

**RETIRED TEACHERS ORGANIZATION**

**of the Nova Scotia Teachers Union**

**MEMBER REPORT**

1. **Major concerns of your Association**
   1. **Federal level**
2. *Canada Health Accord negotiations*

The RTO is very concerned with the provinces and territories (with the exception of Manitoba) agreeing to bilateral agreements on the Canada Health Accord with the government of Canada. We believe these arrangements will result in reductions of health care, more privatization, less patient protection and varied standards of care across Canada.

1. *Lack of a Universal Pharmacare Program*

The Premiers of the four Atlantic Provinces agreed to finance research in reviewing public drug coverage in order to seek improvements, cost containment and more heir) for high cost therapies for rare diseases. There will be some savings due to the buying power of 2.3 million individuals, but this will be a fraction of the savings if there was a universal pharmacare program.

1. *Lack of a National Seniors Strategy*

There is an urgent need to provide funding for a continuum of community-based integrated services which would include a universal system of home tare and home support where seniors can live and get the support they need to stay in their homes longer, improvement in long-term care to provide and improve more residential care options and hospice and palliative care. Under the recent Health Accord agreement the government of Nova Scotia will receive an extra $157 million for home care over the next 10 years, but this will not resolve the funding problem.

* 1. **Provincial level**

1. *Senior Pharmacare*

The Seniors Advisory Council was informed on November 24, 2016, by the Deputy Minister of Health that there would be no changes in the program for 2017-2018. The Department of Health hired two consultants to develop a province-wide consultation plan to seek input from seniors on how to enhance and sustain the program for the next five years. The consultants met with the Advisory Council on February 3, 2017, and Council members were not pleased with the consultation plan and suggested many revisions. On February 20, 2017, the Premier announced there was an agreement with the four Atlantic Premiers on this issue and there would be no changes for the 2018-2019 years.

1. *Shortage of Physicians and Specialists*

Nova Scotia is facing an acute shortage of physicians and specialists across the province, including Halifax. The Minister of Health has indicated the province will need to recruit 50 new physicians every year due to physicians retiring or leaving the province. The province is establishing collaborative care centers whereby physicians, nurse practitioners, dieticians and mental health workers provide care to patients. The RTO believes that government should ensure that health care personnel receive adequate training in treating elderly patients and the geriatric content of medical school curricula be reviewed.

*Long-Term Care*

The Department of Health and Wellness believes the extra funding in the recently negotiated Health Accord will provide increased funding for a lack of beds in nursing homes and reduce the long wait lists for home support. The RTO believes that a national seniors strategy would provide assurances that nursing homes have the physical and staffing resources along with a plan to adequately fund them.

1. **Main Activities for Your Organization Since the Last ACER-CART AGM**

**(a) RTO support for the Nova Scotia Teachers Union**

RTO members have been very active in supporting the 9,300 active teachers in their dispute with the Department of Education in trying to negotiate a fair collective agreement and having the government participate in meaningful and productive contractual negotiations. Members have attended many marches and rallies, have sent e-mails and letters, made phone calls and, in some cases, personal visits to the Members of the Legislative Assembly. Three tentative agreements were rejected by the membership with a work to rule campaign implemented on December 5, 2016, after the second tentative agreement was rejected. The work to rule campaign continued until February 21, 2017, when the Liberal government legislated Bill 75 — Teachers Professional Agreement and Classroom Improvement Act.

While the government was debating Bill 75 the NSTU held a one-day strike on February 17, 2017, the first strike in the **122-year-**old history of the organization. On that date 10,000 teachers, parents and students surrounded the Legislative Assembly. Bill 75 imposed a 3% wage increase over 4 years, a freezing of the service/severance award, establishment of a Commission on Inclusive Education and a Council to Improve Classroom Conditions.

1. **Adjustment to Retirement**

Fran Reddy Chisholm, former NSTU counsellor for the past 26 years, has developed a new workshop entitled “Adjustment to Retirement.” During this interactive session, members are encouraged to think about the changes at this stage in their lives, everything from financial planning to personal activity levels and lifestyle changes and choices. Participants are led through an activity to assist them to set achievable life goals recognizing their individual wants and needs. The **RTO** will be providing the program in our seven regions throughout the 2017-2018 year.

1. **Advance Care Planning**

Over the past two years the RTO and the Nova Scotia Hospice and Palliative Care Association have jointly sponsored the Advance Care Project. Advance Care Planning is a process whereby a capable (mentally competent) individual engages in a plan for making personal health decisions in the event that this person becomes incapable (legally incompetent) to personally direct his or her own health care. The RTO was successful in receiving a $25,000 New Horizons for Seniors Grant to design and facilitate a more in-depth community workshop in advance care planning to help families better prepare for the end of life and/or serious illness.

1. **Ad Hoc Committee on Wellness**

In keeping with the RTO desire to support the wellness of its members, the RTO Executive approved a five-member Ad Hoc Committee on Wellness to develop a one-day symposium in the fall of 2017 on wellness. The three Branch Presidents who will serve on the Committee have previously conducted wellness workshops in their area and will no doubt provide guidance and expertise in planning this provincial event.

1. **Branch Programs/Initiative Fund**

Since 2016 the RTO provides $10,000 each year for Branches to provide programs at the local level to serve their members. The amount awarded to any single Branch does not exceed $2,000 in any one calendar year. Over the past year five Branches have accessed the fund in the amount of $7,961.00

1. **ECRTO**

Every two years representatives of the Retired Teachers Organizations in the Atlantic

Provinces and Quebec meet to hear relevant presentations and to compare operations and related activities. On October 26-27, 2016 Past-President Jim Kavanaugh and I attended the fourth conference in St. John’s, Newfoundland and Labrador. There were two excellent guest speakers — Dr. Patrick O’Shea who spoke on Medical Assistance in Dying and Bob Dowden who spoke on An Overview of Prescription Drug Trends. One of the highlights of the event was the Newfoundland-style kitchen party where the mainlanders were “screeched in” and provided with an honorary Newfoundland certificate.

1. **Declaration of Agreement Concerning a National Health Care Strategy for Seniors**

The RTO Executive endorsed the Declaration at its August 9, 2016, Strategic Planning meeting. The declaration was presented to the eight other organizations in the Seniors Advisory Council of Nova Scotia on October 18, 2016. Five of the organizations — Caregivers Nova Scotia, the Nova Scotia Retired Employees Association, the Federation of Senior Citizens and Pensioners of Nova Scotia and Community Links have endorsed the declaration.

1. **Seniors Advisory Council of Nova Scotia**

In the Spring of 2016 the Department of Seniors commenced a wide-ranging project. to recognize the contributions that seniors provide and to help government integrate new thinking about older adults and their importance to the province. The following committees were established to provide recommendations on the following issues:

1. Recognize, promote and support older adults to engage in paid and/or volunteer work and participate in the economy
2. Create the conditions for older adults to age in place in their homes and communities
3. Help older adults to live healthier lives

Over 100 recommendations were produced by the three committees and from researchers at the Centre on Aging from Mount St. Vincent University who Ied 16 public presentations and reviewed the on-line surveys. The Advisory Committee pared the number ta 50 recommendations and called the document **SHIFT-Action Plan for an Aging Population** which was provided to government in October 2016. The Premier announced on March 30, 2017, that all recommendations were approved by government and will now be placed in various departments business plans to be implemented over the next three years.

1. **AGM Motions from your Organization to the ACER-CART AGM.**

* NIL