



PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2021-22

I want to express my appreciation for the expertise and efforts of our Executive and Directors during this past year. It is an honour and a pleasure to work with gifted people towards our common goal of improving the life experiences of our members.

Our Executive Director, Roger Régimbal, deserves special recognition and thanks for his work, much of it in the background, in completing the day-to-day office work, sharing his knowledge of our history and our routines, and respectfully advising the Executive.

In the past year there has been no shortage of compelling issues affecting retired teachers and other seniors:

National Seniors Strategy

More than 1 in 6 Canadians are over 65 but Canada's policy response to this growing demographic group is still lacking in substance. Social, financial and health care concerns must be addressed in an integrated way between all levels of government to remain sustainable and meet the needs of all. The bilateral health-funding agreements now in place suggest that the federal government has little prospect or intention of implementing a National Seniors' Strategy because provinces prefer to remain firmly in control of any health care initiatives - but are willing to make individual deals to access federal dollars.

National Universal Pharmacare

Encouraging words are coming out of Ottawa with the Supply and Confidence agreement between the Liberal and New Democratic parties. However, per capita Pharmaceutical spending in Canada is around \$1,100—the third highest amount for high-income, developed countries. The Hoskin's Report, commissioned by the federal government concluded that a national pharmacare program, once implemented, would save \$5 billion dollars per year in addition to the huge benefits of improved individual health outcomes achieved through greater compliance of prescription use. The interests of the pharmaceutical and insurance companies, plus the challenge of getting provincial and federal government agreement on any health care initiatives are roadblocks to a meaningful national pharmacare plan.

Aging at Home

Surveys show that between 87 and 97% of seniors wish to remain in their own homes as they age. This is no surprise. The benefits of aging in one's own home and community include

better physical, mental and social health. And we are all aware of the unacceptable conditions in some long term care homes publicized during the COVID crisis.

Compared to other countries in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation, Canada spends 1/3 less than the average, as a percentage of GDP, on home, community and long-term institutional care for their senior populations. And the majority of our money goes toward long term care facilities in Canada, with little left over to support home and community support.

Support for Defined Benefit Pension Plans

While pension issues have not dominated the federal political landscape this past year, defined benefit (DB) pension plans need to be supported in some provinces. DB plans provide the most efficient retirement income due to their low management fees. Their large capital sizes support significant investments in local Canadian projects.

According to The Canadian Centre for Economic Analysis In 2019, Canada's public sector pension plans paid \$49 billion in retirement income to 1.85 million retired members. Interestingly, 64% of those members are female. The impact of these pensions is multiplied: for every \$10 of pensions paid, \$16.72 of economic activity is generated. This supports 877,100 jobs and \$33 billion in wages for Canadians and provides \$21 billion in federal and provincial tax revenue.

Despite the overwhelming benefit of defined benefit pension plans to society, plan sponsors, including governments, short-sightedly look for opportunities to reduce their costs and liabilities by attacking DB plans in favor of less-efficient target benefit plans, defined contribution plans or no plans at all.

Conclusions

These complex and long-standing challenges will continue to impact our membership. It is imperative that we continue to work together to advocate on behalf of our 165,000 members. The challenge we face is how we can do that more effectively. Meeting together once per year is not likely to produce significant momentum or results. Is it time to consider more frequent ACER-CART Directors' meetings using Zoom-like technology?

Respectfully submitted,



Gerry Tiede
President