



# **BRITISH COLUMBIA RETIRED TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION MEMBER REPORT 2023**

## **1a. Major concerns – Federal level**

- i. Development and implementation of a comprehensive National Seniors Strategy
- ii. A comprehensive plan that prioritizes seniors' care in their own homes as long as possible
- iii. Regulations governing Retirement and Long-Term Care Homes with an emphasis on improving patient respect, staff working conditions and training, and employee wages and a value on Canadian ownership of such facilities
- iv. Extension of the proposed government dental care program to include Canadians in need of such an option
- v. Continuing monitoring of bilateral health care funding with the province and territories
- vi. Implementation of a national Pharmacare program and comprehensive drug formulary
- vii. Protection of Canadian Defined Benefit Pension programs

## **1b. Major Concerns – Provincial level**

- i. Coverage of vaccines for B.C. seniors – including high dose flu vaccine (Fluzone), Shingrix, and all measures related to COVID-19 treatment
- ii. The welfare of active teachers and the education community who are working in challenging conditions that include a province-wide shortage of teachers
- iii. Liaison with the B.C. Teachers' Pension Board and the B.C. Investment Corporation
- iv. Adequate provincial funding for the public education system of British Columbia to enable a full range of programmes and services from pre-school to graduation

## **2. On-going Influences of the COVID Era on the BCRTA.**

- i. Email and zoom have become the technology vehicles for the BCRTA and its branches
- ii. In-person pension workshops successfully went on-line and there continues to be an increase in participation.
- iii. Staff are working on a 'hybrid' model – at home and in the office.
- iv. All committee and Board meetings are alternating between zoom and in-person formats. Our Fall AGM and Delegates' Day will have an on-line participation option
- v. Moving to virtual meetings introduced the opportunity to offer webinars and 'special events' which allow more members to access our information and offerings
- vi. Branch and zone meetings are returning to a predominance of in-person gatherings.

## **3. Priorities for 2023-2024**

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- i. *to monitor and defend our defined benefit plan and explore control of our insurance plans.*
- ii. *to increase and maintain membership through online workshops, presentations and meetings.*
- iii. *To continue a consultation and implementation process that will result in a major upgrade to office procedure and communications systems*

BCRTA formally adopted the 2021-2023 ACER-CART advocacy priority, Aging in Place. We look forward to supporting the ACER-CART priorities for the 2023-2024 year.

#### **4. Main Activities This Year**

1. The BCRTA is making major upgrades to our IT systems.
2. The BCRTA has held 'Super-Zone' meetings which draw together Branch leaders from around the province for important issues facing the Association and for sharing ideas among our Branch Zones.
3. BCRTA works with Trip Merchant, one of its Members' Advantage Partners, to offer trips hosted by BCRTA members. These travel events are very popular with our members.
4. The BCRTA continues to review its bylaws and procedures and policies. An emphasis on policy statement updating and development will help ensure our positions on educational and social issues are relevant and up to date.
5. On March 20, 2023 the Board of Directors held a Strategic Planning session and training on the content and format of zone meetings. The emphasis remains on membership growth, website development, the growth and purpose of our publications and social media presence and our EHC program offering. As an organization, we are at a place of needing to engage additional staff and are currently using outside expertise to develop our internal capacity. We have hired an associate editor for PostScript, and an Office Receptionist.
6. The Well-Being Committee continues to monitor key health care issues in the province and finds that a survey of in-home care reveals very limited amounts of support to enable more "ageing in place". The Committee is producing a series of "Health Facts" to be published in upcoming issues of PostScript.
7. The Excellence in Public Committee awarded Golden Star awards to recognize the excellent intergenerational programs in B.C. schools. A Golden Star/Royal Canadian Legion Award went to Tatla Lake Elementary/Jr. Secondary School and a BCRTA Golden Star Award went to Ray Shepherd Elementary School in Surrey, BC. In addition, we are offering book prizes to regional winners of the B.C. Heritage Fairs. Some of our members volunteer in the B.C. Heritage Fairs programme. For the first time, the Committee is preparing a submission that the BCRTA will make to the B.C. standing Committee on Finance that will include specific areas where educational funding needs to be allocated or increased. Another issue is potential lobbying to have funding for teacher sick leave costs be out of a Provincial education funding line-item instead of having school boards pay these costs out of operating funds.

8. The BCRTA Membership Committee is placing an emphasis on informing new retirees of our BCRTA Membership Advantage Programme affiliates and improving member ease of access to these advantage partners. They are also completing arrangements for Bell Media to become a BCRTA Advantage Partner. The recruitment of Associate Memberships in the BCRTA is receiving more publicity as are efforts to create better access to inform Teacher Pension Plan new retirees of BCRTA membership benefits.
9. The BCRTA Heritage Committee continues to award grants to BCRTA locals who undertake local history projects and is exploring ways to digitize historical material for easy access. Their annual field trip this year was to Nanaimo to visit the BCRTA Heritage Collection there. Cataloguing of archival material continues.
10. Advocacy letters have been sent out under the signature of BCRTA President Arnie Lambert to promote the work of the B.C. Seniors' Advocate regarding surveys of residents in Residential Care, obtaining a National Pharmacare Program for all Canadians and legislating the first payout from bankruptcy of companies to pension holders. We have also communicated to government our policy position on the adequate funding of public schools in British Columbia – using as an example, the recent fiasco involving the Westside private school in Vancouver that involved the Ministry of Education 'bailing out' a private school suffering from fiscal mismanagement to the tune of hundreds of thousands of dollars. The school has since closed.
11. The BCRTA continues its affiliation with and support of the RR Smith Memorial Foundation. This year the RR Smith Foundation Board awarded a total of \$40,800 to 27 organizations and continues to support bursary funds at BC public universities who have Faculties of Education.
12. The Finance Committee is responding to inflation issues by laddering our investments and with greater diversification. We are anticipating a fee increase commencing in September 2023 and a review of committee requests for funding.
13. The Health Benefits Committee is working to improve and add to existing EHC plans with Johnson Inc – perhaps in effect by September, 2023; ie. such things as Shiatsu therapy, dual coverage and cataract surgery. The committee is also investigating the current pharmacare formulary and the lessening of prescription cost for members.
14. Pension and Benefits Chair, Linda Watson, points out that “ the 6.9% increase in B.C. teachers' pension benefits that took effect in January 2023, is largely due to the diligent work of the BCRTA and the BCTF activists over many years”. In 2000 the BCTF pension negotiating committee, including representation from the BCRTA and the BC Retired Principals' and Vice Principals' Association, bargained with the provincial government to create the Joint Trust and to have Employer and Employee contribute 1% more to the Inflation Adjustment Account in the pension plan. We continue to enjoy the gains that continue to result from the legacy of dedicated pension activists.
15. A significant breakthrough this year is that the BCRTA has reached an agreement with the Pension Corporation that will open the way for us to take part in mail-outs from the Pension Corporation to retirees, giving information about BCRTA services, benefits, insurance plans and Members' Advantage Programme. This comes on the heels of a new level of

communication and cooperation amongst the four public sector retiree groups in British Columbia.

16. With upgrading of our communications systems, BCRTA committees are moving into greater use of Microsoft Teams to carry out their work
17. The Communications Committee is working on enhancement, diversification and broadening the scope of the contents of PostScript magazine and the “Connections” newsletter. We’re encouraging our members to ‘tell their stories’.
18. Our Pharmacare advocacy campaign using the ACER-CART New Mode software resulted in 3300 emails to decision makers on this important issue.

NOTE: (*motions below were submitted to the last ACER-CART AGM). We can reinforce or submit new motions*)\_.

## **5. Motions from the BCRTA to the ACER-CART 2023 Annual General Meeting**

1. That ACER-CART priorities for 2023-2024 continue to include the following:
  - a. A continuation of the goal of establishing support mechanisms for seniors to ‘age in place’ for as long as possible
  - b. Advocacy for public control of and the establishment of national standards for care homes
  - c. A Universal Pharmacare Plan
2. That ACER-CART continue to support the territorial integrity of its Members through membership recruitment directed solely to their immediate constituency and the maintenance of Member branches in other provincial / territorial constituencies where there is a need
3. That ACER-CART monitor any attempts to increase the eligibility age for pension programmes such as OAP and CCP that might impact our members and Canadian seniors in general and advocate as necessary

### **Rationale:**

These issues continue to be front and centre for our members and were brought forward at the April meeting of the BCRTA Board of Directors.

## **6. Other Pertinent Information**

The BCRTA extends its thanks to the ACER-CART executive, committee members, Western Region Chair Marilyn Bossert, and Executive Director Roger Regimbal for their continuing leadership.