

JUNE 2020

RETIRED WORKERS' CHAPTER

NEWSLETTER



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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I hope that you and your families are all well.

It goes without saying that we are living in very different times. As many people are saying, and I agree, we will get through this.

Many RWC members experienced some difficulties returning to Canada back in March. We understand that all those who chose to return to Canada finally arrived.

Overall, RWC members, as we understand, are getting through the pandemic quite well. The majority of us are on a defined benefit pension plan so our income has not been affected. As most of us do not have to go to work, it is easier for us to stay at home. That said, I suggest that some of us are facing some cabin fever. The biggest complaint that I've heard is that we are prohibited from visiting our grandchildren and not able to hug them. It will be a while and some question, if we will ever get back to the old normal. At the time of writing, Ontario was beginning to open up so we can plan on having some loosening of the current restrictions.

We must remember that we are, due to our age, in a higher risk group and therefore it is very important that we adhere to the public health guidelines which are put in place to keep us safe and healthy.

As with all organizations, the RWC has had to make changes to our operation currently and for the near future. We have cancelled our face to face executive meetings as well as our spring membership meetings. We hope that the cancelled meetings can be rescheduled in the fall. We are still monitoring the situation and keeping up to date on any issues that arise that may affect our membership. We have and will continue to keep you informed via bulletins of any issues regarding benefits, pensions, and other areas of interest.

Hopefully you will find the articles in this edition of our newsletter interesting and helpful.

"It goes without saying that we are living in very different times. As many people are saying, and I agree, we will get through this."



Stay safe and enjoy the upcoming nice weather.

Peter Kelly
President
PWU Retired Workers' Chapter

OUT OF PROVINCE/COUNTRY MEDICAL INSURANCE

We understand that travel insurance is an area of interest for many RWC members. Currently, travel is limited as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic but members may be contemplating travel in the coming months.

We provide the information below to alert members to issues relating to out of province travel insurance that some members have. Members contemplating travel **MUST** contact their insurer **BEFORE** making travel arrangements to check the status of coverage. The information below is provided to alert you to the issues and is **NOT** to be relied upon for purposes of making travel decisions.

A travel advisory of "avoid all travel" or "avoid non-essential travel" will likely impact Out of Country/Province Medical Insurance coverage. This is why you must contact the insurer prior to making travel arrangements.

At this time the Government of Canada has posted
"Avoid non-essential travel outside Canada until further notice".

The following is the current status of Out of Province/Country Insurance with RSA and GSC, which is subject to change at any time without notice.

RSA Insurance

At the current time, Out of Country Emergency Medical Coverage is generally not available when a formal travel advisory is in place before your departure. However, the RSA policies applicable to PWU retirees from BP and OPG contain provisions that may provide coverage in certain specific circumstances. Check with RSA before making plans for current status.

Green Shield Canada

In light of the latest Government of Canada advisory issued on March 13th, GSC will **not** cover any emergency travel expenses related to the Coronavirus for travelers leaving Canada after March 13th, the date this advisory was in place, whether the emergency travel expenses were incurred on a cruise or any other type of travel.

Check with GSC before making plans for the current status of coverage, including whether non-COVID-19 related accidents and illnesses might be covered when travelling.

RSA Premium 2020

Travel restrictions were issued some time ago by the Canadian government due to COVID-19. This caused some RWC members covered by an RSA Out of Country Medical policy to return to Canada before they had intended. In addition, because of the travel warnings, many RWC members covered by an RSA policy decided not to travel.

The RWC looked into the potential for receiving a partial rebate of premiums paid to RSA because of these events with the PWU. The PWU made the argument to the insurer that RWC members had paid for a service that had (through no fault of their own) become essentially unusable and that this should trigger a partial refund.

Unfortunately, RSA declined the request for a refund on the basis that a discount on premiums would go against the principles of insurance (essentially, that by their nature, insurance premiums are calculated based on both positive and negative risks). RSA also indicated that many members remained out of country and continued utilizing the coverage. They also pointed out that they take account of claims experience in setting premiums each year and a lower loss rating in this year will be considered in setting next year's premium.

The PWU persisted, however, and the latest information we have in respect of RSA coverage for OPG retirees is as follows:

- Retirees will be given the option to temporarily suspend travel insurance coverage for renewals (for the July 2020 renewal only).
- If retirees take this option, there will be NO PREMIUM charged for July and August 2020 and NO travel insurance coverage in place for July and August 2020. Coverage (and premium) will be reinstated as of September 1, 2020
- The retiree mail out packages from OPG will include an explanation on the July and August 2020 suspension option due to the COVID-19 situation

The PWU has asked RSA whether the above noted option will be made available to BP retirees, but the premium renewal for BP retirees doesn't come up until October 1st, so RSA will not be making the option above available to BP retirees at this time. The PWU will follow up with RSA before October 1st to determine the status of coverage.

On a related matter, anyone who bought a top-up policy from RSA, outside of the group policy must inquire on their own to determine if they are eligible for a rebate on their top-up portion, if it was unused. This would be between them and the insurance company as it is outside of the group plan.

The RWC is monitoring the situation and will keep members informed via bulletins when more information becomes available. We remind you that prior to travelling out of province or country that you check with your insurance provider on what coverage you have.

The current status on travel advisories is available at:

<https://bit.ly/2zI5RGa>



A ROLE FOR RETIREES

It is very easy to think and feel as a retiree, that our world is getting smaller. Not physically, but more and more media and entertainment and even community activities are taking aim at those coming along behind us. We all experience life through our own lens and in that we see life as full of opportunities or rife with barriers. Of course, it is not, nor will it ever be, so black and white, but seeing the opportunities may very well make retirement just as wonderful and fulfilling as it is often described.



From Left to Right: Bert Mitchell, Peter Kelly, Rick Purdil, and Earl Evans.

So many of us are experiencing the joys of being grandparents, and maybe great grandparents, and this is one aspect of maturity that is boundless in its joy. However, not everyone who retires will become a grandparent or great grandparent.

PWU retirees are nearly unique in that, nearly without exception, their careers all involved the highest level of skill and academics. In previous editions, this newsletter has extolled the virtues of being active in retirement and the skills and academics mentioned open opportunities of a different kind in retirement, but opportunities, nonetheless, to be active in retirement.

Mentoring or guiding someone younger along life's path is a profoundly noble thing to do. As PWU retirees we have always been mentors to younger workers. After all, we were often in our workplaces for three or four decades, and mentoring played a large role in our workplaces. These mentoring skills offer an opportunity to continue to enrich our retirement. Not to be misunderstood, this is not about going back into the workplace, but seeking the open door to share your skills, knowledge, ethics, morals, and even a philosophy of life.

Actual technical skill and academic mentoring does have a limited number of outlets. One such outlet is FIRST Robotics where the very essence of technical skills and academics is invited into the mentoring role as students construct and then compete in high skills robotics competitions. Similarly, Habitat for Humanity is always in need of people like PWU retirees.



From Left to Right: Frank Maybury and Dave Bunnett.

However, mentoring opportunities may not be marked as clearly. Ethics, morals, work habits, philosophy of life are assets to those who aid and take leadership in coaching minor sports teams. In other words, the instances where our history and experience makes the world seem bigger and more attractive often lays as close as the minor soccer team practicing across the road, the Habitat home being built this summer in your region or in the highly competitive world of robotics and many other places. All it takes is the knowledge that our skills remain in need no matter how many years and generations pass.

COVID-19

COVID-19 is naturally on all of our minds these days.

Daily we hear:

“How are you?”

“How are you holding up during the lockdown?”

“Being retired, it must be easier for you”

and on and on...

Retirees have the same issues in this regard as everyone else. Most of us receive pensions so we do not face the financial issues that others do. Being in lockdown with all the restrictions is hard on us as well. Since we are the demographic that is more vulnerable to the virus, we must adhere to the precautions that are being advised. As well, we are more likely to know people who have contracted the virus. One of the biggest concerns we hear is “When can we see our grandchildren?”

So how are you really doing? Hopefully the answer to this question is okay. As seniors we tend to take things lightly and are less likely to admit that we are having a difficult time. It is important that we talk about our concerns and if need be, we must not hesitate to seek professional help.

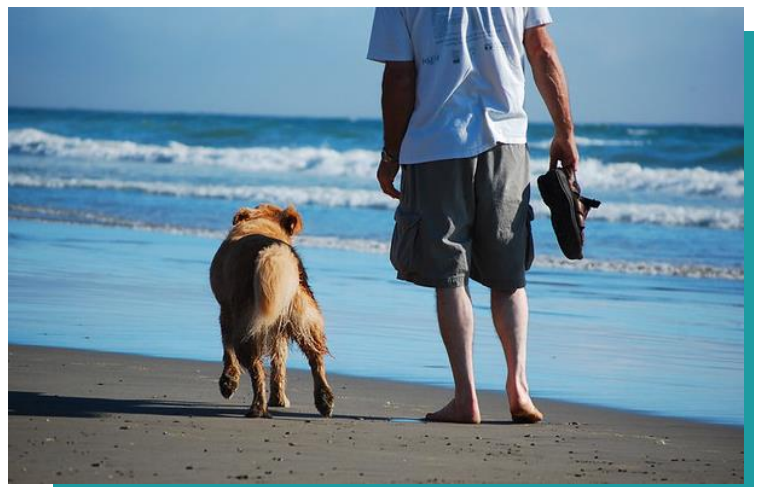
What can we do?

- Get outside
- Go for a walk
- Call a friend for a chat
- Have a self-distancing chat with a neighbor.

Some of these are easier said than done. Walks may be harder in urban areas versus rural areas, but even in rural areas walks can be a challenge as at the time of writing the dreaded black flies are beginning to arrive.

The main thing is we have to be positive and keep active. Remember, we are going to get through this. Be optimistic.

Governments have decided to share information with the public and as a result, we have been inundated with information on this virus. This has been good but sometimes, it is suggested, that too much information can be confusing.



Man's Best Friend - Photo taken by Bala Sivakumar

Many studies and research are occurring in this area. Sometimes information is released which may be incorrect. Caution should be used when reviewing "one print studies" which means the study has not been submitted for publication or is still under review. In short, they are the first draft of a study. These types of studies tend to get released before they should be and have the potential of providing misinformation and causing panic. The normal process is that a study when completed must be "peer-reviewed" before publication. This means other experts have to review the study data, ask questions, etc. This review normally finds shortcomings that need to be addressed before publication.

Another area of concern is "conspiracy theories". These articles can cause panic and fear with readers.

It is good to keep informed about this deadly virus. Below is a list of links to sites that provide legitimate data. This list was provided by the National Federation of Retirees to which the RWC is affiliated.

Stay safe and stay positive!

Trusted Links

World Health Organization Myth Busters:

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public/myth-busters>

World Health Organization Public Advice:

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public>

Government of Canada Symptoms & Treatments:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirusinfection/symptoms.html>



**World Health
Organization**

COTTAGERS STAY AWAY – RETIREE DISCRIMINATION

Several mayors across the province of Ontario have requested that cottagers stay away due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This has had adverse effects on retirees as well as many other citizens in Ontario.

First of all, everyone is concerned about COVID-19 and everyone has a responsibility to prevent the spread of this disease.

What are cottagers?

The term cottager has been defined by local residents in cottage country as anyone who is not a full-time resident of the area. So “cottager” is an all-encompassing term. People who do not live in cottage country for 52 weeks per year are cottagers.

There has always been a small minority of residents in cottage country that are anti-cottager. However, the majority of residents respect and appreciate cottagers. Cottagers pay taxes and are allowed to vote in the local municipal elections. Cottagers are legally entitled to be at their cottage. In many areas, cottagers are the lifeblood of the economy. For example, in the Muskoka's, cottagers contribute via property taxes 80% of the municipal budget and are the lifeblood of many businesses.

Who are cottagers?

There are a variety of people who are considered cottagers. They are people who have vacation properties that they visit on weekends and during their vacation periods. Some of these cottagers may visit their property during summer months only or many cottagers all year long.



Others consider their cottage as their primary residence in Ontario and also have another home in a warmer climate. Snowbirds, people who spend the winter elsewhere are cottagers by definition. These cottagers may live in the local towns or at the lake in cottage country. Some cottage owners come from other countries and visit for varying times each year. Many local citizens are absent from their homes for periods during a year and by definition are considered cottagers. All of these people/taxpayers are considered cottagers by the anti-cottager residents which we will refer to as the vocal minority.

What was the catalyst for the “Cottagers Stay Away” movement of 2020?

COVID-19.

It appears that the mayor of Bracebridge, Ontario was the first mayor to go public in mid-March. It is suggested that he may be an anti-cottager or that he caters to the vocal anti-cottager minority.

Whether he encouraged other mayors to join him or they decided to jump on his bandwagon is unknown. These mayors are members of the Anti-Cottagers Mayors Club (ACMC).

The mayor's public plea for cottagers to stay away appears to have resulted after the weekend for the start of school break. He indicated that cottagers invaded the area and overwhelmed the local grocery stores leaving empty shelves for the locals. Some locals were concerned outsiders may bring the coronavirus to their area.

What did happen?

Many weekend cottagers visit their cottage during spring break. Many, as encouraged, shop locally. They stopped to buy groceries in Bracebridge. Many others brought their supplies with them. At this time, the province was starting the pandemic lockdown. Many people began hoarding groceries in big cities as well as those in cottage country. At this time, many snowbirds were returning early from southern destinations due to the pandemic. They too needed groceries and this plus the locals hoarding goods resulted in some items being in short supply.



The food stores and others were naturally a little overwhelmed with customers. They had not anticipated the demand. These stores can normally supply the needs of locals as well as cottagers but it was unusual to have a high demand in March. Anticipating a further increase in demand, these businesses were able to restock the following week.

The above circumstances provided the mayor to make his discriminatory plea. He also added the COVID-19 issue and how local services would not be able to handle an increase in COVID-19 cases in the area.

Cottagers are legally entitled to visit their properties when they choose. However, many have heeded the ACMC messages and have not visited their cottage. Whereas others exercised their right and went to their cottages.

As we have seen the Prime Minister visited his cottage on Easter Weekend. Premier Doug Ford visited his cottage in early May. Many snowbirds had to return to their summer homes early. Other cottagers decided it was safer for them to live at their cottage during the pandemic. All of these people were not breaking any laws. Most cottagers, once they arrived, self-isolated for 2 weeks prior to leaving their cottage. Others arrived with their own supplies and had no interaction with local residents during their stay. Others had been at their cottage before the lockdown.

The actions of the Bracebridge mayor and others fuelled misinformation and resulted in harassment of cottagers that visited their properties. Social media added to the confusion and harassment. It was interesting to see snowbirds joining the anti-cottager sentiment on Facebook.

This seemed somewhat hypocritical of them as they are cottagers as well and have contributed to the alleged concerns due to their forced early return to cottage country.

One cannot help wondering if these anti-cottager mayors, Councilors, and locals ventured away from their communities to visit Costco and other stores in urban centres during the lock-down. Costco is identified as they, due to their membership policy, know who visits their stores. This would be a good project for a reporter to check with Costco to see if the mayor of Bracebridge and other locals have visited any of their stores recently. If so, did these residents self-isolate when they returned to their homes.

The big fear is that outsiders (cottagers) & locals who travel away from their homes may bring a large number of cases of the virus to cottage country. Fortunately, this has not materialized. Public health advisories for COVID-19 are perhaps easier practiced and adhered to in cottage country vs urban areas.

We are all in this together. This is a time for solidarity and not divisiveness.

It is suggested that these mayors have created problems going forward. The vocal minority that they were speaking for have won and the majority have lost. Cottagers have and are being discriminated against in cottage country. Will they retaliate in the future by bringing their goods from home and also not support local businesses in the future.

People will remember that Premier Ford said it is **okay** to go to your cottage but bring your supplies and stay at the cottage during your visit. Whereas the ACMC said stay away.

Finally, it is suggested these mayors have forgotten that they represent all taxpayers and cottagers are taxpayers. Cottagers have a vote in municipal elections. In this day and age, the public can vote online which makes it easier for cottagers to vote. So cottagers, remember these mayors and Councilors when you cast your ballot in 2022.



RWC MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS 2020

Membership meetings for May and June have been cancelled due to the COVID-19 crisis. If possible, the meetings will be rescheduled for September and October. Bulletins will be sent to members in the areas where, and if, meetings will be conducted.

THE CANADIAN NUCLEAR WORKERS COUNCIL

UPDATE

Many RWC members are familiar with this council, especially those from Sector One. Other members may or not be aware but hopefully will find the following information interesting.

The PWU was a founding member of the Council and has been and still is very active in the activities. Bob Walker, RWC member, and former PWU Vice President is the National Director of the Council. Bob took over this position from Dave Shier, former PWU Staff Officer who was President and the National Director over a 26-year period.

The Canadian Nuclear Workers Council (CNWC), founded in 1993 is an umbrella organization of Unions representing workers in all sectors of the Canadian nuclear industry.

Represented sectors include electric power utilities, uranium mining, and processing, radioisotope production for medical and industrial purposes, and nuclear research.

The Council is "The collective voice of Unions in Canada's Nuclear Industry"
CNWC activities are focused on the following objectives:

- Ensure that the interests and perspectives of nuclear workers via their Unions are heard by decision-makers;
- Strengthen the collective role of nuclear workers as a partner in their industry;
- Enhance public knowledge and understanding of nuclear issues by providing factual information, and;
- Build support for the nuclear industry and its future potential

Administration

The CNWC is administered by an Executive which meets a minimum of twice a year. Between executive meetings, the National Director coordinates activities of the council. An annual Convention is conducted.

Member Unions pay annual dues to cover the administration costs of the CNWC. The council conducts the following activities to work towards its mandate.

- The development of fact sheets in layperson terms which explain and provide information on current and ongoing nuclear-related issues.
- The development and maintenance of the CNWC web site.
- Having a display booth at labour convention/conferences, industry events, public forums, etc. This allows the council members the opportunity to distribute their information and to also engage the delegates/public in discussions regarding the nuclear industry.

- The presentation of briefs to the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission (CNSC) in support of the re-licensing briefs and to panels, etc. that are set up to review nuclear-related issues. [Legislative Hearings, Municipal Councils, etc.]
- The production and distribution of a quarterly newsletter which is sent to labour & industry leaders, politicians, news media, etc. which highlights current nuclear-related issues from a worker's perspective.
- When possible, respond to media articles that are detrimental to the nuclear industry.
- Arrange meetings and presentations with labour groups regarding nuclear and uranium mining issues.
- Lobby politicians and encourage them to listen to the views of worker unions in regard to nuclear issues.
- Assist Nuclear Industry Employers and organizations where required in support of the industry.
- Conduct an annual convention of the council to keep members updated on the status of their industry and to also provide them an opportunity to provide input into the council's annual work plan.

Please visit the CNWC web site at www.cnwc-cctn.ca for more information.

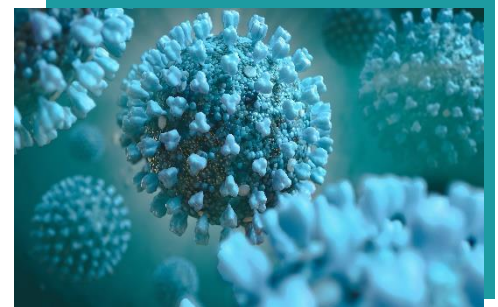


LABOUR UNIONS & COVID-19

Some RWC members will remember and were involved with pandemic planning about twelve plus years ago. Union representatives, Joint Health & Safety Committee (JHSC) members as well as workers at large were involved with developing protocols etc. Back in the day it was sort of thought of as a myth but here we are in the middle of a pandemic.

COVID-19 has caused employers to take drastic steps. The steps were all aimed at doing what is necessary to slow down the rate of infections.

Not all workers have been able to work from home, so many workers have continued to work while others have had to deal with layoffs. The federal government has stepped up with funds to help businesses and individuals, and employers have provided modest levels of extra pay, often referred to as danger pay.



Employers where PWU members work have run the gambit. Many workers continue to carry out their full suite of duties in the workplace while others are working remotely. Further still, some PWU members are working split shifts of one week in and one week out while some apprentice crews are experiencing temporary layoffs. This of course does not address all the different experiences of all PWU members, but we can be proud of the groundwork that has been put down by decades of successful PWU collective bargaining to provide world class employment provisions for our members in this time of uncertainty.

Thankfully, the vast majority of employers and joint health and safety committee members where PWU members work, with support from PWU staff and elected officials, have done extremely well in setting the bar high enough that the rate of COVID-19 infections and self-isolations in these workplaces has been very low when compared with what is taking place outside of these workplaces.

This work will continue at an elevated level as the phased reopening of the economy moves forward. Thankfully, we see the vast majority of workplaces continuing with the cooperative and collaborative work started as we entered into the COVID-19 crisis. PWU joint committee members, PWU staff and elected officials will remain vigilant and involved for as long as it takes to ensure the best in class health and safety of our members across Ontario.

Other workplaces and Unions have been and still are facing severe problems. Unions have been on the forefront of some of the crisis areas and will have to be involved with fixing the issues as society opens up and moves on.

This plan of everyone working together has been good and hopefully successful. Governments and Employers will have to remember the benefits of the Unions through these times.

We will get through this and we are all looking forward to better times.

POWER WORKERS' UNION UPDATE

PWU members were designated as essential workers and remain on the job during the COVID-19 shutdown. Many members are working from home. Plans are currently being made to have workers who are working at home return to the workplace.

The PWU Office in Toronto has been shut down since March and the staff are working from home. Staff continue to assist elected officials with the operation of the union on a daily basis. Elected PWU officials continue to serve the needs of members in the workplace.

Naturally during this time of COVID-19, there are no unnecessary face to face meetings occurring. As with other organizations, the PWU is relying primarily on virtual meeting formats to conduct business.



Effective March 28th, 2020, Jeff Parnell, PWU Vice President Sector 2, became the Acting President in place of Mel Hyatt, who is on medical leave.



Sector 2 appointed Mike Hamby, Chief Steward & Executive Board member, to the Sector 2 Vice President position.

On January 1, 2020, Paul Reece, Chief of Staff retired. Paul served the PWU since the 1980's as an elected official and in 2003 he became a Staff Officer.

A new Chief of Staff, Matt Figliano, was hired in January and he resigned in April.

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