

**Association canadienne des enseignantes et des enseignants retraités**

**Canadian Association of Retired Teachers**

**Report on CTF AGM - July 2018**

**Gordon Cumming–Representing ACER–CART**

A new experience for me, I was pleased to represent the Association as Guest to the meetings held in Edmonton July 11–13. I was not in attendance at the “Canadian Forum on Public Education- Safe and Caring Schools,” which preceded the AGM on July 9 and 10th, however the impact of the discussions and content of that event overlapped into the Annual Meeting.

Initial impressions were most favourable, with organization and resources, which anticipated every eventuality. Information packages were not only available in French and English, but participants could indicate in advance a preference for print, e-mailed or memory stick versions.

The various agendas flowed smoothly, thanks to every meeting aspect being anticipated and well scripted. New for me was the meetings not being run by Executive Officers, but rather two independent speakers one being our own Roger Régimbal. He was masterful in steering the proceedings through all the nuances of the Agenda, and his knowledge of Roberts’ Rules was up to the challenge of a generation of “parliamentarians” spread through the various delegations.

An event of interest was the return of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers’ Federation to membership after a twenty year absence.

Reports: Presenters highlighted the various aspects of the organization’s work. I will highlight some dimensions.

1. President H. Mark Ramsankar focussed on relations with governments, and his representation throughout the member organizations, and to Federal Senators and MPs. Of particular concern are anticipated changes to Section 43 of the Criminal Code, and the Copyright Act. He spoke of the universal need to challenge global governments through international partnerships, as well as being vigilant at home. Particularly he spoke of the “increasing tension between government and the profession as to who should be the drivers on policy, curricula and other educational initiatives.” With current and impending changes in provincial governments, there are challenges ahead for member groups.
2. Secretary General Cassandra Hallet spoke of communication, advocacy priorities, and engagement with the government. She highlighted events sponsored by the organization. She also commented on work and networks with partners and other organizations within and beyond Canada’s borders. (I will come back to this at the end of this epistle.) The leadership and support for international initiatives was also impressive, as well as CTF’s Research and Position Papers which have been generated in alignment with every aspect of the organization’s mandate.
3. Budget deliberations went smoothly. One couldn’t help but notice that ACER-CART’s membership fees trail CTF per member assessment of $29.30 by approximately $29.00. When we compare, we need to celebrate what we have been able accomplish on our nickel plus a quarter Budget.

Advocacy Priority Discussion Groups were held on the second morning, as delegates broke into their areas of interest. Not being a delegate, this was the one session where I could actively participate and share my “wisdom”. Topic Choices were:

* Adequate Resourcing of Schools, particularly to support effective inclusion.
* Violence in the Workplace
* Indigenous Education
* Mental Health
* Labour Rights and Unionization
* In addition to these discussion group priorities, the organization also included Gender Equity, Poverty, Privatization, Environment and Climate Change, Rights and Freedom from Discrimination, and Section 43 of the Criminal Code (Protection of our Members) as top-most advocacy priorities for 2018-19.

I selected the session on Labour rights, which highlighted differences in working conditions, negotiations, and job security across the country. I drew on Gerry Tiede’s wisdom of pensions being “deferred salary”. and tried to engage the group on the potential impact of Bill 27. I also emphasized the need for active teachers to understand they would on average spend more years in retirement than in “active duty”. I hope my input was appreciated.

Motions: Proposed Resolutions very much reflected the priorities, and a majority were aligned with the angst of so many other organizations wrestling with issues of Voice and Narrative. As well as advocating for students and community, motions were directed at the structure of the organization, and how it would model for the wider community.

There were motions of support for the #MeToo movement, and encouragement for all members to speak out against misogyny, sexual harassment and abuse of power against women. This was followed by the expectation for CTF and member organizations to support the expectation that all meetings and activities be free inappropriate and unwanted comments, gestures and physical contact.

Organizationally, there were a number of motions looking to establish structural changes of the Executtive that would ensure designated leadership positions and voice for women, and self-identified LBGTQ, indigenous, and equity candidates. This set of motions were referred for study and report next year. How intent gets translated into structure will be a most interesting challenge.

There was also strong support for encouraging member organizations to lobby governments for commitment to ensure professional supports and adequate resources for inclusive education of students with special needs. This represented the sentiments of the Forum on Safe and Caring Schools.

In Summary, it was a great experience and learning opportunity for me as I represented ACER-CART. I felt most welcome and had the opportunity to meet committed colleagues from across the country.

My one disappointment, which I shared in my evaluation was the fact that aside from my introduction, there were no other mentions of ACER- CART to my knowledge. I could not find us noted in the extensive list of Partnerships and Collaborations. I think this is unfortunate, and mirrors experience some of us have had with our own “active” teacher groups. While appreciated for our past contribution, we are too often viewed as being on the wrong side of the hill to deal with the realities of the day. Effective partnership might realize that our experience and knowledge could be an asset in planning for a better tomorrow.

I would suggest a priority for ACER-CART would be to inventory what we can potentially contribute to CTF, and then initiate a discussion as to how they might capitalize on our presence and involvement. I look forward to that dialogue.

 Gordon Cumming