

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

**Canadian Association of Retired Teachers**

**Report Vibrant Voices**

Our two days of advocacy were a great success, not just for the journey and the meeting with politicians, but more so for the strong alliance and “common” priority of the nine seniors organizations who participated. Three strong themes were enunciated and will go forward to:

 - define our commonly held priorities

 - guide discussions with politicians

 - empower our individual organizations and their members

Those three themes were: Pensions and Security, Pharmacare, and a National Seniors Strategy. Equally important was the process that we can capitalize on in facilitating Branches and Members in venturing into the arena on their own.

My highest compliments to Gerry and Roger for the knowledge and background they bring and the credibility they gave ACER-CART as a partner in the event. Also, kudos to RTO-ERO for their leadership and investment in ensuring the success of the days. Staff they brought from Toronto were great supports, and the leadership of Jim, Martha and Rich in articulating their commitment were important in setting the tone. Finally, and maybe most impress was the leadership of Sayward Montague of NAFR (National Association of Federal Retirees) and her cohorts. They are well versed in the ways and means of the National Capital, and were amazing in setting up our navigation and supports in an environment of changing availability of MPs. (The schedule was bouncing because of the SNC Lavalin affair, surrounding politics and the arrival of the big rigs from Red Deer and the West.)

Minister Tassi spoke at the final event, and although it was a litany of Liberal accomplishments, her presentation indicated an awareness of issues and a desire to make a difference. I believe she is confirmed as the speaker at our AGM Dinner and I’m looking forward to see if she is more in election drive at that time.

As said above, the most important part will be the journey going forward. Gerry and I are looking at formatting the common materials in a style conducive to the needs of our membership. We will be approaching some of you for background data to support our declarations, and I will look to ARTA for wisdom on formats that would work best on our various communication platforms.

Thanks for the opportunity to represent the group.

Again it was an extremely worthwhile trip in terms of knowledge, process, contacts and insight into what needs to be done over the next few months.

Gordon Cumming,