**RETIRED TEACHERS’ ASSOCIATION OF**

**NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR**

**MEMBER REPORT**

**2019**

**Major Federal Concerns of RTANL**

1. Participation focused toward the Federal Elections by cooperating with other like-minded groups to advocate for pension protection and security.
2. Advocate for a national pharmacare plan through political action and participation in activities in which members can participate
3. Establish lines of communication with the Minister of Seniors by advocating for issues that involve seniors and their diminishing health and security benefits, like affordable housing, and independence so that they can stay in their homes longer, delaying long-term care and maintaining their quality of life especially in rural communities.
4. Continue to monitor our health care funding agreements.
5. Oppose any changes to our Defined Benefit Pension Plan
6. Support all efforts to maintain pension security for all seniors and encourage enhancements to the CPP and OAS.
7. Oppose the privatization of health care to protect the right to universal treatment practises.

**Major Provincial Concerns of RTANL.**

1. Advocate for active participation by members in issues that relate to seniors’ quality of life as it relates to health and other concerns by engaging their elected representatives.
2. Affordable care of seniors in Long Term Care and establishment of standards for levels of care in Long Term Care facilities.
3. Accessible testing for hearing and coverage for hearing aids and appropriate fitting of hearing aids for Seniors.
4. Better dental coverage for seniors and reintroduce a seniors’ dental plan which was discontinued several years ago.
5. Improvements in the Home Support Program to enable seniors to stay in their own homes and retain their independence through improved home support.
6. Electric Power Cost Escalation–Impending increases, especially here in NL.
7. Identify seniors’ issues and work with the Seniors Advocate affecting resolution of these issues.
8. Take part in Seniors deprescribing initiatives and advocate for increased monitoring of senior prescription drug usage.
9. Lower automobile insurance rates for seniors and debate concerns about putting a cap on soft tissue injury claims.
10. Address the problem of seniors renewal of drivers’ licences and vehicle registrations caused by cancelling the mail-out of renewal reminders.

**Major Federal Advocacy Initiatives**

RTANL has been proactive in working with ACER-CART to communicate our national concerns through our Newsletter and regular email reminders to as many of our members as we can possibly reach. We have achieved more prompt responses by our members by contacting all our executive members and division presidents who in turn relay the information and requests to the individual members throughout the province.

We have partnered with the Coalition of Seniors, Retirees and Pensioners NL and have held face-to-face meetings with local MP’s to make them aware of the issues facing seniors and demonstrate to them the resolve we have in demanding that our issues are addressed. We feel that we now command an increased measure of respect as we act as a united front to make our voices heard. Our involvement with the CLC, and many other federal groups who advocate for many of the same issues, seems to be achieving more positive results.

The representation we have made to our federal representatives opposing Bill C-27 seems to be gaining ground as more and more of the federal caucus members seem to be getting the message.

On the issue of universal pharmacare, one of our local MP’s has admitted that steps leading toward a pharmacare program was included in the recent federal budget and that it is not unlikely that a pharmacare program will be part of the next election platform. After all, our federal ministry for seniors became a reality within the past year.

On the issue of the Consultation on Retirement Security, I received an email from Seniors’ Caucus Co-chair, Churence Rogers, and later from ACER-CART advising members to make submissions to the Committee. The emails were sent to RTANL members and, as President, I made a submission on behalf of our members in NL. Members were encouraged to do the same and several reminders were sent encouraging members to support our efforts by making their own submissions.

Regarding the ACER-CART e-petition–RTANL have encouraged our members through repeated emails right up to the deadline and although the response was a little disappointing to me personally, we still came out ahead of other provinces in overall turnout.

**Major Provincial Advocacy Initiatives**

From a provincial standpoint, our email networks have been very busy. Emails on most issues would be sent to Provincial Executive Members and Division Presidents with the directive to send all communications to as many members as we can possibly reach. To that end we have constantly been advocating to all our networks to encourage more members to sign on and become an active part of the overall communication network.

In addition to addressing many of our major provincial concerns, as listed above, we have used our newsletters to communicate those concerns to our membership. I am proud to report that our newsletter is now distributed exclusively in electronic format. We have gone completely green. With the exception of a number of our members who opted to receive a paper version, the number of email subscribers is increasing with each succeeding issue. Reporting on all executive activities and events by both email and newsletter has become a regular routine at all levels of our association.

**Personal Achievements since last ACER-CART AGM as a member of RTANL**

Following the ACER-CART AGM, as Vice President and of NLTA I became the potential director of ACER-CART for NL when Doreen Noseworthy stepped down from her post. At that time, I indicated my intention to run for President of RTANL.

Shortly after last June’s AGM I was invited to a Town Hall Meeting hosted by local MP Churence Rogers on July 18, 2018. At that meeting I outlined the levels of seniors involvement that I represented from my active membership in ACER-CART, RTANL and several other local level seniors groups. Among the topics referenced were Bill C-27, the need for a universal pharmacare program and the issues outlined by the Canadian Medical Association’s Demand A Plan plus the need for affordable housing and home care.

During September and early October, while still Vice-President, I compiled a report of the ACER-CART AGM and submitted it to our October BGM and later published it in our December Newsletter.

On September 18, 2018, our local Retired Teachers division hosted a Presentation for Seniors and the speaker was Newfoundland and Labrador’s first Seniors Advocate, Dr. Suzanne Brake who addressed the gathering by explaining what her role is in advocating for seniors. She explained that her office does not answer to any department of government and that she reports directly to the provincial House of Assembly. She explained the immense scope of her responsibilities and we felt quite impressed that we in NL are fortunate enough to be the only province in Canada with a Seniors’ Advocate.

On October 2, 2018, I was advised that Churence Rogers, MP for Bonavista-Burin-Trinity, my home riding, had been elected by his colleagues to serve as the 2018-2019 Seniors Caucus Co-Chair alongside MP Jean Yip (Scarborough-Agincourt). Seniors Caucus is comprised of Members of Parliament from across the country that advocates on behalf of the senior population. In the past, they have advocated on a number of issues including a National Seniors Strategy and a Federal Minister of Seniors, which was achieved in July 2018 with the appointment of the Honourable Filomena Tassi. This appointment has afforded RTANL and me a fairly direct link with the office of our Minister of Seniors through the office of MP Churence Rogers.

On October 4, 2018, I was elected President of the RTANL and along with our new Vice President, and ACER-CART Observer, Sharon Penney, and another 7 members our new Provincial Executive was proclaimed for 2018–2020. The pledge from our new executive was to improve and expand our association and make membership in RTANL more relevant and meaningful for all members through improved communication and increased social interaction.

Shortly after our BGM Vice President, Sharon Penney and I attended the ECRTO conference hosted by the PEIRTA and it was at this conference that we were able to focus on many of the issues that are so much a part of our region of Canada that sets us apart from the provinces of central and western Canada. Thanks to Cynthia MacDonald and her executive for hosting the conference and Marg Urquhart who arranged the Round Table discussions that helped us identify the issues that make our respective provinces unique, by illustrating the positive aspects of our Associations and at the same time identifying things of a negative nature and looking at ways to address them. The presentations at the conference were very enlightening and informative and as delegates we took a lot more away from the conference than we had anticipated.

Over the past 2 years, a newly minted RTANL Boundaries Committee set out with a mandate to address the lack of involvement by members in certain divisions who feel isolated from their main division. Retired teachers within a designated area were urged to make contact with their members, and in some cases non-members, and determine if there was enough interest to assemble a group to organize social activities for their particular region. The direct result of this was that, in the space of approximately six months, a total of over 130 retired teachers had become identified, and mobilized to the extent that they formed an executive, obtained the required number of supporters, and applied to their division for permission to form a regional group. Shortly after that, permission was sought (and just recently granted) for the regional to become RTANL’s newest Tri-Bay Division. This raises the number of divisions in RTANL from 7 to 8 and the enthusiasm shown by the members in this new division is an inspiration to all RTANL members. Further outreach is being explored in one or two other areas of the province, with one member of our provincial executive, who chaired the former 3-member committee, will now act alone as chief Liaison person for any future requests to organize our members. We are optimistic that this initiative to activate and reactivate our members will help make our Association more relevant and encourage our members to become better informed and more interactive within their association through our enhanced communication network.

Our Executive has held two meetings since our October BGM. Our first meeting was held in Gander in Central Division and as a means of providing outreach to our members, time was set aside to attend the division general meeting and take part in their silent auction. Also our Provincial Executive was very proud to take part in a 100th birthday celebration for a retired teacher, Rosalie Spurrell, of Gander. These opportunities to share in the activities of our local members afforded us the opportunities to meet a large number of our members whom we would not normally meet on any other occasion. Also it gave the division members the opportunity to meet their executive members as well. In light of the events at Gander our executive decided that for future meetings we would attempt to go to other, somewhat remote, regions of our province, and as a part of our meeting process, we would arrange a luncheon and invite the members of the host division to a meet-and-greet session to help establish better lines of communication with the members we would not ordinarily see. As a result we held our May 2019 meeting in the town of Milltown-Head of Bay d’Espoir and we shared a luncheon with an amicable group of retired teachers and executive members from the Division known as Coast-of-Bays which is RTANL’s smallest division.

On March 27, I attended (by invitation) a Round Table Discussion in Clarenville, NL hosted by MP Churence Rogers and Honourable Bernadette Jordan, Minister of Rural Economic Development. According to Minister Jordan, the Round Table was held to discuss ways to focus on helping Seniors in Rural Communities *There were 15 people in attendance, most of them represented various seniors’ groups and Fifty-Plus groups from across the Mr. Rogers’ Riding which was predominantly rural.* Each invited guest was given the opportunity to present their views on issues relating to seniors. In my oral presentation, I explained that I was representing the RTANL on a provincial level and as an ACER-CART Director, on a national level and informed of our advocacy role in opposing Bill C-27 and that we were promoting universal pharmacare as a national program. I also outlined other issues that we promote through our provincial and national support groups. At the end of the meeting, I presented a written summary to MS. Jordan’s executive assistant outlining the concerns that applied to all of the seniors that I represent.

On April 15, 2019, I received a telephone call from Minister of Seniors, Hon. Filomena Tassi. She called to thank me for the great work I am doing advocating on behalf of seniors and pensioners here in our area and throughout the province. She said she was in conversation with Churence Rogers and that he mentioned to her the representation I was making on behalf of seniors in our province especially in rural areas. I thanked her for the call and expressed my hope that I would get to meet her in person when I attend the ACER-CART AGM.

On April 24 and 25, 2019, I had the pleasure to accept an invitation from the Newfoundland Teachers’ Association to attend their BGM at St. John’s. I attended a reception and President’s Banquet on the evening of April 24 and I was asked to address the executive and delegates on April 25. This has been an ongoing tradition with the NLTA and it is always a great honour for our president to be so highly regarded by the active teachers’ association. The NLTA gives RTANL an immense level of support and cooperation in all aspects of our operation. We are truly blessed to share the partnership they provide.

**In summary, these are the highlights of my past year with RTANL and ACER-CART:**

1. The dedication and commitment of our current Provincial RTANL Executive
2. The relationships we share with ACER-CART and ECRTO
3. The advances we are making in advocating for our members on issues that affect us at the federal and provincial level, which further indicate that our efforts are showing positive results.
4. Being recognized for our advocacy work on behalf of our members by our elected representatives and being invited to contribute our input on policy development.
5. Having the opportunity to work for a supportive membership and represent them and their interests on the provincial, regional and national level.
6. Sharing the President’s Banquet and the Biennial General Meeting activities with the NLTA

**Albert Legge**

**President RTANL**