Human Rights”. And while divorce was accepted early in our social structure for very limited reasons, today the door appears to swing open at the slightest nudge. Over time, is it the question of a right or wrong which has supported the practice or legality, or is it the fact that with increased usage and familiarity comes acceptance?

While the intrinsic right of living a life where our individual dignity is revered and respected is not limited to those of us who are seniors, the fact of the matter is that “senior” (65+) population in our country now stands at approximately 20 percent and we have a greater aptitude of pausing to consider not only what is but what is yet to come. The following question needs to be asked. Is it possible that a vision that embraces new ethics and social norms which integrate euthanasia and assisted dying in the medical practices would greatly alter our acceptance and understanding of the end of our life, of dying, of life supports, of medical practices, of the relationship between patient and doctor and the relationship amongst those who provide healthcare in all its forms?

Given the volatility of this discussion, it is absolutely necessary that as individuals, a contemplative reflection be undertaken which considers the implications for our institutions of justice, ethnics and societal supports, for eventually the legal justification of a medical practice which supports assisted dying will become common practice by consensus which is socially acceptable and totally irreversible. While universal acceptance is no more possible for this issue than it has been for the previously mentioned historical cultural changes, euthanasia, assisted dying and suicide must be dealt with in our times.

In the current reporting and other supporting literature on the right of a dignified death, there some key words that keep arising and seem to be used to define either the same or even different meanings. Euthanasia and assisted dying (aka assisted suicide) are often presented as if there did not exist any other way to die with dignity. It is also essential that we come to understand that euthanasia or choosing to end ones life with the assistance of a trained medical specialist are in fact two very different actions.

In Alberta, the discussion of this very fundamental topic has been rather limited. We Albertans often seem to be unwilling or unable to discuss matters such as these in a public forum. The arguments for or opposed to these matters are very much a testimonial of how words can incite uncontrolled hysteria. Is it justifiable to believe that those who oppose euthanasia or assisted dying will die without dignity while all others who condone such practices are somehow guaranteed a dignified death? This ambiguity is very much promoted by pro-euthanasia interest groups pushing for a rapid political solution steeped in thought subject to great emotion. Why has this demand for the right to die with dignity arisen? One needs to look no further than the rise of therapeutic practices which are relentless in their commitment to “fight tooth and nail” in extending living. A case in point, of such intervention is the Karen Ann Quinlan case where this person who although in an irreversible coma, was kept “alive” from 1975 to 1985 when the courts finally decreed that all forms of life support be removed.

The strongest voices in our midst seem to have reached a consensus that the human rights that apply to the quality of life must be maintained and protected to assure that when circumstances demand it we individually have the right for making the final determination of when and how our life will end.

Where are you on these matters?

Paul E. Boisvert

Visit our website: www.npsc.org

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Continued on next page

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NPSCF Treasurer
2389 Head Rd
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**Phone: 905 985 8170
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THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION TO THIS ISSUE

Donations

From the desk of the Treasurer

In the fall of 2013, we will be having our annual convention in Windsor, Ontario.

As the elected Treasurer for the National Pensioners and Senior Citizens Federation, part of my duties is the raising of funds for this occasion. The convention is always a drain on our finances and we depend on the clubs/members for their generosity to offset the costs of this major event.

We would appreciate and thank you for any contribution you can make.

Please fill out the form below and send your cheque to the following:

Sandra Carricato
Treasurer,
National Pensioners and Senior Citizens Federation
2389 Head Road
Port Perry, ON L9L 1B4

----- (Please cut along line) -----

Name of club or Member Donation \$

Address

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Feel free to contact me by phone at (905) 985-8170 or email me at sandy.carricato@gmail.com with any questions or concerns that you may have.

I look forward to hearing from clubs/members

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However, not all calls can be blocked, including those made by political parties, newspapers, pollsters, companies with whom you already do business and telemarketers from whom you have requested information within the previous six months. **Warning:** telemarketers are not required to comply with the DNCL in cases where a telephone or fax number is registered to a business.

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To put an end to **credit card** company promotions, call the listed numbers and ask them to remove your name from call lists, mailings and email registries. You can also refuse to accept advertising delivered via **Canada Post**, which boasts more than 13 million addresses in its direct mail database.

To decline publicity bearing no address (i.e. **coupons**, samples and free magazines), indicate on your mailbox that you do not wish to receive ? unsolicited admail?.

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Spam - Many companies use **spammer tactics** to confirm the validity of randomly composed email addresses. To avoid becoming part of their approved lists, **never reply to spam and never click on an? unsubscribe? link**. Adjust the settings of your email program to guard against the automatic opening of images.

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Invasive texting - To stop unsolicited text messages, such as weather alerts, news updates, etc., simply text? STOP? as a reply. In the case of malicious senders, contact your service provider to register a complaint.

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Useful links: **Canadian Wireless Telecommunications Association:** (613) 233-4888;

Canadian Marketing Association: (416) 391-2362;

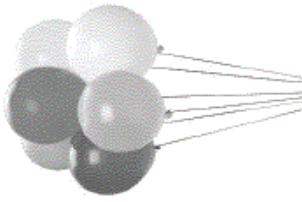
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