



RETIRED TEACHERS ORGANIZATION OF THE NOVA SCOTIA TEACHERS UNION

MEMBER REPORT 2022

Major concerns of our association

Federal Concerns

It would seem that the past year has been somewhat disappointing in terms of progress on national issues related to senior needs. There was some discussion during the election in the fall as we shared information with our members to question candidates on *National Pharmacare Program, a National Seniors' Strategy, Long Term Care* and Guaranteed and Sufficient income to Age with Dignity. As well, our members were also asked to participate in the letter writing campaign to demand a National Seniors Strategy.

There is a strong need for the federal government to recognize that their actions, or lack thereof, have a tremendous impact on the quality of life for seniors.

Provincial Level

Nova Scotia held an election in August 2021 and as a result, a new Progressive Conservative government took office. This transition has created challenges for seniors' groups in the province. As well, the new Minister of Seniors and Long-Term Care has been tasked with an incredible undertaking in realigning the new department amid the challenges of the past two years.

The N.S. Seniors Advisory Council continues to meet monthly and has established working subcommittees to formalize our concerns to present to the government regarding these issues.

Relationship with the Nova Scotia Teachers Union (NSTU)

The NSTU-RTO Liaison Committee has met three times and has continued to identify and discuss issues of mutual concern, the current pension review being the one of most concern.

The Expert Review Panel of the Teachers' Pension Plan began its work in the fall and met with all five stake holders including the RTO to learn first hand the various perspectives and history of the plan as it relates to our specific group. In April, the panel held virtual consultations and invited all stakeholders to join and share their thoughts, concerns, fears and suggestions. The final report with non-binding recommendations will be presented by July 31, 2022, and these recommendations will be presented to the Sponsors Board. Decisions will

need to be made by the NSTU and the provincial government on implementation of the recommendations.

The RTO also meets with representatives of the Group Insurance Trustees (three members of the RTO Executive and three from the Insurance Trustees) to discuss issues of concern to our members. During the past year, we have focused on two issues: (1) a number of resolutions passed by the 2021 AGM related to insurance benefits and (2) the promotion of the CAREpath program to increase awareness to all RTO members.

Main Activities

Strategic Planning

In August 2021, the RTO Executive met for their annual Strategic Planning Session. The agenda focused on a variety of topics including accommodation allowance for RTO meetings, administration tasks of the organization and succession planning. These discussions have led to two specific undertakings for the 2021-2022 year.

First, at the AGM in September we passed a resolution to create an ad hoc committee to consider the possibility of having a paid part time staff person to support the Treasurer in the many and varied tasks associated with our organization at this time. The Ad hoc Committee reported back to the Executive in March 2022 and presented four (4) resolutions to be presented to the membership at the AGM 2022. These resolutions recommend the hiring, via a service contract, of a part time administrative assistant to support the Treasurer and the organization.

Secondly, we focused on succession planning at the Branch level. Many Branch Presidents have raised concerns about recruiting members within their own Branch to serve on their Branch Executive. As a result, we established a program whereby Table Officers visit the seven (7) regions of the province and present an overview of the organization, the benefits of membership and other topics which were identified by the Branch Presidents of that region. By conducting these sessions regionally, we are able to include more Branch members in the program and enable the Branches to work together regionally to plan and promote their activities and issues. Funding for these events has come from surplus funds which were made available when meetings and events were cancelled during the pandemic.

Recruiting continues to be a major focus for us. We made RTO presentations at the NSTU's virtual pre-retirement sessions across the province. In addition, we were invited to provide this presentation to the Public Schools Administrators Association of Nova Scotia (PSAANS) at their pre-retirement seminars since their members are eligible to join RTO as recipients of a Nova Scotia Teachers Pension. Annually, we deliver information packages to retiring teachers at their home school and in the fall, a RTO poster is delivered to each school for display in their staff room with a general overview of who we are. This year, we were invited to have a display table at the NSTU Annual Council to increase our RTO visibility among active teachers.

Our Executive and Committees continued to meet both in-person and via Zoom allowing us to maintain our connections and provide our members with regular updates and support.

Our newsletter, *The Retired Teacher* has been produced three times this year and in this way, we were able to share the various events which were carried out across the province. The creativity of our members is to be applauded as they offered such variety—from takeout dinners to on-line yoga and Zumba; from outdoor pickle ball and nature walks to learning about local history. Many were even able to hold Christmas gatherings while following provincial restrictions.

Our Annual General Meeting 2021 was postponed from May to September and, in order to meet provincial restrictions at that time, only Branch Presidents (or their alternate) could attend. The meetings entertained twelve resolutions which focused on issues of health insurance, pension, distribution of funds and organizational changes to current practices.

Early in the pandemic, each Branch received a special Covid 19 grant of \$1000.00 and most Branches did use the money for such options as to defray the cost of special events, purchase a Zoom licence, make donations to local agencies and purchase equipment for outdoor activities during the summer months.

The Annual Golf Tournament was held in September and had a full compliment of avid golfers for what turned out to be a day of great camaraderie in beautiful weather. Unfortunately, plans for the Curling Bonspiel in March were cancelled due to rising Omicron concerns.

At our Legacy Foundation AGM on April 25th, we reviewed ten grant applications. In total, \$6800.00 was distributed for programs and services which support children and youth up to the age of 21 across the province.

Our provincial Programs Committee organized a very successful Wellness Symposium on April 27th for two delegates from each Branch. With a theme of “From Isolation to Connectivity”, it offered excellent presentations and opportunities for connecting with representatives of a variety of supports and services for seniors.

We have planned our 2022 Annual General Meeting for May 19th and are pleased to welcome all interested members of the organization to attend. In addition to the regular AGM business, nine resolutions will be presented with the opportunity for members to ask questions and debate the issues.

Other area of interest for our RTO this year include:

- Reviewing and increasing both meal allowances and meterage for RTO expense claims in light of rising costs
- Continued increase in the number of applications for Branch Initiative Program grants. These grants support Branch activities which engage members in programs and events which encourage active, healthy lifestyles.
- Preparing a two-page document on the RTO for inclusion in the annual insurance mail out to all those who receive a teacher’s pension. This enabled us to capture the attention of retired members who are not currently members of the RTO.
- A donation of \$5000. to the Red Cross Ukrainian Relief Fund.

- Finding ways, as an organization, to reduce our carbon footprint (reducing hard copy materials; hosting meetings by Zoom, etc.)
- Promoting the CAREpath program which provides supplemental support to our members and is free to all members of our health plan. The plan is currently under utilized and could be discontinued if there is not more uptake.
- Raising awareness regarding fraudulent use of email addresses of our members and other scams which target seniors.

We are grateful to ACER-CART and our various colleagues across the country for the on-going support and leadership as we endeavor to “advance, promote, and protect the welfare of our members.”

Respectfully submitted,

Alyson Hillier

May 2022.

Resolutions from the RTO for ACER-CART AGM 2022

BE IT RESOLVED that beginning at the Annual General Meeting of ACER-CART in June 2023, the election of members to the Executive be for a 2-year term. At the end of that term, they may re-offer for a second term in the same position. No member can serve more than two (2) consecutive terms in the same position.

Brief

Continuity is important to provide strong and well-informed leadership for our organization. Two-year terms would allow executive members to become more familiar with their role and responsibilities and to build a better understanding of how their position relates to the overall success of the organization. As well, two year term enables those in executive positions to build contacts and connections with member organizations and with government bodies that allow for a stronger communication toward end goals.