



# ALBERTA RETIRED TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

## Member Report 2023

### Major Concerns of Association at the Provincial Level

#### Health Care

Health care continues to be a major concern in Alberta. The present government continues its goal of privatization of health care and is moving towards privatization of labs, EMS, blood plasma, and multiple other health care services. Pay for Plasma Clinics have opened in Alberta. It is concerning that the bulk of money coming from the federal government to the provinces for health care is being provided without any strings attached. Wait times for surgeries are extensive, and the solution being put forth by the provincial government is for more privatization.

Hospitals in Edmonton and Calgary are being inundated with patients from outside of their areas because of the lack of medical staff elsewhere, particularly in Central Alberta. There are over 100 beds daily being taken up by patients from the Red Deer area in Edmonton and Calgary, because the Red Deer Hospital does not have the space or medical personnel. This causes stress on the medical facilities and staff in these larger centers. Wait times to see your family doctor (if you can get one) is often 2 months in rural Alberta.

#### CPP vs APP

The provincial government has put forth the idea that Albertans transition from the Canada Pension Plan (CPP) to an Alberta Pension Plan (APP). This has been the cause of much discussion within the population of Alberta!

#### Provincial Police Force

The province is exploring the idea of replacing the RCMP throughout the province with a Provincial Police Force. This has caused upsets in some communities.

#### Additional Information

##### Public Interest Alberta – Seniors' Task Force

ARTA has representation on the Seniors' Task Force which represents 17 organizations in Alberta – most of them retired groups. This task force meets every month.

Many of the priorities of the Seniors' Task Force are in line with the priorities of ARTA. Here are some of what this organization is advocating.

- Independent Office of a Seniors Advocate for the province of Alberta
- Improve Quality of Care in Seniors Congregate Care Facilities
- Expand the funding, scope and accessibility of services that will permit seniors to continue to reside in their own homes or communities and experience optimal health at all stages of aging.
- Strengthen Pharmaceutical/Dental/Hearing and Vision Coverage

## Alberta Provincial Election in May 2023

A questionnaire containing 12 areas was sent to each of the political parties in the province to see how they would answer questions pertaining to health, senior care, pensions, and the position of an Independent Office of a Seniors Advocate. The completed questionnaire was placed on the ARTA website for people to read.

### Federal Concerns

Inflation is a major concern. With inflation comes the increased costs of living without the benefits of a corresponding increase in income. This is of concern not only to seniors, but the general population as a whole.

National Pharmacare continues to be of interest. Will the federal government ever implement the recommendations of the Hoskins Report (2018) that was commissioned by the government?

Long-term care is also a concern at the federal level since it is clear that the provincial and federal governments would need to work together in order to make the system better.

### Priorities for ARTA in 2023

The priorities in Alberta are – a National Seniors strategy, long-term care, aging in place, and universal pharmacare. ARTA is currently in the process of researching and writing a series of Position Papers on Seniors' Matters. The first paper being worked on is: ARTA White Paper: Aging in Place.

### Main Activities since our last AGM

ARTA's mission is to support, *“an engaged lifestyle after retirement through member-center services, advocacy, communication, wellness, and leadership.”*

**Teacher Conventions** - ARTA staff and volunteers manned booths and ran 1-hour sessions (including a PowerPoint) at all 9 Teacher Conventions in the province. There was a very positive response to these. Many active teachers are hearing what ARTA can do for them and plan on using the ARTA plan upon retirement. ARTA 101 is a free membership for active teachers and offers benefits in the way of scholarships, ARTA Discount Program, and numerous other offerings. These venues help ARTA continue to increase numbers.

**Communication** – All branches are eligible for funding to cover the costs of the annual zoom license, thus fostering branch communication.

**Wellness** - The Wellness Committee's initiatives include the Wellness Planner and a nutrition resource. The Wellness Planner has been very well received by our membership and so continues. The nutrition resource will be focused on ARTA's demographic such as, cooking for one, two, or a family, and portion sizes. The activity challenge that the Wellness Committee promotes is currently underway with branches reporting how many of their members are involved and with what activities.

**Pension Webinars** - The Pension and Financial Wellness Committee of ARTA held 3 excellent webinars via Zoom. The first session entitled “Enhancing Retirement Sources: RRIFs and Annuities” was sponsored by Capital Estate Planning. It was held on November 29, 2022. Discussion centered on the pros and cons of Annuities and how to invest in your RRIFs.

The second webinar had guests from the Alberta Teachers' Retirement Fund (ATRF) and discussed the Alberta Teachers Pension and how it works. This was held on January 11, 2023. ATRF assured everyone who attended that our pensions are alive and doing well. One of the interesting points that came from this seminar is the fact that there are 51 individuals receiving the pension who are centenarians. As well, over 90 million dollars is paid out in pensions each month.

The third webinar held on April 5 was on life insurance and critical illness insurance and was offered by Capital Estates Planning.

Between 150 and 200 individuals attended each of the webinars.

**ARTARx Pharmacy** - The ARTARx pharmacy is in full swing for Edmonton and the surrounding communities. Numbers continue to climb as both retired teachers and other retirees, such as provincial and federal government workers, choose ARTA as their primary private plan health provider.

**Membership** – Membership continues to grow, and as of April 2023, ARTA has 29,480 members, with 27,723 members participating in the ARTA Benefit Plans, covering over 43,121 lives. This is a year-to-year benefit plan participation growth of 6.6%

Each Branch is currently participating in our annual "Wellness Challenge" which involves members keeping track of their physical activity for a period of time and submitting the information.

**Annual Retreat** - ARTA held a retreat on May 23-25, 2023, at the Fairmont Jasper Park Lodge in Jasper, Alberta. The theme of the retreat was "Celebrating Milestones" to recognize ARTA's sixtieth birthday! Guest speakers included the following: Phil Callaway, who entertained the delegates on the benefits of bringing laughter to life; Dr. William Gibson, who spoke on how seniors can reach various life milestones and the challenges they may face; Liz Pearson, who explained how to optimize mental health, and how to significantly reduce the risk of depression and anxiety with food; and Theresa Westhaver, who spoke about the value of seniors and Elders as knowledge holders, language keepers, and mentors to young people in the community. This retreat in the mountains was enjoyed by all!

**Alberta Retired Teachers Charitable Foundation (ARTCF)** – Our Foundation continues its journey to become a charity of choice. Each year, ARTA has groups that we partner with. This year ARTA, through its Charitable Foundation, has donated funds to the following charities:

Parkinson Association of Alberta - \$25,000

Alzheimer Society of Alberta - \$20,000

Bethany Care Foundation - \$20,000

Operation Friendship Society - \$5,000

**Casino** - ARTCF applied for a casino several years ago and we have received word that this is our year. ARTCF is hosting on August 19-20, 2023, at the Casino Yellowhead in Edmonton, Alberta. It is expected that the casino will raise between \$65,000 to \$80,000. ARTA is helping to supply volunteers for General Manager, Alternate General Manager, Banker, Count Room Supervisor and Cashier. We are looking forward to a fun time!

Lawrence Hrycan – ACER-CART Director (Lorna McIlroy 2023 Representative)

Deb Gerow – ARTA President

Marilyn Bossert – ACER-CART Regional Representative West

Daniel Mulloy – ARTA CEO & Executive Director