**REPORT FROM WESTERN REGION - ACER-CART – October 2017**

Gathered by Gerry Tiede

**BCRTA - STEVE BAILEY**

The BCRTA held its annual conference on September 21-23 at the Vancouver Hilton Airport Hotel in Richmond BC. The theme of this year’s Delegates’ Day was “well-being”. A number of engaging speakers dealt with proper nutrition, effective exercise and guarding against elder abuse.

Thursday evening’s reception was hosted by Merit Travel, one of our newer Members’ Advantage Program partners. The evening was marked with a good time of delegate ‘meet and greet’ as well as an opportunity for delegates to gain more knowledge about Merit Travel programs, Collette Travel, Johnson Inc. insurance programs and HearingLife Canada offerings.

Saturday’s Annual General Meeting of the Association saw updates on the development and implementation of our Strategic Plan that has been developed by our Innovation and Strategic Planning Committee with the help of facilitators and consultants -including Tim Anderson who has redesigned the BCRTA website to make it more attractive and accessible. Part of the strategic plan is to develop a more effective communication strategy that involves coordination of website resources and our publications - *PostScript*and *Liaison Priorities*.

The business of the AGM was interspersed with celebrations of our Golden Star Award winners of 2017 and our Branch Membership Growth Awards. The former recognizes programs across BC that bring together seniors and students in elementary, middle and secondary schools for mutual learning. The latter recognizes branches who have shown the most growth over the past year. The Association has shown increased membership growth this year through a “Free Membership” initiative offering complimentary membership for one year for all retired educators who have not previously joined the BCRTA and to all new retirees. The BC Teachers’ Federation has been very supportive of this initiative.

In terms of elections, Patricia Clough was elected president for another year, and Gerry Tiede was elected First Vice President along with Grace Wilson who will serve as Second Vice President. Some new Directors were also elected to the Board.

A real highlight of our annual gathering was Friday’s banquet which is attended by guests from the community and organizations such as the Council of Senior Citizens of BC (COSCO), the BCTF and the BC Retired Principals’ and Vice Principals’ Association. Another special guest was Art Rempel, a BC educator who is 100 and still very active in the community.  In our recognition of long and effective service to education in BC and to the BCRTA, Life Membership status was granted to Sheila Gair, retiring editor of PostScript, Sheila Pither, and Pat Brady. Pat’s knowledge of meeting “Rules of Order” was impressive as he chaired the business of the AGM. Banquet attendees were also entertained by a theatre troupe who performed a “murder mystery” scenario during the evening.

Our battle with Bill C-27 was front and centre during our conference as we look for effective ways of lobbying against this legislation. A plan is bing formulated that will see every Member of Parliament in the province contacted in various ways.

As we enter the Fall of 2017, our Innovation and Strategic Planning Committee will continue its work along with a newly streamlined standing committee structure. Our branches have been challenged to seek on-going effective ways to retain and enhance membership and branch involvement. We remain grateful to ACER-CART for its role as a national voice for retired educators and Canadian seniors.

**SASKATCHEWAN – MARIE LEBLANC-WARICK**

The increasing cost of pharmaceuticals and an increase in usage of paramedicals and certain classes of drugs are creating challenges for the STS Benefit Plans. The STS will be conducting a full review in preparation for its 2018-2019 budget planning.

The imposition of the 6% PST to Benefit Plan Premiums and to Life Insurance premiums has led to an increase in premiums to STS members of a corresponding 6%. Information was provided to all members to ensure an understanding of the reason for the increase.

The STS will be holding the annual Chapter Presidents Meeting in October 2017. This is an opportunity to open discussion with the Presidents on all important facets of the STS and to provide networking opportunities between STS Chapters.

**ALBERTA – GORDON CUMMING**

Provincial Initiatives

1. Somewhat similar to birthing a Blue Whale, and after five years of moving from concept to society to getting a CRA number, we are rolling out the “Alberta Retired Teachers’ Charitable Foundation” at our AGM, and will be on line shortly thereafter.  Our focus is support of Charitable Organizations involved in Seniors Health and Housing, as well as ESL for Seniors.

2.We have a number of Health Initiatives under our Wellness Committee including the use of an InBody Machine and Technician being available to Branches.  We had been in a Diabetes Initiative as well, but that has come to an end.

3. Communications has been a major focus, and we are proud of the maturing and development of our Magazine, E-Newsletter and Web-site.  Getting Branches on to their own Web Site has been a longer Project

4.We have had limited contact with the Seniors Minister, and individuals in the Health Ministry.

5. Our Benefits Plan continues to prove successful, and an ongoing focus.

Critical Issues

Like the rest of you we follow the current dialogue on Pharmacare with interest. In Alberta, the lack of a Dental Fee Guide is an issue.  Currently the Province is pushing for a more reasonable Dental Guide from the profession.

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 this item with interest.  No active action is planned.  Our plan seems to be in good shape as contributions are altered to ensure defined benefits in the future.  I’m not so sure our Provincial Civil Servants do as well as the Retired Teachers.

**MANITOBA – JO-ANNE HOYAK** is travelling out of the country so I talked to Mary-Anne Slegers, their Executive Director.

Manitoba participated in the UN International Day of Older Persons and are making plans to participate more fully in next year’s event. Bill C-27 is a concern and they are considering how to participate in that issue. Some major health-care changes are contemplated for their province which are of great concern to seniors.

A major issue for the Manitoba group at present is the transition initiated by the hiring an Executive Director and roles and responsibility changes that follow.

**YUKON – KEN NASH**

Ken reports that the Yukon Association is mainly a social group although they are very active volunteers in local projects such as tutoring. One main project that Ken has been involved with is the planning for a new seniors’ complex in Whitehorse.