



FSNA – 40 Years of Achievement

FSNA's 40th Anniversary

The Federal Superannuates National Association (FSNA) is celebrating its 40th anniversary in 2003. Branches will be holding special events throughout the year to mark the 40th anniversary. The National Executive Committee is holding its first-ever meetings outside Ottawa to meet with membership and local politicians from Western Canada and the Maritimes. From its modest beginning in 1963, FSNA has grown into a well-managed not-for-profit advocacy organization of more than 130,000 members.

FSNA: 40 years of being on guard for pensioners

FSNA has a proud history, reflective of the determination of those former public servants, Canadian Forces personnel, and members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and more recently federally appointed judges, who joined the ranks of the Association. A history of growth and achievement, of effective and efficient advocacy and influence, and of forecasting and managing changes.

Above all, a history of pensioners protecting their interests, seeking improvements to their benefits and participating in the development of social policies for all seniors.

The early years

From its modest beginning in the basement of the Victoria home of Fred Whitehouse, the “driving force” that led to its establishment in 1963, FSNA has grown into a well-managed not-for-profit advocacy organization of more than 130,000 members.

The Founding Convention, in 1963, was attended by little more than 20 people representing some 1,600 members. In those early years the Association's approach to advocacy was formed as FSNA representatives made presentations to Prime Minister Lester Pearson and to a number of Cabinet Ministers.

By the time the First National Convention was held three years later, membership had doubled to 3,200 and there were 24 branches across the country. From the beginning, FSNA pressed for full indexation and, in 1967, presented a brief to the Joint Committee of the Senate and House of Commons studying pensions. Finally, in 1969, the Government passed legislation to increase the pensions of retired civil servants and their dependants. Bill C-194 provided for annual

indexing to a maximum of 2 percent, the same limit that was applied to Canada Pension Plan, Old Age Security, and Veterans' pensions.

The 70's: A time of growth

The 1970's can be remembered for the continued growth of the Association and achievement of several objectives. In January 1974, future pensions were granted full indexing to match the consumer price index and increases of up to almost 11.5 percent were given to those not fully protected against inflation due to the 2 percent limit on indexing.

The age at which pensions became payable without actuarial reduction was lowered to 55 for PS, CF, and RCMP members with 30 or more years of pensionable service.

The Association gained representation on the Superannuation Advisory Committee, and started to attend those meetings at which the superannuation benefits of retirees were discussed.

In 1978, after the government announced its intention to replace fully indexed pensions with adjustments determined on a three-year basis, FSNA tackled the demanding job of protecting the existing benefits against those seeking to reduce or eliminate them.

The 80's: A new beginning

It was becoming more and more evident that the future work of the Association needed a stronger presence in Ottawa and that the continuing growth in membership — exceeding 8,000 in 1980 — would require fulltime staff.

The National Office was established in Ottawa in 1981 in the Public Service Alliance of Canada headquarters building, and Frank Lancaster was hired to succeed Fred Whitehouse as National Secretary-Treasurer. Membership recruitment received high priority, as funds for research and publicity were urgently needed. FSNA's longstanding request to have a leaflet enclosed with the monthly pension cheques was granted in 1982. Membership reached the 20,000 mark. In 1983, compensation restraint legislation was imposed on public service pensions, as well as salaries, family allowances, Old Age Security, and income tax exemptions and brackets. FSNA fought hard against this anti-inflation program that limited the cost-of-living increases to 6% (1983) and 5% (1984) at a time when inflation was running at double-digit levels. FSNA obtained an additional 1/2 percent for federal pensions.

To this day, it remains an FSNA objective that superannuates recover the difference between the actual increase in inflation and the cap imposed in those two years. In the spring of 1985, the government announced that "the current guarantee of unlimited inflation adjustment will be terminated". FSNA waged the greatest battle in its history: interviews, press briefings, conferences with parliamentary caucus groups and a tide of letters from individual members brought backbenchers from all parties to support full indexing. The legislation

subsequently introduced, Bill C-33, was never passed. Indexing was saved, but there was no guarantee it would be preserved in the future.

Meanwhile, membership grew to 48,000, largely attributable to the 1986 Convention decision to grant membership rights to the spouse of a superannuate. This took effect just a few years before the superannuation acts suspending surviving spouses' pensions upon remarriage were amended to guarantee the continuation of benefits to these spouses, something for which FSNA had been campaigning for many years.

The Association continued to press the government to permit some form of direct superannuate involvement in the control and development of the Group Surgical Medical Insurance Plan and to give pensioners access to the Dental Insurance Plan available to employees. FSNA also embarked on a campaign opposing the 1989 budget that proposed to clawback Old Age Security benefits.

It is of interest to note that by the time the Association celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary, it had become formally chartered as a not-for-profit corporation, gaining a legal status that enabled it to contract with government or business.

The 90's: the decade of change

This was a period of rapid growth with the Association reaching the threshold of recruiting its 70,000th member in 1992.

Another step in the right direction, although modest, was made when, in 1992, Bill C-55 provided an option to those who married after retirement to obtain, at the cost of a reduced annuity, a survivor pension for their spouses. In addition this Bill also increased the paid-up death benefit from \$500 to \$5,000.

FSNA was instrumental in achieving other significant improvements such as enhanced government contribution to the Group Surgical Medical Insurance Plan premiums and improved health benefits through this plan's successor, the Public Service Health Care Plan established in 1991.

FSNA executives were appointed to represent all pensioners on the Public Service Health Care Plan Board of Management, the Advisory Committee on the Public Service Superannuation Act and the Canadian Forces Pension Advisory Committee. These appointments provided a formal means to ensure that the concerns of superannuates were made known and considered.

In 1994, rumours that the Canada Pension Plan would be reduced or eliminated for those the government considered affluent prompted FSNA to spearhead the formation of the Coalition of Seniors for Social Equity. One of the Coalition's aims was to ensure that the Government considered all the implications before initiating any further changes to seniors' income security programs.

When the 1996 federal budget proposed the replacement of Old Age Security benefits with a Seniors Benefits Plan based on family income, the Coalition strongly objected to family income testing and played a key role in influencing the government not to proceed with this plan. 1996 was also the year that the deduction of FSNA membership dues from federal pensions came into effect. Combined with another successful insert campaign, this method of payment contributed to reaching the membership goal of 100,000.

The long-awaited consultative process on the future of the Public Service Pension Plan was announced in 1998 with the recommendation to maintain the “old plan” and to establish a “new plan”. It was proposed that the new plan be managed by a pension management board that would have at least an advisory role with respect to the old plan. It was expected that this new plan would have a significant impact on the future form of the CF and RCMP superannuation acts.

The pension reform legislation (Bills C-71 and C-78) was adopted in 1999 without providing the fair and equitable distribution of the pension surpluses FSNA has wanted. Nevertheless, the Association’s efforts in the consultation stage were critical to the Supplementary Death Benefit improvements, and its advocacy work contributed to increasing FSNA’s profile with government decision-makers.

The new millennium: a new and exciting chapter

After officially opening its new office facility on St. Laurent Boulevard in the spring 2000, FSNA entered the new millennium with a stronger than ever voice to protect pensioners’ benefits and defend their interests.

FSNA’s Executive Director sits on the Public Service Pension Advisory Committee, Past Deputy Regional Director for Nova Scotia is a member of the Canadian Forces Pension Advisory Committee, and the National President is representing pensioners on the Nominating Committee that has responsibility for recommending persons suitable for appointment to the Public Service Pension Investment Board.

**“FSNA aims to sponsor and support legislation, rules and regulations beneficial to annuitants and potential annuitants; to oppose legislation inimical to their interests; and to promote their general welfare.
Founding Convention By-laws (1963)”**

As one of the three plan parties, FSNA also represents all pensioners on the Public Service Health Care Plan through the National President,

and the Executive Director is one of the trustees of the Plan. The Third National Vice-President represents all Public Service pensioners and an Ottawa Branch member represents all Canadian Forces pensioners on the Board of the Pensioners' Dental Services Plan that was established 1 January 2001. During that year, FSNA played a major role in the establishment of the Congress of National Seniors' Organizations and is now chairing its coordinating committee. The Congress brings together 12 seniors' groups whose total membership is more than 2 million. Its mission is to influence and shape policies and programs through efficient and effective dialogue between seniors' organizations and all levels of government.

The year 2002 will be remembered as the year of the debate on the health care system. FSNA prepared a very solid report on issues of importance to older Canadians, a report that was submitted by the National President as he appeared before the Standing Committee on Social Affairs, Science, and Technology (Kirby Committee) and the Commission on the Future of Health Care in Canada (Romanow Commission). The Association continues to lobby for improvements to a publicly funded and publicly administered health care system. FSNA is also preparing for the new and different challenges that the future may bring, such as the new era of government pension administration, the new governance of the Public Service Health Care Plan, the increased demand for information and other services by members, as

well as the growing impact technology might have on them, and many more. These challenges can only be met with the commitment of dedicated members willing to give many hours of their time at National, Regional, and Branch levels and the continued support of the superannuates for whom the Association exists.