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Using our influence to make a positive difference

As September got under way, like many of you, I thought about the first day of school, one of the most significant days of the year. Nothing competes with it for nervous energy, high hopes and new resolutions. Students, parents, school and district staff all feel the surge that comes with the official re-opening of school.

Those of us who are retired often still do something to mark the day: meet for breakfast chats, go to the gym, plan to be on holiday, sit and read a book quietly, walk grandchildren to school, sleep in, go for a hike, and more. We make sure that we notice the difference between what we used to do and what we now do. I wonder if noting the first day of school will ever leave us. I have been retired for six Septembers now and still notice the day, and, quite honestly, I feel the thrill of being not at school – almost like I am being a bit naughty. What did you do on the first day of school this year? How did it feel?

I'd like to introduce myself to you, our membership. A good number of you might know me from PDK-UBC where I held various executive positions. You may have met me at a Networks of Inquiry and Innovation Symposium. Some of you know me because of my many years of teaching at the elementary level, of presenting workshops in mathematics, and being a Vice-Principal and then Principal with the Vancouver School Board.



In August, I slowly and joyfully transitioned into the role of President of the BCRPVPA, having been Vice-President for the past two years and on the executive, responsible for programs - contacting speakers and organizing refreshments - for two years prior to that. I feel well prepared by the former president – Vivian Rygnestad – and well supported by our excellent

**BC Retired Principals' &
Vice-Principals' Association**
Issue 69 • September 2016

executive committee and by the wonderful BCPVPA staff. I have not met, in person, many of our 700 members, but you are all, known and unknown, encouraged to write to me at: bcrpvpa@gmail.com

Much time has been spent over the past two weeks updating the email addresses of members. Leanna Garner, our membership and sunshine chair, has done an outstanding job of sleuthing down changed and new e-addresses. If you have a change – whether of address (email or residential), phone number, name or status – please let us know by dropping a line to: bcrpvpa@gmail.com. Or, send this information through the post to the BCPVPA offices, #200 - 425 West 10th Avenue, Vancouver, BC, V5Z 1K9, but be sure to mark it for our attention. It is important that we stay connected.

So far, this year, we have three major projects:

- Updating our on-line presence and means of communicating with members
- Partnering with the BCPVPA to begin a Mentorship Program
- Using our individual influence to promote public education.

If you can attend the General Meeting on October 19, you will hear more about the first two bulleted items. The third is a carry-on from last year's idea of 'the im-

portance of influence', begun by Vivian Rygnestad. It would be good to hear about ways that you, our members, are using your influence and knowledge to promote public education. As school-based administrative retirees, we are in the informed position of knowing schools, inside and out, as well as understanding the roles of those who work in schools and in education. Informally, and individually, we can support our working colleagues. Often the topic of education arises in conversation – we can take advantage of these times to voice a positive message about schools and the work of fine educators. Offer anecdotes of successful programs, challenges that were met and positive initiatives that you have experienced: people love stories. We know how varied the roles of Principal and Vice-Principal are; we know the many hats worn and the long hours worked. We still have an important job – that of supporting education and educators by using our influence to make a positive difference, one conversation at a time.

Sincerely,

Eileen Phillips

Please remember to send us any changes that will help us stay in contact:

- new phone
- new address
- new name
- new email

BCPVPA Mentoring Program

OVERVIEW

The BCPVPA serves its more than 2200 members through advocacy, representation and leadership development. Our most recent provincial survey reveals that our members, particularly our newest members, are looking for mentoring relationships to support them in the important work that they do. Currently, 40% of districts provide a mentoring program for new administrators leaving the majority of our members without this type of support system.

The current reality is that the role of school leadership is increasingly complex and demanding. Principals and vice-principals currently work in an environment of high student achievement expectations, curriculum and assessment reform and funding cuts within a highly unionized workplace.

Lieberman (1992) notes, "Urban school populations have not only been characterized by students who are increasingly diverse ethnically and linguistically, but by students who, in ever larger numbers, are coming to school with many more physical, social and emotional problems that make them far from ready to learn." A recent Ontario Ministry of Education discussion paper concludes, "The strain of the last decade has taken an unfortunate toll ... which is reflected in record numbers of retirements leading to a high proportion of new and less experienced principals and vice-principals." The time is right for a school leadership mentoring program that will allow experienced school leaders to encourage and support the development of principals or vice-principals in the first three to five years of their career.

The Objective

To create a BCPVPA mentoring program aimed at providing a mentoring partnership to support our newest members. Our vision is that members of the BC Retired Principals and Vice-Principals Association would be recruited and trained in effective mentoring strategies to mentor and coach BCPVPA members willing to participate in a mentoring relationship.

- Priority #1: Create a partnership with the BCRPVPA Executive to develop a BCPVPA mentoring program
- Priority #2: Recruit and select qualified BCRPVPA members who would be willing to take the training and act as mentors.
- Priority #3: Hold mentoring training sessions in the spring of 2017 with a goal of launching a mentoring pilot program in the fall of 2017. Timeline for Execution

Description	Start Date	End Date	Duration
Meet with the BCRPVPA Executive	September 14 th		
BCRPVPA AGM Meeting	October 14 th		
Identify interested members to act as mentors	December 2016	February 2017	3 months
Providing Training Sessions	March 2017	May 2017	3 months
Market the pilot program	April 2017		
Open registration	April 2017		
Program launch	August 2017		

You need a week to see Istanbul

Gerry Tiede



Travelling in Turkey has been on our must-do list for such a long time that even the recent coup attempt did not keep us from spending 18 days there on our way home from a volunteer experience in Zambia. It turned out to be perfect because the usual 12 million tourists a year stayed home. No line-ups at attractions, the best seats at restaurants, almost private “group” tours and photos without thousands of other tourists blocking the view!

Some highlights:

Cappadocia – People have been carving homes, storerooms and churches into the soft volcanic



rock for 10,000 years – well before the pyramids were built. For safety from invaders, they carved underground cities with hidden and booby-trapped entrances. When their enemies appeared, they went underground. The cities are up to nine floors deep. They could hold 2000 people with rooms for each family, wells, storerooms with several months of supplies, an air circulating system, common kitchens and ‘barns’ for their animals. Now, the hot ticket item for tourists is to balloon over the fantastic landscape of fairy chimneys at dawn.

Ephesus- The ruins of this Greek and Roman city of a quarter million people is spectacular. The Roman amphitheater seated 25,000. The architect of the 12,000 scroll Library of Celsus at the end of ‘main street’, was Bibliothek. So our modern word, bibliography, comes from the name of the architect of this library?



Istanbul – This mega-city of over 15 million is a quirky mixture of modern and ancient. Their integrated public transit system of buses, trams, subways, funiculars and ferries puts ours to shame. We rode the subway under the Bosphorus from Europe to Asia in under 5 minutes for less than a dollar.

The Blue Mosque may get the most press but the **Sophia Hagia**, across the main square is the more impressive. Built as an Byzantine Greek Orthodox Church in 532 AD it was converted to a mosque when the Ottomans conquered Constantinople 900 years later. Now it is a museum and they are peeling off the layers of plaster to reveal original mosaics. But the architecture is the star of the show. It was built in just 5 years and it is massive and awe-inspiring. Rick Steves says that the Statue of Liberty could do jumping jacks inside.



You need a week to see Istanbul. You can't miss the Grand Bazaar, the ferry ride back and forth across the Bosphorus to the Black Sea, the mosaics at Chora Church and walking down Istaklal Cuddesi – that's like Robson Street on steroids. Go to Turkey soon – before the other tourists return.

Paros, Greece

Burt Deeter

My wife, Lana, and I have had a visit to the Greek islands on our travel list for a long time. This year was the year! We decided to visit the Island of Paros, which is in the Cyclades group of islands. Cyclades means 'circular islands' as this group forms a circle around the sacred island of Delos, which is considered the birthplace of Apollo. Greek mythology has it that Poseidon, God of the sea was furious at the Cyclades Nymphs and turned them into islands. Santorini and Mykonos are perhaps the most famous islands in the group as they are popular stops with the cruise ships. All of the Cyclades islands are popular with tourists, but Paros is where the Greeks vacation. The island's population swells from about 30,000 to 300,000 during the summer!

While there is limited bus service on the island, we opted to rent a car for our week. Off the plane and our car was waiting for us. Ready to go in about 5 minutes. Great service! Maria, who owns the resort where we stayed, told us that the company is owned by her daughter's fiancée! It turns out our Nissan Micro is brand new with only 40km on it and we're the first renters. We'll have to be really careful among these aggressive Greek drivers!

Our first adventure took us to the picturesque hillside town of Lefkes, which was the original capital. Nestled into



the valley, at 200 meters, it is the highest village on the island. We're very early in the tourist season, so not too many shops were open. Also being Sunday, all the shops catering to locals were closed. Of course, we did manage to find one open shop that sold jewelry and other souvenir things that was owned by an Irish expat. He'd been there 30+ years and commented that the economy works more on the Turkish model, a left over from the Ottoman rule, than the free enterprise system. He said we'd probably refer to it as corruption.

Our research indicated that tourist season started in early April. We were there for the week of April 10 – 16. We were definitely ahead of the tourist season, which seems to depend upon the Holy week leading up to Easter celebration as opposed to a definite time frame. Apparently this year is the longest time that ever occurs between the Roman Catholic Easter and the Greek Orthodox Easter. Greece is still 95% Orthodox. Usually, it's 1 – 2 weeks but this year it was closer to a month. We're often the

only people in the stores and restaurants and everyone was really happy to see us. Every Euro counts given the current state of the economy! However, some of the museums weren't open and some ferry schedules weren't in effect yet.

Monday night is Greek Night at the resort. What a blast! The food was amazing with a good selection of salads followed by 8 main courses, buffet style. Every table also had their own whole fish, head on of course. Everything was very fresh. Two musicians serenaded us all night without taking a break. The wine was flowing ... The evening ended with traditional Parian dances, which happen in a circle.

On Wednesday, we headed back mid afternoon to be sure we were home



in time for our Greek cooking class. Sixteen of us participated in making some of Maria's grandmother's recipes for

moussaka, tsatziki, potato salad, fish soup etc. Lots of chopping, kneading, laughter and wine! What fun! We brought the recipes home with us.

Our all-too-brief stay on the island included day trips to the islands of Naxos and Antiparos. Naxos is famous for its marble quarries, some dating back to ancient Greek and Roman days. The idyllic island of Antiparos has caves and is famous for its celebrities who occasionally

vacation there. First discovered by Bridget Bardot, European royalty and film/rock stars frequent this island to relax. Both islands are easily accessible by a short ferry ride.

Across from Antiparos is the island of Despotiko, where an important



archaeological site is being excavated. This sanctuary is dedicated to Apollo and the early Greeks used to stay several

weeks at a time while worshipping here. Currently, the island is uninhabited, except for about 3,000 goats.

If you choose to go to Paros, I can highly recommend Anezina Village resort. It's smallish but very comfortable with spacious, extremely clean condos. Maria and her family will look after you with gusto. If you have RCI weeks or points, you can use them to book your stay, like



we did. I would suggest any time after May 1st, but before July or perhaps sometime in September. We were very sad to

leave this relaxing island paradise but we were also excited to begin the next leg of the trip: Istanbul. But that's a story for another time.

You can see more of Burt's photos here:

<https://burtsphotobooks.shutterfly.com/>

BCRPVPA Pensions Report

By Gerald Soon

VALUATION 2014 Results, as reported in the 2015 Teacher Pension Plan Annual Report

At least every three years, an independent actuary performs a valuation of the Teachers' Pension Plan. The most recent valuation was measured as at December 31, 2014. The purpose of the valuation, which is like a report card, is to determine how much money needs to be put into place to keep the pension promise, based on a series of economic and demographic assumptions. If assets are the same as liabilities, the plan is said to be "fully funded." If there is an excess of funds, it is a surplus, a shortfall is an "unfunded liability." In the case of "unfunded liability," the Teachers' Pension Plan Board of Trustees (the Board) must address the shortfall by adjusting contribution rates for members and employers.

The plan's basic account had actuarial assets of \$22.9 billion and actuarial liabilities of \$22.4 billion, meaning the plan was in surplus and 102 per cent funded.

NEW RULES THAT MAY AFFECT RETIRED MEMBERS

As of October 1, 2015, if a Teacher Pension Plan member who is retired, returns to work, they no longer have the option of suspending or repaying their pension payments and restarting contributions to the plan. If a member retired, then became re-employed with a Teacher Pension Plan employer and restarted contributions before October 1, 2015, they may continue contributing until they retire again. If they began working for an employer that is not part of the Teachers' Pension Plan, they should talk to their new employer about its pension plan enrolment rules.

Members may be interested in reading the full Annual Teacher Pension Plan report for 2015.

The Teachers' Pension Plan Joint Trust Agreement (JTA) provides specific instructions when there is a valuation surplus, requiring the plan to use the surplus to balance employer and member contribution rates. Currently employers pay higher contribution rates than members. Effective July 1, 2016 the gap between employer and member contributions will narrow. Active Member rates will stay the same, and employer contributions rates will be reduced. As of July 1, 2016 employer contributions no longer required to fund the basic account will be reallocated to the account that funds COLAs.

Retired Members

Due to this Valuation, funding for COLAs (Cost of Living Adjustments) will be strengthened. As of January 1, 2017, all retired members will be eligible to receive a cost of living adjustment. They will no longer be required to be age 56 or older to receive it. This will be reviewed at the same time as the next valuation.

Cost of living adjustments are a non-guaranteed benefit. But, remember that once a member receives an adjustment it becomes part of their basic lifetime pension.



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The Story Studio Needs Volunteers



Who is The Story Studio?

A charitable organization founded in 2012, The Story Studio is dedicated to advancing children's relationship with literacy.

How does Story Studio accomplish this?

Story Studio has developed a 3 part creative writing workshop which is offered to kindergarten through grade eight classrooms in Greater Victoria.

Workshops are held on Tuesdays and Thursdays, beginning toward the end of September through to the second week of June. There are three workshops each day – two in the morning and one in the afternoon. Morning workshops run from 8:50 to 11:50 am. Afternoon workshops run from 12:50 to 2:50 pm.

Upon completion of the workshops, students will have written a story. The story is published as a book for the student to keep; proudly making them authors!

How can you help?

Story Studio relies on volunteers to assist in two areas:

1. Classroom helpers:

In addition to the Story Studio instructor and the classroom teacher, at least 3 volunteers are needed in the classroom to assist the students in the development of their stories. Volunteers provide individual attention with each student. Their job is to help the students stretch their imagination, use descriptive words in to help their readers visualize their characters and setting as the author does. Volunteers also help keep students within the structure of the program while creating their stories.

How does the volunteer do this? By asking students questions about their stories and giving them examples that help them to stretch their imaginations in the creation of their stories, as well as the description of their characters and setting. **(Note: Story Studio arranges training sessions for volunteers prior to scheduling them to classroom help).**

Stories are also often transcribed by the volunteers, allowing the student to concentrate on his/her story, rather than spelling and grammar.

2. Typists:

Each story written is then typed by volunteers – with over 1200 stories per year, help is clearly needed. The typed stories are then edited and bound into books for the students to keep and share with family and friends. Typists often take the workbooks home, but Story Studio also

arranges typing socials where volunteers enjoy working together.

In the 2015/2016 school year, The Story Studio worked with 53 classrooms, creating 1325 books. Our volunteers dedicated approximately 3000 hours to help us to achieve this amazing statistic!

What are we looking for from our volunteers?

- A love of books, stories, creativity
- A desire to work with children
- Typing skills
- A computer, for typists (Story Studio can provide a limited number of laptops for use at typing socials, if necessary)
- Ability to commit time. This can be as little as one ½ day per month. Our volunteer coordinator, Naomi, will note your availability and schedule you accordingly. Naomi prepares the schedule a month in advance. If you are unable to meet a scheduled commitment, we simply ask that you provide us with as much notice as possible.

For more information about The Story Studio, please visit our website at www.storystudio.ca . To find out more about volunteering, please contact Suzanne Moss at 250-818-6653, or by email at naomi@storystudio.ca

Do you have a story to tell?
a travel experience you would like to share?
or maybe a volunteering adventure?

We would love to publish it in the newsletter. Send your story to grahammul@gmail.com

Green Investing

Brian Coote

Last quarter, I outlined several industries and sample companies that may be of interest to green investors. Many industrial, energy, technology and transportation companies are changing how they do business, attempting to waste less and employing renewable resources to grow their businesses. In the process of doing so, the successful companies will become more efficient AND more profitable, making them more compelling investments to all investors, green or otherwise. In this, the final installment on green investing, I will share with you three examples of companies who are continually investing in efficiencies and green technology. I will also give two examples of the types of companies that many green investors may wish to avoid, but by making a generic mutual fund investment, may unwittingly hold in their investment portfolios.

Three examples I will share with you about well-known companies who are going green are:

1. General Electric: GE launched their “Ecomagination” program in 2005 to build innovative technologies that help customers address their environmental and financial needs while also helping GE grow. At the time, it was considered to be a bold and potentially risky move to make clean technology a strategic focus for the company. 10 years later, GE’s investment in cleantech has been \$15 billion, and has generated more than \$200 billion in revenue for the company. Further, GE has reduced its greenhouse gas emissions by 31%, its fresh water use by 42% and saved over \$350 million in the process. Currently, GE has partnered with Statoil, Walmart, Total, BHP Billiton, Intel and other companies to help find more resource-efficient solutions.

2. Apple: Through their recently created and

wholly owned subsidiary “Apple Energy”, Apple has received a license to be able to sell excess energy generated from its solar farms in California and Nevada across the US.

Apple is approved to sell excess electricity to homeowners in 6 regional power markets across the US at market rates. When a large, debt-free, cash-rich company like Apple gets involved in a new line of business, I expect there will be a disruption that follows.

3. Google: Leading wind turbine manufacturer and installer, Vestas Wind Systems has partnered with Google. In June an order for 22 turbines to be installed in Mariestad, Sweden was won by Vestas. A similar contract was won for a new 50-turbine project in Stavanger, Norway. The power produced from both developments will be sold to Google as part of the tech company’s drive to power its entire operations on clean energy. Vestas’ 12.5% stake in the Lake Turkana wind power project in Kenya will also be acquired by Google upon completion in 2017. This project is the largest in Africa and will supply around 15% of Kenya’s electricity needs. To date, Google has made agreements to fund over \$2.5 billion in renewable energy projects.

As a contrast, let’s consider the negative contributions some companies are making to the sustainability movement with two brief case studies:

Honeybees and investing with your values: The importance of bees cannot be overstated: Their populations of 20,000-50,000 bees per hive pollinate 70 of our top 100 food crops, representing 90% of the world’s nutrition. Alarming, honeybees are being threatened globally, with the populations of wild bees having decreased in the U.S. by 60% since 1962. Globally, around 45% of honeybee colonies die each year, versus the 10-15% decline that was experienced

only several decades ago. A continued slide in bee numbers could prove to be devastating for our food supply locally and across the continent, as they are considered indispensable to the agricultural sector. A growing body of science points to neonicotinoid pesticides as one of the main culprits behind this decline, the other being habitat loss. Bee pollen has been found to be a cocktail of pesticides, containing more than 150 different chemical residues. A study published in *Nature* found that neonicotinoids “pose substantial risk to wild bees in agricultural landscapes.” While the EU banned most neonicotinoids for use on crops in 2013 and has one of the strictest regulatory systems in the world for the approval of pesticides, in Canada these deadly chemicals are still allowed to be used on crops.

In the U.S., Greenpeace is fighting to ban the seven most dangerous pesticides and protect wild habitat for bees. They have identified U.S. companies Dow Chemical, Du Pont and Monsanto as suppliers of the deadly chemicals found in these pesticides, as well as Swiss company Syngenta and Germany based BASF. The three American companies are all commonly held in mutual funds and pension funds. On average, 36.2% of their shares are owned by mutual fund managers, and this figure rises to 74.2% if pension funds are included.

This honeybee example provides an excellent example of the disconnect between the portfolio holdings versus the values of many eco-conscious investors in Canada.

Are the Tar Sands Tar-nishing Your Values?

Many SRI (socially responsible investing) products employ a ‘relative screening’ process that is based on an initial negative screening process to eliminate companies operating in morally distasteful industries (i.e. tobacco, gambling, nuclear), followed by a relative

screening to then select the companies that score in the top 50% of their peers on broad environmental, social and governance (ESG) measures. Very little company specific research is involved. As a result, major (top-10) holdings can still result in companies like Suncor Energy and Canadian Natural Resources. Both of these companies were found as of July 31, 2016 in a well-known ESG-screened portfolio that uses ‘more than 100 indicators for environmental, social and governance performance’.

Given the consensus that most of the oil sands reserves must never be extracted and combusted if the world is to meet the resolution to limit global warming to under 2°C that was reached at the UN Climate Change Conference in Paris in 2015, does it make financial sense to invest in companies with massive carbon footprints, especially if you also care about the environment?

Canadian oil sands companies Cenovus and Canadian Natural Resources are widely held in mutual funds and pension funds. Mutual funds own 45% of the shares of Cenovus, and once pension funds are included, this figure rises to 72%. For Canadian Natural Resources, these figures are 52% and 73% respectively, meaning that mutual funds hold over \$20 billion of their shares. Instead of taking the nearly default position of holding these types of companies in your mutual fund portfolio, consider investing in renewable energy companies that are well managed and profitable as a way of aligning your investments with your values of environmental sustainability.

Given that this is my final contribution on Green Investing, I would encourage each of you who have read each of my four articles to consider what you are doing currently with your personal investment portfolio, and how it aligns with your views on climate change, and values surrounding environmental sustainability. Previously, most Canadian investors have felt it was their obligation as a Canadian to support the fossil

fuel industry via. their investment portfolio. However, as we head into the final months of 2016, the landscape has definitely shifted. Many of our major financial institutions have begun to offer the choice to their clients of some type of fossil-fuel free portfolio. For more information on responsible investing and investment options, please refer to <http://www.ecoportfolios.ca/media/documents/Understanding%20Responsible%20Investing%20Scotia.pdf>

About the Author:

Brian Coote is a Portfolio Manager at Scotia Wealth Management in White Rock, B.C. where he manages EcoPortfolios. Brian is a holder of the Certified Investment Manager designation, Sustainable Investment Professional Certification and is also a Certified Financial Planner. For more information on Green Investing, visit www.EcoPortfolios.ca.

You may also subscribe to Brian’s newsletter, EcoPortfolios Quarterly by emailing Brian.Coote@ScotiaWealth.com.



photos: Burt Deeter

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Graham Mulligan
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General Meetings

Wed. Oct. 19, 2016

Wed. Jan. 18, 2016

Wed. Mar. 8, 2017

AGM

Wed. May 3, 2017

Please mark meeting dates in your planners.

Social: 9:30 a.m.; Meeting: 9:45 a.m.;

Program/Speaker: 11:00 a.m.

No-host lunch to follow at a local restaurant. Meetings are held at the BCPVPA Office unless otherwise noted.

