

Strategic Plan Feedback Highlights

About 120 members participated in the feedback activity. Some members responded individually, and some responded as a group. We did not attempt to determine if there was a consensus on these issues – our goal was to hear all the voices. The complete list of feedback has been distributed to the Board and will be considered at our next Strategic Planning meeting. This set of Highlights removed the repetition and combined similar responses. As you can imagine, there were lots of shared opinions as well as some contradictory suggestions offered.

Agree/Disagree

Respondents were asked if they agreed or disagreed with the general direction the Board was moving in with the Organizational Tenets and each of the 5 main goals. The response was overwhelmingly positive that the Board was moving in the right direction with less than 12 ‘Disagrees’ in total.

1.a. Organizational Tenets

Concerns and suggestions

- Some concerns centered around the need for good communication and careful decision making as any change process is difficult for people
- Some suggestions were received about specific wording and the order of some items in the lists
- Some comments suggested that these were all motherhood issues that raised no concerns
- Some reminded us that this was a growth in management and the Board should take care to stay in control with the best interest of the members / best use of the members’ money in mind at all times.
- Ways to enhance communication and social engagement to areas north of Hope / presently limited by expense, geography was expressed in several sections of the feedback
- All retired educators / include notion of advocacy on behalf of values: stress non-partisanship – we are not the BCTF. Some members have the wrong idea about what the BCRTA is, does, stands for.
- Business plan? Too many unanswered questions. Is bigger better? Too much centralization of power? Develop and publicize the goals – why are we doing this? More info about how RTO and ARTA did it. What are the risks?

1.b. Increase Membership by adding services to members with a focus on wellness.

Concerns and suggestions:

- Define wellness
- Look at ourselves as a service organization
- Arrange with a ‘Senior Center’ or a “Gym and Art Center’ to give BCRTA members a special rate

- Physical, mental, emotional, social, financial, legal aspects of wellness
- Continuum as retirees age their needs change, cover all the needs
- Teachers are retiring younger – pay attention to their needs

1.c. Develop a unified communication strategy that includes print, web and social media.

Concerns and Suggestions

- Must be done sympathetically and gradually. Be sensitive to members' abilities
- Small, rural communities may not have access to high speed internet
- No concerns – we need to focus on meeting the needs of NEW retirees
- Need to be concerned with 'isolation' of members – technology not the answer
- Need more modern communication – costly, accurate
- Like the new website – keep it up to date
- Lack of communication can alienate new members, too much communication can overwhelm – find a healthy balance
- Partner with library/senior centers for programs
- This could certainly be improved. New webpage looks good. Postscript needs to be more upbeat.
- Information is most important to me eg. Bill C-27, Health Accord
- Focus on 'topic areas' for each age group.
- Branch wants to send communications to members
- Get a professional editor – print LP in Postscript for important issues.

1.d. Control our Insurance Plans

Concerns and suggestions

- Green Shield is inadequate and a hassle
- BCRTA provide experts to explain at locals
- Partnership with Johnson's
- Scary! What are the risks
- Agree, but with some concerns. What are the risks? How does it affect the bottom line in a worst-case scenario? Cost of underwriting. What about liability after a disaster?
- Do not want liability of underwriting our own insurance liability. I wonder about taking business away from our local insurance providers. These people need to make a living. Need more information about the dangers.
- We are a society with a focus on serving our members.
- Are you sure it will be cost effective and provide the best benefit for the members? What happens if it cannot be cost effective and provide the best service?
- Need professional staff. Hire staff
- Really concerned about global warming etc. Do we have enough money to fill obligations/ a major catastrophe could be serious for insurance plans.

- Very clear information
- This is what will bring in new members – priority!

1.e. Update our processes including committee structure

Concerns and Suggestions

- Always good to re-evaluate
- Simplicity – leave more in the hands of paid staff.
- Wellness emphasis very positive
- Like having to sign up for only one committee
- Organization sets the philosophy, Board sets the structure
- We must be responsive to members needs. Involve more members
- Disagree about combining social concerns and health and housing – they did different things.
- Good updating
- More flexibility, fewer meetings!
- Good to streamline committees, only one committee each.
- Invite applications from locals to attend conferences elsewhere – don't just send Exec. Members. Get new people involved in the provincial Association so they will run for Exec. positions.

1.f. Increase Staff including an Executive Director

Concerns and Suggestions

- Essential, Professionals needed. How can we expect volunteers to do this great work?
- ED key to unfolding the process. Hire now and implement the tenets
- Time limit and time line specific goals ie: standard, proactive
- Support staff needed
- Not this year
- Concerns about hierarchy and power, possible bureaucracy. Membership fees go up?
- Concern about cost, possible bureaucracy
- Slowly
- Under no circumstances should this person be a retired teacher. / Not everyone understands teachers or education.
- We've got to take the risk
- Contractual positions, at least at first
- Proper vetting – Experienced, good job description, team interview
- Increase staffing
- We need someone in place who can operationalize the organization's goals 'full on' - not, as was said, off the side of their porch swings. Needs to be educated in communication / finance
- Always have Board in control.

2. What can local branches do to help grow and revitalize their own branch?

- Plan interbranch activities if possible
- Choose vital speakers with key information, seminars and special presentations
- Have more than one Zone meeting a year and at more locations with more people attending
- Make programs more appealing to new retirees; activities – not just meetings
 - Plays, bus tours, wine tours, hikes, social activities, book club, games, cards, wellness, mystery tour, bus trip at cost, cooking, gardening, young gardening mentors –
 - Not all activities have to be for all members.
- Partner with other senior organizations, YMCA, local teachers' associations, etc.
- Remember – social activities are changing
- Variety of venues – restaurants
- Survey members – what do they want?

3. What can local branches do to help grow and revitalize their neighbouring branches?

- Keep in contact – more zone meetings to share ideas, plans
- Share resources, share newsletter articles
- Plan joint activities

4. What can local branches do to help grow and revitalize the BCRTA?

- Develop active recruitment strategies at the branch level
- Share branch publications with other branches more regularly
- Plan more workshops on engaging topics, wellness topics, pension topics
- Use District Pro Dev day to have a retiree function (side by side event).
- Use zone meetings to offer more input to provincial executive
- Get actively involved – not just meetings
- Use spoken reports to branch meetings – speak with enthusiasm about all this change, BCRTA initiatives, speak about the attack on our Defined Benefit Plan
- Prepare Powerpoint presentations for local branch use on what the BCRTA is/does

5. What can the BCRTA do to help grow and revitalize the local branches?

- Focus on ways branches can be successful – Share ideas for activities, make membership attractive
- Find a way to get in touch with teachers who have retired previously
- Executive committee chairs could attend branch meetings for visibility. Get out to talk to branches

- Zone meetings at the AGM
- Continue free membership, Advantage program
- No other ideas – I think the local has the main responsibility
- Help with communication
 - Develop website, – new website is a good start
 - newsletters on line
 - Keep Postscript with more politically oriented/articles/ commentary
 - Keep LP short and focused
 - Facebook and social media has become an expected method of communication, but many retirees do not feel comfortable using them.
 - Web based workshops and webinars for smaller or remote branches
- Promote why it is positive to join to working teachers – advertise in seniors' magazines
- Self insurance is big
- Lead us to fight Target Benefit Plans
- BCRTA could compile a list of speakers/presenters who could attend local branch meetings – even remote one