

**RETIRED TEACHERS ORGANIZATION**

**of the Nova Scotia Teachers Union**

**MEMBER REPORT**

**2019**

**Major concerns of your association**

1. **Federal**
2. **Engagement in the National Pharmacare Program** – Our president, Bill Berryman participated in the round table with Dr. Eric Hoskins’ Advisory Council on the Implementation of Pharmacare and I participated in the public information session conducted by the committee prior to the submission of the report. The round table discussion was attended by a range of special interest groups, and these consultations discussed specific options whereas the public meeting was an open discussion and revealed that there was a majority support for a program which provides universal coverage for all using a system which is uncomplicated and user-friendly.

We are eagerly awaiting the release of the report and will continue to monitor the issue on behalf of our members and community.

1. **National Seniors Strategy -** The government continues to talk about services to seniors however, we are not seeing those words translate to action. Services for home care and support continue to be less than adequate and particularly in our province where we have a large number of seniors, the situation is very challenging. Community-based services to our seniors is essential to allow “aging in place” to be successful. Dementia continues to be a major concern and until we have a fully implemented Dementia Strategy this will continue to be a strain on the supports and services.
2. **Pension Security –** We have been actively engaged in the on-going discussions regarding the enhancement of retirement security. This information has been widely shared with our members. In December many of our members participated in the Consultation on Enhancing Retirement Security on-line survey and our president sent a letter on behalf of the RTO. We were particularly pleased by the number Nova Scotians who responded to the petition for Pension Security e-2039 and believe it reflects the widespread concern for the future of these earned benefits.
3. **MP Darrell Samson** - Our president, Bill Berryman has met with Liberal MP Darrell Samson and has developed a relationship with him for information sharing.
4. **Provincial**
5. **Relationship with the Nova Scotia Teachers Union (NSTU)**– In the summer of 2018 the leadership of the NSTU changed and since that time we have established a positive rapport which potentially offers mutual benefits. We have had productive discussions through our Liaison Committee, meeting with their Provincial Executive and we have received more support from the staff of NSTU. With negotiations upcoming, we will be working under their direction to support our active colleagues in their efforts.
6. **Pension –**The Teachers Pension Plan continues to be underfunded and this shortfall has been noted not only by both retired and active teachers, but has been repeatedly identified by the Auditor General of Nova Scotia. While the investment funds achieved a positive return in investments in 2017 (8.57%), the plan is still funded well below the 90% which is required to grant the cost-of- living increase to retirees who retired after 2006. Currently the number of retired teachers in Nova Scotia exceeds the number of active teachers.

The NSTU President, Paul Wozney, took the pro-active step of appearing before the Nova Scotia Legislature Public Accounts Committee to reinforce the Auditor General’s report and remind the Government that pension changes, by law (2005 Pension Agreement) cannot be made at the negotiations table, all changes must be addressed by the Teachers’ Pension Board. This Board has representation by both government and teachers.

1. **Shortage of Doctors and Healthcare Services** – Nova Scotia continues to struggle with a shortage of doctors; approximately 50,000 residents are currently without a doctor. All areas of health care are affected by this shortage and wait lists are backed up for months. It has been noted that many serious illnesses are diagnosed in the ER department and on many occasions, the ER department cannot manage the number of in-coming patients and paramedics are left waiting for hours when bringing in patients. Hospitals are developing measures to prioritize and, in some cases, deny care for non-urgent situations.
2. **Seniors’ Advisory Council -** The RTO continues to be represented on the Seniors’ Advisory Council which is composed of nine senior group and represents 120,000 seniors across the province. The organization is chaired by Bill Berryman and serves as an advisory Board to the Department of Seniors to support and inform government related policies, programs and services. The priorities of the Council for the 2018-2019 are:

* Patient Centered Health Care
* Support the continuing Implementation of ***SHIFT: Nova Scotia’s Action Plan for an Aging Population***
* Financial and Pension Security in Retirement
* Facilitate the Participation of Seniors in Nova Scotia’s Economic Recovery
* Support for Caregivers

**Main Activities**

1. **Strategic Planning –** In August 2018 the RTO Executive met for their annual Strategic Planning Session. This session allows us to address policies/practices and identify objectives for the coming year which will enhance and promote our work. In addition to updating committee mandates and general procedures for Branch President’s meetings, we looked into re-setting the relationship with the NSTU, engaging retired teachers who are not members of the organization and increasing the participation of our current members.
2. **Programming –**This area has been a major focus for us during the past few years. In September we appointed a Programs Committee to support our Branches in planning activities and events to promote active healthy living and provide information to support aging in place so that members can remain in their own communities. Our Branch Initiative / Program Grants ($1000.00 is available to each Branch to assist them to cover financial expenses for specific wellness activities) have been accessed by more than two thirds of our Branches over the past year. The proposals demonstrate the diversity of programs that the initiatives are undertaking (theater trips, maple sugar farms, wine tours, Seaside Crafts, guided walks, speakers etc.) and the opportunities they are providing to our members for learning and socializing.

In October 2019, we will be conducting our second Wellness Symposium which will introduce our delegates to the ***Fountain of Health*** initiative for ***Optimal Aging: A unique Canadian Strategy to Promote Resilience***. This program is a national seniors mental health promotion project led by Dr. Keri Leigh Cassidy who is an Associate Professor at Dalhousie University and Director of Dalhousie’s Geriatric Psychiatry/ Seniors Mental Health Program of the Nova Scotia Health Authority.Three times during the year, we have gathered our Branch Presidents in Halifax to support their efforts at the Branch level. These sessions include round table discussion, speakers, committee reports, financial updates and some social time as well. Presidents have expressed their appreciation for this opportunity to come together to build the organization throughout the province.

1. **Changes to Substitution Regulations for Retired Teachers-** During our meeting with NSTU in the fall, we raised concerns regarding the 69.5 day limit on substitution by retired teachers per school year. Since schools were hampered by the extreme shortage of substitutes and causing them to deny leaves, including conferences and professional development opportunities, we suggested that the number be increased as many of our members had indicated they want to support their colleagues and local schools.

On April 1st, amendments to the regulations of the Teachers’ Pension Plan were approved for the remainder of the 2019 and 2019-2020 school years to allow retired teachers to work up to 99.5 days in one school year. We believe this is a welcome change for both our retired members and their active colleagues in the schools.

1. **Tournaments –** Once again our members participated in active province-wide events. On September 11th, the 20th Annual Golf Tournament was hosted by Colchester-East Hants Branch at the Mountain Golf Course in Bible Hill. Queens Branch hosted the Annual Curling Bonspiel on November 30th and December 1st at the Liverpool Curling Club. The Bowling Tournament which is co-sponsored with the NSTU was held in Dartmouth, on April 27th and 28th. Many members look forward to these events and plans are already underway for next year.
2. **Advance Care Planning –** We are continuing to work with the Nova Scotia Hospice Palliative Care Association to deliver workshops on Advance Care Planning. Recently the Canadian Hospice Palliative Care Association was awarded funding to create an Advisory Committee to deliver a nation-wide program to increase Canadians’ engagement in Advance Care Planning. The project entitled, ***Preparing Canadians for their Future Health and Personal Care: A Capacity Building Project***  will be carried out over the next three years, The RTO was invited to be part of the committee and share our work from Nova Scotia.
3. **Legacy Foundation –** The Legacy Foundation was established in 1994 to honor the life and work of former teachers in Nova Scotia. The annual disbursements are made to organizations and institutes that benefit persons under 21 for an educational, medical, social or similar purpose. Donations and interest on these investments for the 2018-2019 year was $4,300.00 and applications were received from seven (7) groups.

**Pertinent Issues**

1. **NSTU Negotiations -** We are prepared to support our active colleagues as they enter negotiations with the provincial government. Relations between the Nova Scotia Government and NSTU have been very difficult since the last contract was legislated in 2017 and the Education Reform Act was introduced and passed in 2018. This act made significant changes to school governance (removed school administrators from the Union, and abolished the 7 English Boards across the province).

The provincial government has indicated that pensions will be discussed as part of the negotiations despite the fact that pensions are not part of the bargaining process. The Teachers’ Pension Board and the NSTU are joint sponsors of the plan and changes can only be negotiated by these two groups.

1. **Loss of the Nova Scotia Community College -** In June 2018, the staff of the Nova Scotia Community College voted to leave the NSTU resulting in the loss of approximately 1000 NSTU members. This will have a significant impact on the NSTU. We are currently looking for ways to communicate with this group regarding the RTO since as recipients of a Nova Scotia pension they are eligible to join our organization.
2. **Public School Administrators Association of Nova Scotia (PSAANS)** In February of this year, the school administrators voted to remain affiliated with the NSTU, 93.2 percent were in favor of maintaining the affiliation. It appears that members focused on rights and entitlements which they enjoyed in the past such as accrued seniority, options to return to the classroom and being able to access professional development funds from the NSTU contract. The RTO will endeavor to communicate with this group to insure they are aware of our organization,

**AGM Motions from RTO for ACER-CART AGM -none**

**Alyson Hillier**

**Director**