



Our Check List, Expanded and Updated for the 2019 Tax Season

Last year's tax preparation checklist was our most frequently accessed resource. So we are back this year with an updated guide to help you make the most of your tax return. BCRTA does not offer income tax advice, but here are some common things to keep in mind. Working through this list will help you complete your return to your maximum advantage. This year's check list was put together by our Pensions and Benefits Committee, with some additional tips from financial expert and PostScript columnist Mike Berton.

ELIGIBLE MEDICAL DEDUCTIONS

Any eligible medical costs that you pay that exceed 3% of your net income can be deducted when you complete your income tax return this year. A couple usually should combine all medical expenses on one tax return – usually the one with the lowest income – to gain the highest value deduction.

Eligible medical expenses are those payments made by you or your spouse that were not fully reimbursed by an insurance plan. Some examples that you should explore:

- Prescribed medications
- Payments to a medical doctor, dentist, and most paramedical service providers such as physiotherapists, chiropractors, massage therapy, etc.

continued...

IN THIS ISSUE OF BCRTA CONNECTIONS:

- | | |
|---|--|
| 4 2020 Marks Changes to Pension Payments | 6 ALASKA! NEW BCRTA Group Departure |
| 4 Finance News | 7 BCRTA News |
| 5 Hearing Test Proves Surprising | 8 Treasure of Vietnam |



TAX TIPS

FOR RETIRED EDUCATORS

- See CRA's complete list of medical expenses that may be eligible for tax deductions [here](#).
- Premiums that you paid for any health service plan other than MSP.
- If you participate in our Johnson insurance with Prestige Travel Plan you should receive a letter that itemizes your claimable premiums as well as your claims history that shows your eligible deduction. If you don't see this by March 16, follow up with them.
- If you participate in MEDOC and have requested a letter that shows the eligible amount of premiums in a previous year you should receive it soon. This year's tax notices are scheduled to be sent out by February 19th. If you are a MEDOC participant but have never requested this notice, call Johnson at 1.800.563.0677 and you will automatically receive one every year.
- If you are signed up for Extended Health Coverage with Green Shield and premiums are deducted from your Teacher's Pension Plan payments, GSC premiums are always shown in Box 135 of the T4 you received from TPP. See more about tracking GSC claims at www.bcrta.ca/gscclaims

THE NEW CANADA CAREGIVER CREDIT

The Canada caregiver credit (CCC) is a non-refundable tax credit that may be available to you if you support a spouse, common-law partner or a dependant with a physical or mental impairment. For detailed information click [here](#).

DISABILITY TAX CREDIT

The disability tax credit (DTC) is a non-refundable tax credit that helps persons with disabilities or their supporting persons reduce the amount of income tax they pay. For detailed information click [here](#).

AGE TAX CREDIT

If you were 65 or older on Dec. 31, 2018 you may be able to claim an age tax credit. The credit is geared to income with the maximum discount for those whose income is less than \$36,976, and the credit is gradually eliminated as your income increases. There is a corresponding provincial tax credit as well. This deduction can also be transferred to a spouse. For detailed information click [here](#).

CHARITABLE DONATIONS

Tax credits are available for donations made to registered charities. In a spousal relationship, the claim can be split or attributed to either person to provide the greatest tax advantage. For detailed information click [here](#).

POLITICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Tax credits are available for any contributions you and your spouse made to registered federal political parties or British Columbia political parties.

For more information about the federal credit click [here](#) and for British Columbia credits click [here](#).



TAX TIPS FOR RETIRED EDUCATORS

TAX FORM UPDATES

The CRA has revised the T1 Personal Income Tax return form this year. You should allow yourself a little extra time to complete the return. The new return has expanded from four to eight pages including calculations that were once on other schedules. Line numbers have changed from 3 digits to 5 digit numbers. Where possible, the print is larger to assist those with vision impairments.

PAYMENT OPTIONS

If you are among the 16% of Canadians that owe tax after filing, you now can pay using a credit card, PayPal, or Interac e-Transfer (See Payments to the Canada Revenue Agency on the CRA website).

OTHER OPTIONS

You can now also file a return electronically on CRA's website. You will have to register on the CRA website MY Account service to do this. Once you have registered, you can take advantage of CRA's "**Auto-fill My Return**" Feature.

NEED HELP FILING YOUR RETURN?

There are several low-cost or free tax filing programs available on-line. Search for "on-line tax filing." A listing provided by CRA can be found by clicking [here](#).

There are also many volunteer run tax preparation clinics at Seniors' and Community Centers around the province.

CRA SCAMS

Be on the alert for phone calls, e-mails or letters pretending to be from the Canadian Revenue Agency. If you receive one of these, provide NO information. Rather contact CRA directly by calling 1-800-959-8281 or check your CRA My Account on-line.

To see Revenue Canada's longer list of tax credits for seniors, visit:
www.bcrta.ca/tax-tips-2



Have a friend who is eligible to join the BCRTA?

- Retired Teachers
- Retired Support Staff
- Retired Post-Secondary Educators

***Get all the benefits of membership
and the first year is free!***

[***bcrta.ca/join***](http://bcrta.ca/join)

FINANCE NEWS

The Finance Committee has taken steps to ensure the security of the Association, our directors and members. We rounded out our general liability insurance by adding coverage for contents and crime. This insurance protects us against loss of office equipment and cash. Following the advice of two different insurance providers the BCRTA increased liability coverage for directors and officers from \$2M to \$3M. Additional information about this coverage will be provided to directors and branch executives.

The interest from two maturing GICs will be moved to the BCRTA operating fund and the principal amounts will be reinvested.

New computers and office software are in place and the transition to new financial systems is well underway. The completion of this upgrade will give us better tracking and reporting and aid the board of directors in long-range planning.

Our present auditors will have completed six years of service at the 2020 AGM and there are ongoing changes to our new financial systems taking place in this fiscal year. With the completion of the contract with our present audit firm, the Finance Committee has taken the opportunity to work with BCRTA staff to develop a formal request for proposal (RFP) for auditing services. This RFP has been circulated to a number of accounting firms who provide auditing services to non-profit organizations. The finance committee will review proposals and the recommendation of an auditor will be made at our October AGM.

Grace Wilson
1st VP and Treasurer

TIME FOR A NEW MOBILE PHONE PLAN?



BCRTA MEMBERS
SAVE UP TO 15%

USE CODE BCRTASAVE2019
at [simplyconnect.ca](https://www.simplyconnect.ca)

A New Year Marks The End of MSP Premiums and a Cost of Living Increase

If you receive a pension from the Teachers' Pension Plan of BC, you will have noticed some changes to your pension payments in 2020.

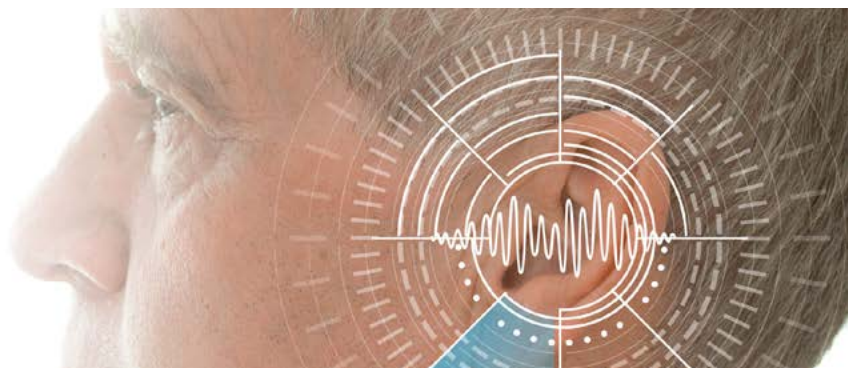
MSP PREMIUMS

If you watched your bank account near the end of December you might have noticed an increase in your pension amount. Because premiums were eliminated in the BC Medical Services Plan (MSP) beginning in 2020, and most of us paid our MSP premiums directly from our pension, the deposit amount increased by \$37.50 per person in December. In the past we paid ahead for MSP - and the January premium would have been deducted in December. But not anymore!

PENSION INCREASE

A cost-of-living increase to our pensions came into effect on our January payment. You will have noticed a 1.9% increase. This increase now becomes part of our guaranteed pension. BC and Ontario are the only provinces where the teachers' pension plans have consistently provided full cost-of-living increases.

Pensions and Benefits Committee



Hey There – I Went for a Hearing Test!

In the last Connections I shared an article about a presentation I attended by HearingLife on the impacts of hearing loss on seniors and the need to have regular hearing check-ups after reaching the age of 60. HearingLife is one of BCRTA's Advantage Partners and offers BCRTA members savings on hearing-aids.

What I didn't mention was that my wife and I often complain to each other that we can't hear what the other is saying and we frequently ask one another to repeat things. Even worse are the miscommunications about events and happenings. Occasionally one of us says in exasperation, "I TOLD YOU ABOUT THAT LAST WEEK, YOU NEVER HEAR WHAT I HAVE TO SAY!!"

I reflected on this after the Hearing Life presentation. After some discussion, my wife and I decided we would give HearingLife a try by getting our hearing tested.

Now I want you to know that I have never before entertained doing this because over the years I had a nasty suspicion that I was going to be told that I needed hearing-aids whether I was suffering hearing loss or not.

So off we tootled to the HearingLife office nearest to us in Penticton. It was easy and convenient to schedule the appointments. My wife had her test first, followed by me. The tests took about half an hour for each of us and then we had a combined consultation for about fifteen to twenty minutes.

The consultant who did the testing was an amazing person who took the time to discuss how the ear

works and the causes of routine hearing loss. She had a professionally-equipped audiometric booth and a thorough testing process. The friendly manner of the testing and consult was greatly appreciated.

What was amazing to the technician and to me and my wife was that the results of our tests provided almost 100% identical hearing profiles. That is apparently quite unusual. What surprised me even more were the affirming words from the consultant—she told us that we have amazingly good hearing for our age (I am seventy and my wife is sixty-nine). She indicated that because our hearing is so good that we don't need to worry about another test for two or three years.

When we asked her about our concerns regarding not hearing each other she asked us how long we have been married. We said forty-two years. She replied that the answer was easy – there is what she calls the "Marriage Syndrome" that after a long marriage, often hearing is not a problem. What is a problem is "listening"!

Her advice was not to go around shouting at each other but when communication is essential to take the time to sit down, face each other, snap your fingers and say, "Are you listening to me?" Then we will be set to get the information across. For me, at least, this is good advice because my attention span is becoming increasingly shorter as our marriage continues to grow in numbers!

So... have you had your hearing tested?

*Terry Green
BCRTA Well-Being Committee Chair*

SEPTEMBER 2020

ALASKA

OFFERED FOR THE FIRST TIME!

Join Dave and Bon Scott on this BCRTA Group Departure!



Your Group Leaders:

Dave and Bon Scott met in high school and pursued careers as teachers. They have three kids and four grandkids, and a Boler trailer named Bernice. Travel is a favourite

activity of course, and they love to bike, hike, golf and go camping. Dave is a BCRTA Director. This will be their second Alaskan cruise and they are really looking forward to the Ketchikan White Pass train and the Juneau “bike to brew”. Dave and Bon warmly welcome you to join them on this unforgettable Alaskan adventure.

Cruise roundtrip from Vancouver through the scenic Inside Passage to Ketchikan. Watch for whales, Dall’s porpoise and bald eagles en route to majestic Glacier Bay National Park.

Explore Alaska with Holland America Line – From calving glaciers to foraging wildlife, Gold Rush history to native cultures, no one knows the Great Land better than Holland America Line. Exceptional onboard entertainment—in classic cruise style.

Book now for the best savings!

What’s Included: 7-night cruise, all meals, entertainment, exclusive cocktail reception and more!

Not Included: Port charges and taxes of \$305.50, gratuities.

Your Ship: Noordam (with Holland America)
Named for the Northern compass point, Noordam features museum-quality art—from 19th oils to contemporary photographs of music greats Dizzy Gillespie and B.B. King.

Guests onboard can enjoy cooking shows and hands-on workshops in partnership with America’s Test Kitchen. Explore the world’s wonders through BBC Earth Experiences. Take yoga or Pilates in our Fitness Center. Savor the sounds of Music Walk™ and the delights of our specialty restaurants.

**THIS BCRTA GROUP CRUISE
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* SEE THE TRIP MERCHANT WEBSITE FOR A COMPLETE LIST OF OPTIONS, PRICES AND CONDITIONS. SUBJECT TO APPLICABLE TAXES AND FEES.

Who can join this trip? Friends and family of registered BCRTA travelers are welcome to join our group trips at any time. One month after the trip announcement, if there are still spaces available, the trip is open to any friends and family of BCRTA members even without the BCRTA member traveling.

News

FROM AROUND THE BCRTA

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

The BCRTA Group Travel program has been very well received. Additional seats have been made available for the Vietnam trip. The membership committee has developed terms of reference for Group Travel and supported the Executive Director in developing an application form for members who may wish to be a BCRTA Trip group leader. The committee also affirmed that group travel opportunities will be available exclusively to BCRTA members and their travel party for the first 30 days, and that if seats remain after 30 days, the offering will extend to friends and family who can purchase seats even if the BCRTA member is not traveling with the group.

The Membership Committee is looking to support branches in developing activities and events that meet the needs of members and prospective members. Many good ideas have emerged in response to our 2019 Survey Results, including a focus on travel, books, the environment and green living, fitness, health and aging.

BCRTA will continue to reach out to active teachers through their local leadership and by coordinating with pension workshops.

The committee chair also reports that BC Seniors Advocate Isobel Mackenzie will address the Metro West Zone meeting of BCRTA leaders on April 28.

Dave Scott
Chair, Membership Committee



INTERCOM SAFETY TIPS FOR SENIORS

If you are living in an assisted living unit or an apartment – DO NOT open the main door to the building via intercom unless you recognize and know who you are letting in. If someone claims to have been locked out or they can't raise the person they want; ask them to contact the building manager. Do not be fooled by a "sob-story" or "pretend emergency."

Never tell anyone over the phone or who may knock at your door that you live alone.

Avoid using your first name in telephone directories or in lobbies. Just use your initial and last name.

Well-being Committee

GOLDEN STAR AWARDS APPLICATIONS

The Excellence in Public Education Committee has updated the application forms for the Golden Star Awards. Available on the BCRTA website, teacher applicants now have forms available which can be completed by hand or electronically.

The Golden Star Awards celebrate programs that link students with seniors in their community.

To access the form, simply go to bcrt.ca and click on the Golden Star Award link on the top menu.

SECOND TOUR ADDED!

Limited seats still available:
OCTOBER 2020 GROUP DEPARTURE

TREASURES OF VIETNAM A TOUR AND CRUISE EXPERIENCE

OCTOBER 25 - NOVEMBER 7, 2020

Join Grace Wilson, First Vice-President of BCRTA on this
Exclusive BCRTA Group Departure to Vietnam!

ACT QUICKLY: This SECOND tour has a few seats left



- 12 Nights
- \$2,399 per person*
- *Prices are CAD per person, based on 2 people sharing (Single Pricing is available upon request).
- **Optional 3 Night Extension to Cambodia:**
\$999 CAD pp based on 2 people sharing
(includes internal flight from Ho Chi Minh City to Siem Reap)
- All sightseeing and 21 meals as per itinerary
- Two domestic flights within Vietnam (Hanoi to Hue and Danang to Ho Chi Minh City)
- Hanoi Street Food Tour
- Walking Tour of Ancient Hoi An
- Sunrise Tai Chi
- Travel visas and airport transfers
- **And much more...**

INCLUDES Overnight Cruise of Halong Bay AND Boat Cruise of the Perfume River in Hue

This guided land tour and cruise package is available to all BCRTA Members. Use code BCRTATM18.

**To learn more, visit [https://bcרתa.ca/vietnam](https://bcрта.ca/vietnam)
Email info@tripmerchant.com or Call 1-800-481-9739**



* Airfare from Vancouver to Vietnam is extra, approx \$1000 including taxes, available through Trip Merchant.



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