



Vancouver Retired Fire Fighters



NEWSLETTER

2025 September

PRESIDENT

John Hudson

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President

John Hudson

Brothers and Sisters, another summer gone. I hope you all enjoyed yourselves with whatever you got up to. Whether it was traveling the world, Canada, in our home province or just sitting on the porch sipping a nice cold beverage with some old friends.

We have quite the change over this year new retirees, members passing on to the void may they Rest in Peace, new members on committees, families expanding particularly those that have welcomed new grandchildren or daughters and sons in law. All these changes have made some kind of impact on our lives, which always take some time to get adjusted too.

Now if you have some difficulty in making sense of these changes, some suggestions talk to a friend, co-worker or seek out help from the Retired



Fire Fighters Network or the BCPFFA have trained personnel to assist with any mental health issues. If you are not aware of the Retired Fire Fighters Network, it is a group of Vancouver Fire Fighters that set up a site dedicated to assisting those that need some mental health help. This group is made up of FF peers that have gone through some of the mental health issues that are plaguing more of our retirees. This Retirees network is working conjunction with our Retirees Association in fact the Network will be submitting portions of our newsletter to better inform you of what they can do to assist you if needs be. Their web site is as follows

www.retiredfirefighterswellnessnetwork.org

Please note that our Retirement Dinner Tickets will be available for purchase now! Please note that do to an ongoing strike at our previous location we have been forced to move at the last moment. The new location is in Richmond; details are in Treasurer Howie Browns submission.

As I work myself into the President's role, I hope to be able to fill the large shoes that Tony left. It will be a learning experience for me. I look forward to seeing everyone at our meetings and our annual retirement dinners.

One thing I remind everyone is to check your vaccinations, it seems as if some of our old childhood diseases are reappearing. Check with your medical provider if boosters are needed

Look after yourselves, play safe be safe.

Cheers,

John Hudson

President of the VFFRA

jdhud@shaw.ca

604 626 9264



Vice President

Albert Drinovz

I hope everyone had an enjoyable summer. That was a warm July & August and is supposed to carry on through September. I spent the last 2 weeks of July in Osoyoos. While in Osoyoos on July 25 I met up with a number of members both retired and active at the motel they were staying after the Keith Oliver memorial motorcycle ride. There were about 45 to 50 riders this year. 2025 was the 20th year for the annual memorial ride. Good job Rob Culbert and all his helpers!!!

Time to start putting all the summer toys away for the winter and get the winter stuff out, cleaned and tuned up if needed.

I would like to thank John Hudson for taking on the role of President in our association and Gord Ditchburn for filling John's position as Secretary.

Sadly, since the last newsletter six of our retired members have passed away: Pat Hayes, Doc Cumbers, Harry Oleson, Lorne Forrest, Barry Williams and Paul Zaharia. Some of the families have already had a service, some are not having a service, and some are yet to announced. As soon as we are informed of services John Hudson will notify everyone via email. Your executive attempts to attend all of the services as possible. I would like to thank the Honor Guard for attending many of the Celebrations of Life. They do a tremendous job of showing respect for the fallen. I also wanted to mention that Ava Choy who worked in the stores department at #1 passed away as a result of a bicycle accident July 13. RIP all.

We had an in person meeting as scheduled on Sept. 11 at the new #17 firehall.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

Sept. 20: Annual Fallen Fire Fighter Memorial in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

Oct. 16: MPP Year in review meeting (online).

Oct. 20: Retired Members Dinner at the Radisson Hotel Vancouver airport. Please take note that we are moving the dinner this year to Richmond. See Howard's report for details.

Nov. 5: Local 18 Retirement Dinner

Dec. 6: Local 18 Children's Christmas Party

If you would like to get medals mounted for your dress tunic Andrew Siwy does this. He can be contacted at: victorymedals@gmail.com

VFRS Stores is now carrying the **retired flashes** that go on the arms of your dress tunic.

If you are on **FACEBOOK** please join the retiree's group (**Vancouver Fire Retirees**) that Bob Hollier has created and administers. There is a lot of information on this page that will keep you up to date.

Please update your personal information (new address, email, phone number(s), etc.) with John or myself. If you haven't already supplied John or myself with your email address, please do so. John sends out a lot of information by email on such things as meetings, deaths, celebrations of life, pensions, this newsletter, etc. There are still about 25 retired members who we don't have email addresses for. **If you receive the newsletter in the mail from Canada Post you are one of those 25. Please inform us of your email address so you can receive information in a more timely manner.**

If there is a change to your beneficiary notify all parties (ie: pension board, banks, insurance companies, us, etc.).

Albert Drinovz

Email: adrinovz@shaw.ca



Treasurer

Howie Brown

Greetings All:

September 23, Autumnal Equinox, the official end of summer will occur. Hopefully, the dog days of summer, warm days and blue skies, persist well into the fall season.

Annual Banquet: October 20, 2025.

With a continuing labor dispute at the *Sheraton Guildford*, a decision has been made to **change venues** to the:

[Radisson Hotel Vancouver Airport](#),
8181 Cambie Road, Richmond

Tickets now available

Note: There are two Radisson Hotels in Richmond

Thanks to the *Firefighters 314 Fraternal Benefit Society*, *Firemen's Benefit Association*, *Vancouver Firefighters Credit Union*, and *Local 18*, for their continued support. Money In, Money Out – the games basic.

Howie,
Treasurer

Recording Secretary

Gord Ditchburn

Hello,

It's been a busy summer, and I sincerely hope that everyone has had time with family and friends enjoying this beautiful weather. Fall is right around the corner! With the loss of Brother Tony Neratini, I want to thank John Hudson for stepping up as our new President, and with everyone's support, will serve us well. I am honoured to serve as your secretary and look forward to working with everyone in serving the needs of our members.

Some of other work I am involved with includes serving as President of the Municipal Pension Retirees'

Association (MPRA), Trustee for the Municipal Retirees' Benefit Trust (MRBT), and Board Member of The People's Pantry Food Recovery Society.

The MPRA serves as a melting pot of retirees' receiving a municipal pension from over 1000 different employers across the province and provides a route of advocacy on issues important to retirees. Brothers Mike Joy and Howie Brown serve as executive board members bringing their years of experience to the table. We are in the midst of surveying members as to their priorities in advocating for benefit changes/increases, setting our government advocacy meeting schedule, and administering our rewards/affinity program.

Since joining the MRBT as a Trustee this past spring, it's been a busy schedule of meetings, catching up on materials and planning for the future. The MRBT remains financially strong, yet we are mindful to factors such as rising drug costs, increased utilization and broader economic pressures. We have initiated a new communication strategy sharing information directly from the Benefit Trust, and we will be looking for member input as we move forward.

A reminder to attend the BC MPP Annual General Meeting on October 16th, please register and receive the virtual link to join. There will be an additional five breakout rooms to learn about information including the following.

- The Municipal Pension Retirees' Association: learn about its history, advocacy, and the value membership brings
- Get an update on retired members group benefits The Municipal Retiree Benefit Trust and Pacific Blue Cross.
- Valuations: find out how actuarial valuations help secure the plan and learn more about this year's results
- Pensions 101: ask general questions and learn about tools associated to the MPP website.
- Prospective Employers: learn about the benefits of joining the plan and how to join.

Since retiring, conversations have continued albeit with retirees' and many of the conversations involve mental health whether with the individual directly or brothers who are not at their best. For anyone struggling, please connect with a family member, friend, a brother/sister, don't suffer in isolation or silence, sometimes just talking is therapy in itself. There is the newly created Retired Fire Fighters Wellness Network, (www.retiredfirefighterswellnessnetwork.org) comprised of retired members who are there to listen and assist. On a personal note, I was fortunate to have participated in the BCPFFA's Loon Lake program while active and have been seeing a psychologist for the past few years, all making a positive difference. Should you wish, there are treatment options available, whether in-person or virtual, and while many come with a cost, it can truly be a difference maker. Never hesitate in reaching out and being your best advocate.

Continuing with health I strongly encourage everyone to get their PSA done on a yearly basis, whether one gets an annual physical, get it done and ensure you're monitoring any changes. Just remember to get your PSA checked!!

Stay well everyone, look forward to seeing everyone at the upcoming dinner October 20th, tickets went on sale September 6th and please, never hesitate in reaching out.

Sincerely,

Gord Ditchburn
gditchburn12@gmail.com
(604) 916-7110



News from Retired Firefighters Wellness Society



As many of the retired members may well know, we received Society status from the Province last year and as a result held our first AGM in March, where we elected 4 officers of the Society and 3 Trustees. Brothers Ditchburn and Salas from Local 18 and Dave Kent from Local 323 were elected to the Trustees position. Brothers Kearney and Hudson were elected to the 2 Vice President Positions each serving 2 year terms. Also elected to the Secretary Treasure position was myself, for a term of 1 year. All were elected by acclamation.

Finally, Brother Symington was elected as our President but unfortunately has recently tendered his resignation citing personal reasons for withdrawing from the Society Executive Board. Don remains an integral part of our Wellness Group and continues to provide both compassion and leadership in his support of our brother and sisters.

With this vacancy we are forced to hold an election for the President position. This will take place at our next AGM. Both the Secretary Treasurer and 2 Trustees positions will also expire at the end of this year and require an election for their respective positions in the New Year.

In the interim both current Vice Presidents will assume the duties of President should the need arise.

In other news we have received a generous donation from the 314 Benevolent Society earlier this year. Some of those funds have been invested in Term Deposits with the Vancouver Firefighter Credit Union. Part of the proceeds from the donation have funded the Retired Fire-fighters Wellness Network (RFWN) Peer Support Team Training Program. This program has been developed by Rod Salas with assistance from Diversifies Rehabilitation Group, a leading Mental Health Resource in the Province. As a result we have 12 members representing both Vancouver and Burnaby as part of our support group. Our plan is to add to this list of peer support members in the hope that we can cover all regions of the province where our members reside should they seek help. Additional training is planned for later this year as well as next.

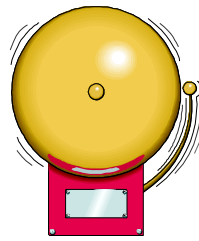
I would like to add that we continue to see support from the BCPFFA and Brandon Curry in particular. Brandon continues to advocate for retired members in his work. He has proved invaluable in helping to provide a list of quality certified counsellors for our resources. We very much look forward to fostering this association in the hope we can further benefit our members.

Finally, I would like to add that over this past year we have fielded a number of calls looking for assistance. What is frustrating is not only the frequency but the nature of these requests. In some instances we are able to help and other cases we are limited or not at all. The reality of an aging population, the nature of our past employment and the stark reality that we are pretty much on our own when it comes to providing assistance or support can be overwhelming at times. With that said we continue to look for a solution or at the very least a means to increase our support for those who need it.

Stay safe, stay well.

Mike Joy
Retired Firefighter Wellness Network.

Last Alarm



District Chief John Doc Cumbers	99	natural causes
Captain Bldg. Facilities Harry Oleson	83	unknown
Captain Lorne Forrest	85	unknown
Assistant Chief Barry Williams	87	lung cancer
Captain Paul Zaharia	88	heart

FIRE BOAT STATION 1953



VANCOUVER RETIRED FIRE FIGHTERS' ASSOCIATION



ANNUAL BANQUET MONDAY, OCTOBER 20TH

Radisson Hotel Vancouver Airport

8181 Cambie Road

Richmond, BC

(236) 305-5339 (main hotel)

Note: There are Two Radisson Hotels in Richmond



Join as we celebrate the newest retirees to our Association!

Revisit the kitchen table, enjoy the camaraderie

Re-unite with old friends.

Listen to the stories, tell some yourself.

Have a giggle or two – there will be plenty.

Banquet Tickets \$20.00

Cash Bar

Free parking.

Tickets on sale September 6 to October 10

No exceptions!

Three Ways to Pay:

- Call the CRUN (604 874 4911) to transfer from your account to Vancouver Retired Fire Fighters #22418.20-1. Ensure your name is included in the transfer.
- E-transfer: 778 838-2772 or hwbrown4@yahoo.ca
- Canada Post:
369 Keary Street, New Westminster, BC. V3L 3L2

See you there!

Staying Overnight?

The Radisson is offering rooms at \$219.00 per night, plus tax.

Reservations are made by individual call-in. To receive the special rate, identify yourself as a participant attending the VFFRA Banquet.

You can make a reservation by:

- **Online booking link:**
<http://www.choicehotels.com/reservations/groups/ZN55R5>
- Calling the hotel's in-house reservation desk at (604) 279-8384
- Emailing: reservations@radissonvancouver.com

Reservations must be made no later than Friday, September 26, 2025, to secure the special rate.



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778.838.2772

Vice President
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or contact Local 18 (the Union office): info@iaff18.org