Association canadienne des enseignantes et des enseignants retraités



Canadian Association of Retired Teachers

**POLITICAL ADVOCACY COMMITTEE**

**AGM 2019**

**Committee Members**:

Gordon Cumming, Chair–Regional Representative–West

**Terms of Reference**:

The Political Advocacy Committee shall :

1. develop and recommend to the Executive actions to accomplish goals and objectives established by the Board;
2. monitor political issues and advise the Executive or the Board on emerging issues relevant to ACER-CART;
3. plan and organize political action if so directed by the executive;
4. include in its membership a representative from each ACER-CART Region.

**Action Plans Coming Out of the 2018 AGM**:

Last year’s AGM passed a series of motions that led to ACER-CART participating in Advocacy activities that focused extensively on preparing for the 2019 Federal elections. Chief among these were the e-Petition, Vibrant Voices and the communications of our other committees that led to the production of our Brochure, “Senior’s Issues for the 2019 Federal Election.”

In summary, the relevant advocacy motions were:

* M-1 That ACER-CART continue an aggressive communication initiative to advocate for pension security, and oppose any legislation such as Bill C-27 which would jeopardize defined benefit plans…
* M-2 That, as a major priority in 2018-2019, ACER-CART continue its support for a comprehensive national Canadian Pharmacare plan.
* M-3 That ACER-CART continue calling for a national seniors’ strategy by supporting the Canadian Medical Association’s “Demand a Plan” campaign and ACER-CART’s own “Declaration Concerning a National Health Care Strategy for Seniors.”
* M-4 That ACER-CART mount opposition to the privatization of medical services in Canada as an expressed threat to public Medicare in Canada.
* M-5 That ACER-CART mount a lobbying campaign advocating for the establishment of a Canadian Federal Seniors’ Ministry. (As this has been accomplished, our President has already initiated action to offer our assistance to that Office.)
* M-8 That ACER-CART be a participant in the establishment of a symposium of like-minded organizations, in order to develop a national advocacy plan with a seniors’ focus for the 2019 Federal election.

**The Pension E-Petition:**

Full credit goes to Gerry Tiede and the Pension Committee for initiating this venture. It may have been an old hat to some of you, but to me it was definitely “Chapeau nouveau.” I’m sure that Gerry will provide the detail and data, and collectively we will have the opportunity to watch the petitions presentation to the House on the Thursday AM before our meetings.

After thanking Gerry, I would thank all of you and your members, because this exercise proved the power we have cooperatively. The age of electronic media is really upon us, and we see that with well-placed communications, we can unleash our collective voice. All it took was a well-written message, the ability to transmit it electronically, and the voice of thousands was heard. As an example, for ARTA two well-placed e-mail blasts and 5400 members took up the cause. Nationally it was in excess of 13,000 returns. More significantly, I’m sure we started even more conversations, and increased pension issue awareness from coast to coast.

Our power of communication is not just in getting information to members, but in stimulating them to be articulate spokespersons for our shared causes.

**Government of Canada Consultation on Retirement Security**

November 22, in a low-profile news release, the Minister of Seniors announced, “the next steps in national consultations on enhancing Canadians’ Retirement Security.”

Canadians were invited to provide feedback through a consultation on enhancing retirement security pages. The potential actions might span a number of areas, including pension regulations, corporate laws, and insolvency and bankruptcy laws, and allow for the exploration of all available avenues to improve retirement security for Canadians. The timeline for response … between November 22 and December 21, 2018.

Impossible to launch a national response? Gerry was made aware of the post on December 3, and by December 5 letters were going out to members. A well-written letter, with a link to the site, and provincial organizations and individual members had access and participated.

**Vibrant Voices**

October 19 saw the start of our major advocacy initiative, thanks to an invitation from RTO/ERO and the National Association of Federal Retirees (NAFR), to join in facilitating a collaboration of leading national retiree groups.

First session, November 16th in Toronto… After submitting pre-work, Roger, Gerry and I were trooping the ACER-CART colours. We enjoyed the generous hosting by RTO/ERO, meeting representative from other groups, and facilitation of discussions that led to agreement of common issues. The items of consensus: Seniors Strategy, Pharmacare, Pension and Income Stability. And we were off and running … first an on-line Webinar in January, leading to … the development of three agreed upon position papers. Thanks to ACER-CART’s Executive for observations that were input into the collaboration. This became the basis for…

A lobby day in Ottawa on February 20. Although this was the day the big trucks roared, representatives of the organizations set forth to leave their message … combined we represented over 2,000,000 seniors and we had three common issues. The day before we were all in serviced. Very well organized, very well done.

On Thursday afternoon pre-AGM, I know you will be impressed with the political acumen of Sayward Montague and Candace Jazvac. They certainly taught this old dog some new tricks.

The combined work became the starting point for our own advocacy paper, now available to be circulated preelection, by member organizations.

**Seniors Issues for the 2019 Election**

ACER-CART’s Brochure parallels the Vibrant Voices Position Papers. In addition, we have added a section indicating our opposition to Privatization of Medical Services in Canada. This was part of our marching orders from last year’s AGM. It is a more relevant concern today than ever, as we see the incursion of privatization into a number of provinces, and the reticence of the federal powers to enforce the provisions of the Health Accord.

Following this initial resource indicating our positions, and encouragement for individuals to become knowledgeable, and engage themselves into the political process, we hope to produce a second epistle that summarizes the positions of the various political parties on these selfsame issues.

**Conclusions:**

This year we tapped into our potential we have as an organization. Our abilities to communicate not only callow us to get out a message, but to activate individuals into giving their voice. This is the power of an organization with a minimal budget to have maximum impact.

**Acknowledgements:**

It takes a village, and I want to thank the Executive for their contribution and leadership. Although I did not have a formal committee, I want to particularly thank Gerry Tiede for keeping me on the straight and narrow, and co-editing the Brochure, and Bill for his contributions and support. Also, thanks to the BCRTA Elves for sharing their expertise and knowledge on issues. Thanks to ARTA for Communication and Printing Support, and in particular ARTA Communication Officer Tony Esteves for formatting and set-ups.

**Etcetera:**

Thanks to Bill, I had the opportunity to represent ACER-CART at CTF’s AGM in Edmonton. I thank them for their warm welcome, but must also admit that I felt post-teaching career issues were not overly apparent on their agenda. We annually enjoy their generosity and support in our operations, a closer liaison on agendas might allow them to understand the issues that are part of our present, and bound to impact their futures. This would be a good area for joint investigation, as our advocacy needs to include not only present, but future members.

Thanks to ACER-CART West for keeping me in the loop. I hope we can consider a regional meeting again this year as we had November of 2017, and look forward to hearing about their continued successes.

**Gordon Cumming**

Chair