I did send out a request for update prior to the holiday season, but the quantity of turkey and mince pie must have brought on a seasonal hibernation. Perhaps before our meeting I will hear from the other directors, but at this point I can share the wisdom of Dale Lauber of BCRTA (who sent in a Report prior to my request – should get an A+), and my own musings on behalf of ARTA.

I did seek information on:

1. Organizational Highlights
2. Election Initiatives contemplated for the Federal Campaign
3. Thoughts on the three areas of Vibrant Voices:
	* Development of a Seniors Strategy
	* Pharmacare – what does it mean to your org.
	* Income Security in Retirement
4. Considerations for Discussions with the Seniors Minister

As what happens so often, Dale’s answers were better than my questions. An opportunity to compare structure and organization strategies might make a good

AGM agenda item. Certainly BCRTA’s energies have been focused on that direction this year.

Gordon Cumming

**Western Directors:**

* **BCRTA. –** Dale Lauber sent in an extensive report which highlighted:
	+ The Organization and Structuring of **Committees which meet immediately prior to, and report to their monthly Board Meetings. Chairs are appointed by the President, and the Board selects committee members** from members who apply. **Committees** are Advocacy, Communications, Excellence in Public Education, Finance, Heritage, Membership, Pensions and Benefits, Personnel, and Well-being. Each committee established goals with the view to contributing to the organization’s goals.
	+ 2017 the policy to provide all retirees with one **free year of membership** was implemented. The Board will continue with that initiative. It was clarified that the one free year included one free year in a Branch membership.
	+ The forty-nine **Branches are divided into zones**. Two Directors are assigned to be the contact between the Board and the Branches in a zone. A report to each zone is expected after each meeting.
	+ BCRTA provided **advocacy grants** to Branches to be used for all candidates’ meetings in the School Board elections.
	+ At the September 2018 Annual General Meeting a motion was put forward from a Branch **requesting the Pensions and Benefits Committee review the use of the Canadian CPI for indexing TPP pensions**. The **Committee** recommended and the Board approved a report that **concluded that the Canada CPI represents a sophisticated, objective and rigorous reflection of the Canadian cost of living** and its underlying economy and, therefore, would recommend that there be no changes in its use in the calculation of indexing of benefits within the BC Teachers’ Pension Plan.
	+ Many Branches hold meetings, lunches or host other events in commercial facilities. It is becoming common for facilities to charge insurance fees in addition to rental fees. **A Commercial General Liability Insurance policy now covers BCRTA rentals and that is extended to all Branch rentals as well**.
	+ The BCRTA clarified with ICBC, the provincial car insurance provider, that the **senior pleasure designation for insurance is appropriate for members who are volunteering for BCRTA or the Branch even if the members are paid expenses for travel.**
	+ Teachers’ Pension Plan Valuation Results: The valuation as of December 31, 2017 has been completed and published. The good news is that there is a surplus. Some of the surplus will be used for benefit improvements. After all the benefit improvements a $644 million surplus remains and that will be place in a notional Rate Stabilization Account (RSA). The RSA then can only be used to defray potential contribution increases in the future.
	+ Bill C-27 petition campaign conducted by the BCRTA is well underway. Almost all Branches have compiled written petitions calling for the withdrawal of Bill C-27. To date 8 petitions have been read in the House of Commons. BCRTA members are watching Hansard to see if the MP has read their petition.
	+ November 28th the BCRTA Board approved working with ACER-CART on an E-Petition regarding pension security through opposition to the ‘surrendering’ concerns in Bill C-27 and protection for pension plans affected by bankruptcy.
	+ The Heritage Committee is planning the BCRTA’s 75th anniversary celebration in 2020.
	+ Late breaking news – the TPP has announced that the indexing for January 1, 2019 will be the full CPI increase of September 2017 over September 2018 and that is 2.2%!
* **ARTA -** responded to ‘Pension Security' as an organization, and then forwarded the link to all of the members.  Our belief is that a good number of members capitalized on that opportunity.

Advocacy is taking a higher profile in ARTA, with a Provincial Election in the Spring, as well as the Federal Election in the fall.  In past we would go to each of the parties with questions on key issues, and circulate the responses to all of our members.  However, during the last Federal Election we were really pleased with the ACER-CART statements of beliefs, as generated by BCRTA.

Wellness is a major Committee in ARTA, and they just completed a Diabetes Book, which they circulated to all members.  Response has been good, with the exception of a few curmudgeons who complained about costs.  None the less our belief is that the positive proactive sharing of resources will be more than paid for by the potential savings in the Benefits Plan from a more health  conscious population.

By the time we get to the next letter, I anticipate another name as ARTA’s Rep., with an election taking place at their Feb. Board Meeting.  This will allow me to focus solely on the role of Western Rep.

GC