 **ALBERTA RETIRED TEACHERS’ ASSOCIATION**

**MEMBER REPORT**

1. **Major concerns of your association:**

**Federal level:**

We, like all other Canadians are riveted on the emerging relationship and realities of living next to the ‘new’ USA, as well as in a world of changing relationships and politics. We look at the economics of retirement and pensions, and wonder about the impact on our governments and their ability to ensure our traditional benefits. We know that a changing Trade relationship could impinge not only our aspirations for improvement, but also on our traditional ‘entitlements’.

As the current Government and Cabinet Members struggle with their new realities, ACER-CART needs to maintain its leadership position in Advocacy, and continue to foster relationships with like-minded Senior and Labor Organizations. We must share and support positions established in regards to Seniors Issues, Health Care and ensuring public pensions.

In ARTA, we continue to be concerned about the reality that each year of retirement brings a lower relative economic position to many of our members. Interest rates that favor borrowers and banks, have forced those who planned to live off their Investments to dip into and erode their capital. ‘Senior’ seniors particularly suffer diminishing resources that move them closer and closer to the poverty line. The current uncertainty of our major trade relationships does little to increase confidence.

As seniors and retirees we must be vigilant and resist any temptation of government to forget promises, and “balance the books” on our backs.

**Provincial level:**

Alberta continues to wrestle serious economic and service issues due to cutbacks in the Energy industry. The fire at Fort McMurray was another serious blow, not only to individuals, but to corporate and government revenues as well. For a significant part of the population the crisis is well into a second year, and personal economic ruin has occurred. This impact is also felt by communities in other parts of the country that have individuals dependent on the economic fortunes of Alberta.

We continue to watch the evolution of the Provincial Government from their ND Idealism, into perhaps the most pragmatic government in the country. Economics and disaster have worked well to weave realism into our provincial fabric. With an election two years away, we have to be concerned with the possibilities of a more conservative approach to issues that impact us.

As an organization, we have an ongoing priority of being prepared to respond to proposals that would impact the economics of our members.

1. **Main activities of your association since last ACER-CART AGM:**
2. Our Board and Committees continues to be engaged and committed in their support of ARTA’s Mission of *“an engaged lifestyle after retirement through member-centered services, advocacy, communication, wellness and leadership”*.
3. Work is well underway on updating our Strategic Plan. A new strand is added to those of Communication, Wellness and Advocacy, and that is Organizational Excellence. As well as looking outward, we need to ensure the appropriate introspection and servicing of our priorities.
4. 2017 sees us ‘graduating’ from our residence in the ATA’s (Alberta Teacher Association) Barnett House, and moving into our own building. This is a positive step for both organizations, as it ensures our needs for the next number of years, and relieves them from overcrowding at a time that they are contemplating expansion.
5. We continue to work hard to inform all new retirees are informed about their Benefits Options. Our relationship with the ATA has led to very active collaboration on presentations to active teachers and potential retirees. Likewise strong relationship with ASEBP (Alberta School Employees Benefit Plan) and ATRF (Alberta Teachers’ Retirement Fund) help us to contact current and past retirees.
6. Our new organizational alignment seems to be working well. Last year we reduced the number of committees and clarified executive responsibilities. With expanded staff numbers and competencies, new supports have allowed committees to expand their initiatives.
7. We continue our focus on cross committee communications with common Orientation sessions, as well as ongoing opportunities for ‘Joint Chairs’ as well as our Annual Retreat involving Board, Branch, Committee and members at large the opportunity to share and understand each other’s perspectives and priorities.
8. The five strands of Wellness provide a joint vocabulary for members, branches and committees to build programs and opportunities.
9. The Diabetes Health Focus Initiative enters its third year. We have been funding and participating in this Alberta Health Services study with the objective to improve older Canadians’ health and strengthen the health care system. Again our communication with, and data access to our population makes us a great participatory group.
10. Our Foundation is still going through some growing pains. We have determined our initial partnerships with the Alzheimer and Parkinson’s Associations, and CNIB.
11. At this writing we are looking forward to our Retreat, which will be held just prior to the ACER-CART AGM. We are excited by the commitment of the Alberta Seniors Minister to be present for a session, and to be open to dialogue. We will report the outcome.

**Motions from your association:**

None currently.

Thanks for the opportunity to share some of our highlights.

Gordon Cumming Daniel Mulloy

ARTA Past President 2015 – 2016 Chief Executive Officer and Executive Director.