

Membership CCA BC 2021

The Canadian Celiac Association (CCA) has a history that dates back to the 1970s. For many years, membership was a defining feature of the organization, helping generate the funds needed to deliver programming on both a National and local level. But as the association grew, the CCA had to weigh the pros and cons of administering a membership program. It was ultimately decided that given its size, the costs were not worth the benefits. So in 2020, the CCA removed membership in order to operate the organization using funds generated by donations alone.

The Canadian Celiac Association British Columbia (CCA BC), while affiliated with the CCA, has its own charity status, including a separate charity registration number with the CRA and unique set of bylaws and constitution. Our Board of Directors have had many discussions this year regarding our own views on membership. We do not have the same concerns as our National association when it comes to scale, as our focus remains only at the provincial level. From our initial estimates, it seemed entirely possible that we could manage membership with the resources already available to us. The only question was whether a membership program would help us achieve our mission to serve the best interests of the celiac community in BC.

Our final decision has been to move ahead with membership starting in 2021. We believe that by administering the program ourselves, the process can be kept simple and we will be able to troubleshoot any problems quickly since we will be directly involved in the application and renewal process (this was previously handled nationally).

What You Need to Know

- Membership will be valid from January 1st to December 31st each year. All members have the same renewal date, making it easier to stay on top of your membership expiry.
- The cost has been dropped from \$50 down to \$20.
- Members receive
 - ◇ Peer support and additional resources
 - ◇ Quarterly newsletters
 - ◇ Regular email updates on programs, services, and product discounts in BC
 - ◇ Free access to events
 - ◇ Voting rights at our annual general meeting, including election of the Board of Directors

We understand these benefits may be incredibly useful for some of you, while others may find them relatively modest perks. But we'd like to highlight why membership still matters, regardless of whether a member chooses to utilize their benefits to the fullest or not.

Why Membership Matters

1. Bringing Our Community Together

We want to develop a sense of identification within our Chapter, and membership is a simple way to achieve this. By renewing your membership with us each year, you're already demonstrating a commitment and engagement with our organization. In return, we'll ensure you're the first to learn about the latest celiac news, research findings, events, and services offered in BC. We hope this naturally strengthens your support and advocacy of our Chapter, and when that happens, we increase our awareness across the province. This means that we are able to reach more people who are undiagnosed and looking for answers to their troubling symptoms, or reach more doctors who can apply our learnings to their patient care and perhaps refer their patients to our Chapter for further support. It's a cycle that benefits all parties and is accomplished by having regular touchpoints with our members. Rather than only meeting the newly diagnosed in an initial introduction, we can build an ongoing relationship that learns and grows together into a thriving community.

2. Establishing Credibility

Membership figures provide a clear indication of the scope of an organization. This is imperative for many charities such as ours, as we are often seeking funding or trying to initiate action plans with a variety of stakeholders who want to know what impact will be made by working with us. The greater our numbers are, the easier it is to make our case. For the celiac community, such stakeholders include governments, the food and restaurant industry, and medical practitioners. Our membership base provides a sample of the even greater population that is impacted by celiac disease and other gluten disorders. Therefore, having a strong (and growing) community jumpstarts our advocacy initiatives and makes change happen that much more quickly.

3. Have Your Voice Heard

We can't stress enough the importance of providing your input as a means of helping our Chapter achieve success. Our board of directors is only a small group, and we rely on the feedback we hear from our members to provide direction on the programs we should offer or where we should expend our resources to benefit the most people. Membership allows you to have your say on important decisions for the organization. We discuss our initiatives each year at our annual general meeting, which is open to all members. This is a great opportunity to add new ideas for the upcoming year, while also voting in our board of directors. Celiac disease affects us all on a daily basis, and we know many of you hope to see a cure or treatment in the future. If you are looking to take the next step and be a part of the discussion, active membership can help you get there.

We are so excited to begin this new chapter of the CCA BC with you, and we hope to see your name on our membership roster in 2021. Together we can improve the lives of those adversely affected by gluten in British Columbia.

Visit <https://www.bcceliac.ca/membership> for more information.