

**RETIRED TEACHERS ORGANIZATION**

**of the Nova Scotia Teachers Union**

**MEMBER REPORT**

1. **Major concerns of your Association**
2. **Lack of a National Pharmacare Program**

The RTO is encouraged with the establishment of an Advisory Council, chaired by Dr. Eric Hoskins, in the Iast Federal Budget to look at international models, such as New Zealand, and make recommendations for a made in Canada Program. I have had discussions with the Nova Scotia Minister of Health and Minister of Seniors and indicated that the RTO planned on making a submission to the Council. I also indicated that I agreed with their proposal for a broad based universal plan with a single national pharmaceutical formulary.

1. **Canada Health Accord**

The RTO is still disappointed with the Nova Scotia government signing a bilateral agreement with the Federal government in 2017. We believe that the

divide and conquer” negotiations with the provinces agreeing to separate agreements led to a total of $33 billion left “on the table.” The RTO strongly disagrees with a health accord funding formula that allocates resources based on numbers rather than demographics and the health burden. Another question we have is the accountability and transparency in the accounting for $157 million in home care and $130 million for mental health over the next ten years, which are part of the Accord.

1. **Lack of a National Seniors Strategy**

The RTO agrees with the Canadian Medical Association that there is an urgent need to provide funding for a continuum of community-based integrated services which would include a universal system of home care and home support where seniors can live and get the support they need to stay in their own homes longer, improvement in long-term care to provide and improve more residential care options and hospice and palliative care. A National Seniors Strategy could also lead to a National Dementia Strategy with adequate funding from the Federal government.

1. **Bill C-27**

The RTO has been working with the Seniors Advisory Council to bring this legislation to the attention of seniors in Nova Scotia. It is an item on our monthly meetings agenda and I appreciate the valuable materials provided by the British Columbia Retired Teachers Association and the National Federation of Federal Retirees on this issue. I would also like to thank the Canadian Coalition for Retirement Security on their position paper entitled “In Response to the Government of Nova Scotia’s Pension Funding Framework Review” which advised the Nova Scotia government not to change seniors defined benefits pension plans to a shared risk plan.

**B. Provincial Level**

1. Seniors Pharmacare

In 2017 the Premiers of the four Atlantic Provinces agreed to finance research in reviewing each jurisdiction’s drug coverage in order to seek improvements and cost containment for high cost therapies for rare diseases. An Atlantic Collaboration Committee was formed, composed of managers from each province’s Pharmacare division, to look at efficiencies across the four provincial programs for consistency and continuity. One of the specific tasks was to look at each province’s formularies in an attempt to narrow them in order to save costs through bulk purchasing. The committee has met on two occasions and hopes to have a final report in early 2019. Because of these ongoing discussions the government of Nova Scotia has not made any changes to the premiums and co-pays in 2018 and we expect the same in 2019.

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 stated that the province will need to hire 100 more physicians each year for the next 10 years due to physicians retiring or leaving the province. In the recent Provincial budget the government announced it will provide $19.6 million this year, as part of a $39.6 million multi-year plan to recruit and retain doctors. To compound the problem, a report by **the** Canadian Institute for Health Information indicates **that** Nova Scotia has the lowest gross payment per physician in Canada at $262,000 in 2016 compared to the national average of $339,000 in the same year. The government has also agreed to spend $13.9 million more on salaries for family doctors.

1. Wait times for orthopaedic surgeries

At the present time 56% of Nova Scotians receive hip replacement surgery with the 26-week Canadian benchmark versus 79% of Canadians. Another fact is that 38% of Nova Scotians receive knee replacement surgery within the 26-week Canadian benchmark versus 73% of Canadians. Problems in achieving the Canadian average include lack of surgeons, anaesthetists and operating room space. To compound the problem there is a lack of physiotherapists, nurses and occupational therapists post-surgery. The Nova Scotia government has provided an extra $8.8 million to do 350 more hip and knee surgeries by hiring more surgeons, creating a central booking system and providing rehabilitation services.

1. **Main Activities for Your Organization Since the Last ACER-CART AGM**
2. RTO Support for the Nova Scotia Teachers Union

In September 2017 the Nova Scotia Department of Education hired Dr. Avis Glaze, a well-known education consultant from Ontario, to provide an administrative review of the province’s educational system.

On January 22, 2018, Dr. Glaze publicly presented “Raise the Bar — A Coherent and Responsive Administrative System for Nova Scotia.” On the following day, without any consultation with education partners, the Education Minister accepted all 22 recommendations.

The following recommendations outraged the NSTU:

1. Eliminate the 7 English School Boards and replace them with a 15-member Provincial Advisory Council appointed by the Minister. The province-wide French School Board would remain due to Federal government Charter language rights. Remove principals and vice-principals from the NSTU.
2. Create a College of Educators to licence, govern, discipline and regulate the teaching profession.
3. Ensure teachers have mobility to work throughout the province by removing barriers in the 7 regional collective agreements while maintaining seniority rights.
4. Create an independent Student Progress Assessment Office to develop high-quality student assessments and announce the results publicly.

The RTO was heavily involved in the campaign that ensued. Members received the same information as Union members and attended rallies, met their Members of the Legislative Assembly, wrote letters and e-mails and circulated petitions around their community.

The action culminated in an illegal strike vote on February 20, 2018, where 82.5% of active teachers voted to strike and possibly face a penalty of $300 per day for each day on strike. The overwhelming vote forced the Premier to meet with the President of the NSTU and promises were made to compromise on the Union issues. The following week the government introduced Bill 72—The Education Reform Act. The government eliminated the 7 English School Boards effective March 31, 2018, and made

some changes to the position of school administrators in the NSTU. The government did not proceed with a College of Educators and the Student Progress Assessment Office.

The Act established the Public School Administrators Association of Nova Scotia in which administrators would have to pay dues. The Association is not a bargaining unit which therefore means its members cannot unionize, take job action or file formal grievances.

Members of the Association continue to have access to all NSTU Group Insurance Benefits and remain members of the Nova Scotia Teachers Pension Plan and will therefore have to pay Union dues. The Act guarantees that its members will receive the same wage increases as teachers, but also allows the government to pay more.

After the compromises in the Act, the President of the NSTU announced that the government had made enough changes ta avert job action, but they still had much more to do to improve the public education system.

1. **Wellness Symposium**

On October 30, 2017, the RTO had its first Wellness Symposium organized by Alyson Hillier, RTO Program Chair and her Ad Hoc Planning Committee.

The planning committee identified the following goals:

To expand the members understanding of the importance of an active lifestyle To familiarize participants with resources available throughout the province to support the 23 Branches to build up capacity within their community to advocate and support seniors as well as network with other Branches in their region and across the province to enable members to enjoy and thrive during this stage of their life.

The RTO provided funding for two members per Branch to attend the Symposium with the expectation that these participants would organize a wellness program within their Branch. The organization would also provide $1,000 per Branch each year to help support Branch initiatives.

There were a total of 63 participants who heard 3 keynote speakers, a four-member panel describing wellness activities in their Branch and a Mini-Expo of 16 not-for-profit organizations which provided take home materials. The evaluations were extremely positive and indicated that the event was both informative and beneficial.

1. **Advance Core Planning**

In May 2017 the RTO received a $25,000 Federal government New Horizons grant to update the Advance Care Planning (ACP) presentation with the Nova Scotia Hospice and Palliative Care Association (NSHPCA). Twelve of our members reworked the presentation to provide a more interactive model for participants.

Alyson Hillier, RTO Program Chair and Colleen Cash, Executive Director NSHPCA were invited to present the updated presentation at the Canadian Hospice Palliative Care Association Conference in Ottawa on September 20-23, 2017. The presentation was so well received that Chad Drummond, Program Manager Advance Care Planning in Canada, has requested the use of the presentation in discussions with Health Canada on an expanded program with federal funding.

Chad Drummond has sent a proposal to Health Canada to provide funding for a tool kit based on the Nova Scotia and other provinces presentations and will liaise with ACER-CART associations to identify testing sites for the tool kit. I believe Chad would appreciate retired teachers across Canada being willing to provide these presentations, subject to receiving training.

1. **Retirement Journey**

Over the past year and a half the RTO has presented this workshop in ail 7 regions of the province. Fran Reddy Chisholm, former NSTU Counsellor for 26 years, provides this interactive workshop whereby 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.

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

The Seniors Advisory Council is composed of nine seniors organizations representing over 120,000 seniors in the province. The Council meets monthly and serves as an advisory body to the government of Nova Scotia through the Department of Seniors to facilitate the development of government age-related policies, programs and services. I have served as Chair of the Council for the last four years and the main priorities over the past year include the following:

Patient Centred Health Care

Monitor the recommendations of SHIFT—Nova Scotia’s Action Plan for an Aging Population

Financial and Pension Security in Retirement

Facilitate the Participation of Seniors in Nova Scotia’s Economic Recovery Support for Caregivers

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

Nil