**RETIRED TEACHERS’ ASSOCIATION OF**

**NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR**

**MEMBER REPORT**

1. **Federal Concerns of RTANL:**
2. National Health Care Strategy
3. National Health Accord
4. National Seniors Strategy
5. National Pharmacare Strategy
6. Bill C 27
7. GIS Back payments and Possible Effects on Seniors
8. Amalgamation of OAS and GIS
9. CPP Enhancement
10. Spousal Benefits from CPP and OAS
11. Seniors Advisory Council
12. **Major Federal Advocacy Initiatives:**
13. We are proud to say that RTANL participated in the Declaration Concerning a National Health Care Strategy and endorsed it as a signatory. We also shared it with the NL Coalition of Pensioners, Retirees and Seniors who eagerly endorsed it on behalf of every senior, pensioner and retiree in the Province. The Coalition representatives also met with the three Members of Parliament representing the Avalon Region – Mr. Ken McDonald, Mr. Nick Whalen and Mr. Seamus O’Regan, and their PA’s – to discuss this and other National issues, as mentioned above. At that meeting, all the above mentioned issues were addressed and we were given assurances that they would be brought to the attention of the Prime Minister and the respective Ministers responsible for each one.
14. A subsequent, rather short, meeting followed in January, before the Members returned to Ottawa for the reopening of the House of Commons. Aside from the Health Accord, which NL and NS had already agreed to by then, the Federal MP’s basically noted that the other issues were works in progress.
* MPs had made their points to their counterparts in Ottawa, about the difficulty of GIS Back Payments for some seniors who, if paid in a lump-sum payment, would be placed in a higher income tax bracket for that year and could, therefore, lose many of the benefits they currently received, i.e. drug cards, income supplement benefits....taking them, possibly, another two years to be able to have them replaced. Payments received. Nothing done to date.
* They also attempted to explain the benefit of Bill C - 27 and how it would not interfere with those already in receipt of pensions. We, however, have our own thoughts on that one and will continue to rally against it as well as continuing to support our Canadian counterparts and Federal Pensioners in whatever way necessary.
* Promised to look into spousal benefits of CPP and OAS. Should not be seen as an expense to Government but rather, a saving. People in better position to remain independent and don’t end up in Old Age/Nursing Homes being paid for with Government monies.
* No explanation of “enhancement” available. Plan to be phased in by January 1, 2019. Increase of up to one third (25% - 30%) of income would come from CPP. Should revisit so that all seniors have enough for a reasonable quality of life.... based on real numbers of inflation.....Cost of Living, not Canada Price Index. Consider doing an analysis of savings to Government of a Seniors Price Indexing.
* Coalition asked that protection would be placed on CPP under “Trustee” format, to prevent Government from “dipping into” funds for General Revenue, e.g. EI Fund.
* Seniors Advisory Council: So many questions about this. Does it still exist? What is its real agenda/mandate? How does one access it or become a member? To be investigated by MP’s; response pending.
* National Seniors Strategy: Has to involve the three levels of Government. Currently there is “no connect” between them. Can’t work without collaboration, not each operating on their own agenda. Need definition of “affordable” acceptable by all three levels. Tremendous need for “affordable housing for seniors”, particularly in NL. Some housing developments in St. John’s done under this “umbrella” yet, not one senior resident housed in them; thus emphasizing the need for more collaboration and more careful placement of residents for whom these dwellings were intended.
* National Pharmacare Program would give Government more control over Pharmaceutical Companies, would be so much more cost effective to consumers and would save Government millions of dollars annually. How could we not do this? To be further investigated by MP’s.
* Amalgamation of OAS/GIS connected to Bill C-27. Appears to be long term (approx. 10 yr.) plan to gradually get rid of Defined Benefit Plan pensions without any current DBP members involved in these discussions or decisions to alter the plan. Need to ramp up concerns over this and again, support our Canadian Counterparts and Federal Pensioners, retired and active.
1. **Major Provincial Concerns of RTANL:**
2. Provincial Home Support Program
3. Seniors Advocate
4. Health Care
5. Long Term Care
6. Pharmacare
7. Seniors Housing
8. Home Assessments/Evaluations
9. GIS Back Payments
10. Hydro Rates and Effects on Seniors
11. Dietary needs of Nursing Home Residents
12. **Major Provincial Advocacy Initiatives:**
13. Representatives of the Coalition met with the Principle Consultants on February 12, 2016, in a three hour meeting that included many topics impacting health care services for seniors and related social and community programs, including the existing Provincial Home Support Program. The new Provincial Home Support Review was subsequently published and submitted, by Deloitte, to the Department of Health & Community Services on July 12, 2016. The review Report was available online sometime during the last week in September of 2016. Having discovered this, we proceeded to study the Report very carefully and did a summary review of it on behalf of the Coalition.
14. Following the release of Provincial Home Support Review, the Coalition requested a meeting with the Minister of Health, Dr. John Haggie, and the Minister of Seniors and Aging, Sherry Gambin-Walsh. The two major areas of concern were: i) Provincial Home Support Review and ii) Seniors Advocate. Meeting was granted for Nov. 15, 2016 with Minister Haggie, Minister Gambin-Walsh, their PA’s and four representatives of the Coalition. It was a very cordial meeting and much ground was covered. The Coalition Summary Review was submitted and our position on, and understanding of, how the Seniors Advocate Office and position would operate was made very clear. All other areas of concern were briefly discussed as well. The meeting ended with an assurance of the establishment of the Seniors Advocate’s Office and Position, and a subsequent meeting, at the call of the Ministers, to update us on events as they unfolded.
15. Prior to release of Budget 2016, Coalition Reps were asked, by Govt. officials, to attend a meeting at Confederation Building with Minister of Health, Dr. Haggie, and Minister of Finance, Cathy Bennett. Discussed our ‘wish list’ and state of financial affairs of our Province. Coalition was asked to prioritize items in order of importance. Top two items were Home Care Strategy and implementation of Seniors Advocate. As the meeting ended, we were thanked for all the things the Coalition was doing on behalf of seniors.
16. Following the 2016 Budget Presentation in House of Assembly, the Coalition Representatives were once again called to a meeting, at the request of Minister of Finance, Cathy Bennett. Attending that meeting, along with Minister Bennett, were Minister Haggie, Minister Gambin Walsh, their PA’s and the four Coalition Reps. The Minister of Finance had a Power Point Presentation explaining where the Province was financially, how it got there and Government’s plan to correct the situation. Hence the need for the drastic measures taken by Government in this current Provincial Budget. This was the Presentation they were planning to take to the major stakeholders throughout the Province and we were the first group to see it.
17. Another meeting was subsequently requested, this time by Minister Gambin-Walsh. She wished to clarify, with the Coalition Reps, the exact criteria for the establishment of a Seniors Advocate, were they to pursue this as a government. Lists of recommendations were shared but the major issue had to be that the *Office of the Seniors Advocate be an Independent Commissioner of the House of Assembly.* This meeting was followed up by a second meeting, the following week. This time, Minister Gambin-Walsh presented us with the written legislation, Bill 64, which

would hopefully be presented in the House that week. Sure enough, Bill 64 was introduced before the House recessed for Christmas.

* As you can see, we have had a very busy fall. RTANL is one of the key members of the Coalition. As a group of retired professionals, we stand tall and proud on our own. As a political force, however, we stand much taller and prouder as members of the larger group of pensioners, retirees and seniors – The Coalition. Together, we have gained the trust and respect of the general public, of our independent associations and of both levels of Government. Truly we can say, “Together we stand, divided we fall”.
* We have not done this alone, I might add. We’ve had a lot of help along the way, not the least of which has come from our own National Association – ACER/CART. The NL Coalition started gaining momentum during the Federal and Provincial Election Campaigns in 2015. The Booklets that were printed and distributed to each member-organization within ACER/CART, were the driving force behind the successful Candidates Debates at both levels of Government and in both elections in the Province of NL and we, as members of the Coalition, were the benefactors. We had a clearer idea of the issues and what we needed to do to have them addressed. Thank you to Jo-Ann Lauber and the B.C. Retired Teachers Organization and to ACER/CART for being so willing to share this strategy with the rest of the Country.
1. **Conclusion**

Since being elected President of RTANL in October, 2016, I found myself very busy with the many tasks of Office, like restructuring the various Standing and Ad Hoc Committees; looking closely at our current Constitution and By-Laws with an eye to identifying any areas that may be in need of change or update; keeping in touch with our parent association, NLTA; preparing for my first executive meeting, as president; meeting with the President and Executive Director of NLTA with a view to the kinds of ways our membership could be of assistance to them as they entered this current round of negotiations with Government; inviting NLTA President, Jim Dinn, to attend our Executive Meeting, in Gander, to address these concerns with the RTANL Executive; Chairing my first Executive Meeting as President; preparing my first Newsletter message to the members; working with the Newsletter Committee, ensuring that our newsletter is in the hands of retired teachers on time; visiting and addressing two Divisions of RTANL during their Christmas Socials; dealing with emails and phone calls from members who require assistance or direction on personal/professional matters; attending NLTA BGM 2017 and bringing greetings on behalf of all retired teachers in NL. While attending the NLTA President’s Banquet at BGM, I was presented with “*Honourary Membership in the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers Association, in recognition of a significant contribution to the cause of education”.* In the presence of my family, many honoured and esteemed guests, all delegates to BGM, Past Presidents, Past Executive Directors, NLTA Staff members and past Honourees of the Association, the Award was conferred upon me by President Jim Dinn and a beautiful oration about my life and career was delivered by Duncan Ford. It was the most humbling, yet gratifying experience of my career and I will treasure it forever.

1. **Motions to ACER/CART AGM 2017**: There are none.

Doreen Noseworthy

President, RTANL