 **ALBERTA RETIRED TEACHERS’ ASSOCIATION**

**MEMBER REPORT**

At the time of this writing we are coming out of our second worst winter that I can remember. This was the view out my window a short time ago. As you can see the Seniors have everything under control.

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

**Federal level:**

We, like all other Canadians are concerned about the emerging relationship and realities of living next to the 'new' USA. As the world of NAFTA evolves, what will be the impacts on the Canadian Dollar and Economy, and will it impact the finances of Seniors, and their ability to live a full retirement.

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.

We have to be part of the 'senior's voice' that advocates for Pharmacare reforms. We have to make sure that Pharmacy Agreements make sense, and that as cost management strategies are introduced, ample supply is ensured.

We continue to be concerned about the reality that each year of retirement brings a lower relative economic position to many of our members. 'Senior' seniors particularly suffer diminishing resources that move them closer and closer to the poverty line. We appreciate the 'vocabulary' that Pensions were negotiated and are "Deferred Salary", and not some fictional aspect of government generosity. ACER-CART's leadership in this area gives us the data and understanding that allows for a common voice across the country.

As Albertans, we worry about the current tensions between provinces. Reality often gets lost in rhetoric, and our identity as Canadians that flourishes beyond our borders is becoming strained within the country, and the word 'compromise' is disappearing from our political vocabulary.

1. **Provincial level:**

Alberta continues to wrestle serious economic issues due to cutbacks in the Energy industry. Investor confidence has not fully returned and this impact is felt by communities in other parts of the country, that have had their financial fortunes dependent on the economy of Alberta.

We continue to watch the evolution of our Provincial Government. It has been a grand experiment in difficult circumstances. However, despite long range plans to manage the deficits and debt, an election next year is increasingly likely to return control to a more conservative approach to issues that impact us. Assumptions that we have about Pension and Benefits may well be the fodder of the campaign.

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

1. **Motions from your association:**

None currently, however, pursuant to the exchange of correspondence earlier this spring, we would hope for a discussion on how as Retired Teacher Organizations we share a mission to advocate for Retired Teachers, and respect the mandate of Member Organizations to meet the needs of those Retirees within their Provincial boundaries.

1. **Main activities of your association since last ACER-CART AGM:**

ARTA’s Mission is to support “an engaged lifestyle after retirement through member-centered services, advocacy, communication, wellness and leadership”.

1. Our Strategic Plan has been updated. A new strand, Organizational Excellence, was added to those of Communication, Wellness and Advocacy. Where the latter three focused on service and relationships with our membership and public, we needed to ensure the appropriate emphasis on the organization best meeting its internal initiatives and priorities.
2. Membership has continued to grow past 20,000, and so has the organization to keep up with the demands. Our staff component has increased as we have expanded our Communication, Marketing and Benefit Resources. This has allowed for increased support of all the action committees.
3. Our relationship with the ATA (active Teachers) continues to be very active, and we are included in the agenda of their seminars to active teachers and potential retirees. Likewise, we have a strong operational relationship with ASEBP (Alberta School Employees Benefit Plan), as they are our Benefit Plan administrators. While we are pleased that our informal connections with ATRF (Alberta Teachers’ Retirement Fund) help us to maintain contact current and past retirees, we still aspire to someday have a seat on their Board.
4. Strategic Planning focusses on advancing our connection with like-minded organizations, and Government. Last year we were fortunate to have our Seniors Minister as a presenter at our Annual Retreat, and this year we hope to access David Eggen Minister of Education. Also invited to the event are Dr. Duncan Robertson (Geriatric Medicine), Wanda Morris (CARP) and Todd Hirsh (Chief Economist – ATB).
5. 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.
6. Wellness provide a joint vocabulary for members, branches and committees to build programs and opportunities. ARTA facilitates an “Inbody” opportunity for interested Branches, provides grants for other initiatives, as well as resourcing articles for our magazine
7. Our Diabetes Health Focus Initiative was ended by mutual consent. The learning experience is one of requiring ongoing communication if multi-year initiatives are to meet their objectives. The association however is continuing on the journey and will be creating and sharing a Diabetes Health manual with all ARTA members.
8. Our Foundation continues its journey to become a “Charity of Choice”.

Gordon Cumming – ACER-CART Director

Marilyn Bossert – ARTA President (Observer)

Daniel Mulloy – ARTA CEO & Executive Director.