**ACER-CART – West**

Report for Executive Meeting

September 30, 2021

Responses from ACER-CART West in the week prior to the September 30th meeting:

**BCRTA – British Columbia Retired Teachers’ Association**

* + Submitted by Steve Bailey, BC ACER-CART Representative

The BCRTA continues to maintain strong communication links with its members - particularly through *PostScript* and *BCRTA Connections*. Participant organizations in our *Members’ Advantage Programme* continue direct mail and email connections with members with current offerings and deals for BCRTA members.

Membership growth has steadily continued during COVID with a continuation of our “free one year membership”. Branches are continuing to offer on-line activities in the midst of the “Delta Variant” situation. Larger branches with resources to offer workshops to members are inviting members of smaller branches to join them. The Communications Committee has also developed a support mechanism for smaller branches that wish to have a branch newsletter for their members.

The **BCRTA Annual Conference** and **AGM** will take place via zoom on the mornings of September 30, and October 1 and 2. AGM materials have been mailed to all branch delegates along with mementos celebrating our 75th anniversary as an organization along with other ‘party favours’ supplied by our Members’ Advantage partners. Thanks to our office staff - Laurie, Kristi and Tim, Second Vice-President Caroline Malm and members of the 75th Anniversary Committee for planning an informative and celebratory event. We have assembled historical material that will be displayed during conference breaks, and a video which includes spirited greetings from our BCRTA branches around the province, government officials, and ACER-CART members. Thanks to the ACER-CART provincial representatives who recorded and forwarded greetings to us on this occasion.

The BCRTA has released the findings of its extensive Extended Health Coverage survey. Members of Johnson Insurance plans expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the service provided and would recommend Johnson over Green Shield and other plans.

On the technology front, our office staff has now completed transition to direct deposit of membership dues and personal expenses provided branches and members have submitted the required information. Direct deposit ensures efficient, confidential and cost effective transmittal of funds.

In her Annual Report to the AGM, BCRTA President Grace Wilson, pointed out that the BCRTA has adopted the **same priorities as ACER-CART** and is grateful for the National Seniors’ Strategy webinars featuring Dr. Steve Morgan and Dr. Samir Sinha. We will continue to join the voices of seniors’ advocacy organizations across the country in support of a National Seniors’ Strategy and a National Pharmacare Strategy. The ACER-CART ‘election toolkit’ publication was utilized by some BCRTA branches - shared with other community organizations for purposes such as All Candidate meetings. Branches were offered an ‘advocacy grant’ to support pre-election public events in their communities.

In terms of recent organizational development, I quote from the Annual Report of Executive Director, Tim Anderson:

“A long-standing project of BCRTA has been to build a reliable Extended Health Coverage Plan for our members, and we work with Johnson Insurance to offer Prestige EHC and Travel Insurance. The great success of this insurance package is a credit to those leaders at the BCRTA who have spent countless hours refining the plan and publicizing it. Our friends at Johnson deserve credit, too, for their relentless pursuit of a positive experience for our members.”

Tim concludes his annual report by stating that “this year we dealt with some heavy stuff and had to lift much more than we ever expected. No office? No Paper? No meetings? No can opener? No problem! BCRTA has shown a can-do attitude that takes on challenges as they come, and the past year has only made us stronger, more energized, and more engaged. What a team! I am proud and grateful to be part of it.” (And we’re grateful you are, Tim!)

One more positive note in the context of the current pandemic situation is that participation in our pre-retirement workshops has increased significantly. With the development of a solid on-line presentation presenters were able to reach nearly 2000 teachers in 18 workshops. Ten of these sessions were province-wide and 8 were specific to local and regional teacher professional days. Attenders included teachers from 52 for the province’s 60 school districts. Participants had the opportunity to use an email-based question and answer service that allowed them to receive well-researched confidential answers to their questions.

**STS – Superannuated Teachers of Saskatchewan**

* + Submitted by Murray Wall, STS Executive Secretary

**Organizational Update:**

* Membership continues to grow, currently at 11,945 members.
* Membership in the Extended Health Plan also grows and is currently at 8,583
* Advocacy work to focus this year on policy development regarding Ageism
* We’re working with Saskatchewan Seniors Mechanism (SSM) to provide funding for the development of a provincial seniors’ strategy
* Working with SSM to assist with material distribution for the International Day of Older Persons (October 1)
* A significant number of resolutions were dealt with at our May AGM (which actually covered 2 years) and are being responded to through organizational processes
* A multi-year Governance Review process is currently examining our organizational Bylaws, Policies and Guidelines

**Implications of COVID:**

* Provincial Executive meetings are continuing via Zoom for the time being
* Recreational events have been cancelled at least until the end of 2021
* Chapter Presidents meeting typically held in October has been postponed until March 2022
* Planning for our Annual General Meeting is proceeding on a dual track, in-person and virtual, so as to be able to respond the situation we find ourselves in come spring
* Both the STS Operating Fund and the Extended Health Fund ended the fiscal year in a surplus financial position, largely due to impacts of COVID-19

**Implications of the Election:**

* The ACER-CART election materials were distributed and utilized by members
* Not much change in Saskatchewan representation to Parliament although the provincial government relationship with the federal government appears more strained

**Advocacy Ideas:**

* Our Advocacy Committee is currently very busy with some of the initiatives mentioned above in the Organizational Update section.

**RTAM - Retired Teachers’ Association of Manitoba**

– submitted by JoAnne Hoyak, RTAM Vice President and ACER-CART Director

1. **Anything new**—Well, our office is in the process of **relocating** to new premises, so you can imagine the upheaval this is creating!!

We had the pleasure of receiving greetings from ACER-CART Vice President Martin Higgs at our last virtual Board meeting.

We continue to liaison with our partner stakeholders, particularly The Manitoba Teachers Society. President Cann and I met with the MTS President, James Bedford this past Thursday to discuss shared issues of concern which included a Bill 64 update, inclusion in retirement seminars, benefits sharing, MTS staff communications support, 2021/2022 school year, COVID, RTAM status re official recognition as the legislated voice of retired teachers, inclusion of an RTAM Director to attend MTS pension sustainability and PR Training seminars and MORE!

TRAF representatives – Jeff and Brad will be updating the Board in terms of our pension situation and any political repercussions that may affect it at an upcoming Board meeting.

We are in the process of using “TRIP MERCHANT” to organize an RTAM excursion to Haida Gwaii next year. The preliminaries have been presented and look super!

Various virtual seminars and workshops continue to be provided by the Wellness Advocacy committee including photography etc. The next webinar is “Successful Aging/Fall Prevention” on October 1. All virtual, of course.

Our KIT magazine is now assembled under a new structure and continues to do us proud as an important link to our membership.

1. **Implications of COVID** — Nothing has changed regarding the ongoing business of RTAM. All Board and Committee meetings are presently virtual, although Bill and I met with James Bedford in person. With the looming spectre of the 4th wave, we think the status quo will likely prevail.

We have had discussions on a kind of hybrid system going forward if and when that may be possible.

1. **Implications of the Federal election**—Well, here in Manitoba the situation is exactly the same as far as the MP’s who were elected goes. The support from ACER CART, the brochure distribution and the letter writing capability were INVALUABLE!!! NEW Mode was shared with the Manitoba Seniors Coalition to facilitate their letter writing campaign. The Chapter Presidents ably distributed the brochure to our membership. KIT and the website also had it available, and it was very well received.
2. **Advocacy ideas**—RTAM’s Political Advocacy committee is currently developing a document outlining RTAM priorities and the candidate’s reactions for presentation to the Provincial Conservative Party leadership candidates—the winner being our provincial Premier for the next couple of years. Copies will also be presented to all the provincial parties. The PA committee meets next week to finalize the piece and its distribution.

**ARTA** – **ALBERTA RETIRED TEACHERS’ ASSOCIATION**

* + Submitted by Lawrence Hrycan, ARTA ACER-CART Director

**Anything New**

Membership continues to grow, and ARTA has over 26,000 members.

Earlier this year, the ARTA office took over a larger building as space was needed for additional staff members. ARTA recently moved to self-administration for our extended health plan. Additional staff were hired.

As of November 1, 2021, premiums are being reduced for both the educational and public sectors of the plan. At the same time, services provided are being increased.

Starting January 1, 2022, ARTA RX will provide pharmaceutical services in Edmonton for maintenance drugs. The pharmacy is in the same building as the ARTA office. Depending on how this rolls out, services may expand in the future to other areas of the province.

**Implications of COVID**

The September 7-8, 2021 Board of Directors meeting and the AGM to be held on October 5-6 were supposed to be in-person meetings. However, because of large numbers of new Covid cases and the new restrictions in Alberta, every meeting is being held by Zoom for the foreseeable future.

The staff members at the ARTA office are once again working from home.

Some branches were able to hold branch meetings before the latest set of restrictions came down. All meetings at the present time are being held by Zoom.

We have places in rural Alberta where the vaccination rate is only 45%.

Alberta hospitals and doctors are prepared for triage protocols. There are also medical professionals who are calling on the provincial government to ask for help from the military.

Younger people whom I speak to are upset with the fact that they are the ones who are taking the abuse from people who do not want to wear masks or do not want to show a Covid passport. There are several places that could be open for dining indoors, but because of the abuse by customers, have chosen to do take out only.

**Implications of Election**

The UCP government of Alberta seems to have been given credit for at least part of the reason why the Federal Conservatives did not do as well in the election.

Although the Conservatives once again dominated the polls in Alberta, there are indications that the strength of support has weakened. Instead of winning ridings by 80% plus of the vote, some of the ridings this time won by as little as 55% of the vote. The NDP and Liberals made up some ground. However, the PPC also made gains. This party took over 800,000 votes across the country.

Just as a point of interest, I worked both the Advanced Polls and Election Day. The PPC party had the most scrutineers of any of the parties.

There were no political forums either in-person or virtual in Central Alberta where I live. One forum was attempted to be held in Innisfail but had to be shut down because people refused to wear masks.

Provincially, the Minister of Health and the Minister of Labour traded places. At the insistence of the provincial caucus, the UCP is having a leadership review in the spring. At the present time, there seems to be unrest in the provincial government.

**Advocacy Ideas**

ARTA held a virtual retreat on May 27, 2021. Guest speakers included Todd Hirsch (Economist from ATB) regarding “Economic Outlook” and Gregor Jeffrey (Communication Thought Leader) entitled “The Key to Connection”.

Some Branches are holding their own virtual lunches and coffee times. Some have virtual presentations with guest speakers. Covid has once again made it unlikely anyone will be meeting in-person for some time.

Branches did participate in the Wellness Challenge. People recorded how much time that they did some physical activity over their best 30 days from April to the end of June. Activities could include walking, swimming, gardening, and almost anything that required some movement.

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It’s always interesting to see the similarities and challenges facing our Members. Once more, I am very appreciative of the input from the Western Directors/Executive Directors. I will again be forwarding this same report to them.

Respectfully submitted,

Marilyn Bossert

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ACER-CART West Representative