



## **Retired Teachers Association of Manitoba (RTAM) report for ACER/CART 2023**

**Mission Statement (2014)** The mission of the Retired Teachers' Association of Manitoba (RTAM) is to serve and advocate for all retired teachers.

**Vision Statement (2019)** The vision of The Retired Teachers' Association of Manitoba (RTAM) is the well-being of retired teachers through appropriate member services and strong partner relationships.

**Values and Principles (2014)** The Retired Teachers' Association of Manitoba (RTAM) values belief in mutual respect, diversity of opinion, tolerance of different viewpoints, integrity and transparency while working collaboratively towards a common goal.

### **General Update**

The previous report to ACER CART was created almost 2 years ago by Joanne Hoyak on behalf of the RTAM board of directors.

We have currently come out of an Annual General Meeting earlier this month (May 3<sup>rd</sup>). A year ago, we saw a large contingent of long serving board and committee members, move away from volunteering. RTAM created a bylaw, which limited board service to 5 years, which was done to help promote new blood, energy and ideas to the organization.

Last year, Linda Blair took over for President from Bill Cann. Linda inherited a board of 14 people made up of a small group of returning board members and a large group of new board members and committee chairs. By the end of the year, the Board of Directors was operating with 11 members having lost 4 over the course of the year for assorted reasons.

Linda is returning as President for 2023-2024 and has indicated that this will be the last year of what she intended to be a two-year service and term. Joining Linda at this year's ACER-CART AGM is Gabe Mercier, who returns to the Board of Directors, having served in a Director capacity last year. Gabe will be acting as RTAM Vice President, ACER-CART Liaison, and Wellness Committee Chair for this year and may take over as President for Linda next year.

## **Political Advocacy**

The past year saw some major advances politically for RTAM in Manitoba. Most notably is the passing of Bill 208, which did two powerful things for RTAM and retired teachers in our province:

**First** – It allows RTAM to now have a seat on our provincial pension board. The Teachers Retirement Allowance Fund (TRAF) is the group that invests the money which comes back to retired teachers in their pension. With the passing of Bill 208, RTAM will now be guaranteed one seat on the board that manages TRAF and oversees the pension fund. This is a major step forward and win for our community, in that having the people who will receive the pension be able to comment and help direct it.

**Second** – The passing of Bill 208 acknowledges RTAM as the official voice of retired teachers in Manitoba. This empowers us and gives us credibility when advocating for important issues and working with our political partners.

We continue to advocate for our community as we head into the 2023 provincial fall elections in Manitoba. While the NDP was heavily favored to win a year ago, the polls show a very close and tightening race between them and the PC party.

This could be important on the political landscape as the province has made several commitments to older adults and growing infrastructure and support resources over the next few years. To read and learn more about the **Manitoba Senior Strategy** released this February by the Provincial Government, please click here:

[https://gov.mb.ca/seniors/docs/seniors\\_strategy\\_2023.pdf](https://gov.mb.ca/seniors/docs/seniors_strategy_2023.pdf)

La version française est disponible ici :

[https://www.gov.mb.ca/seniors/docs/seniors\\_strategy\\_2023.fr.pdf](https://www.gov.mb.ca/seniors/docs/seniors_strategy_2023.fr.pdf)

Moving into the new year, we are looking to create “**New Requests for Action**” to continue our growth and representation for our members. These are:

- RTAM requests a seat on the Pension Review Task Force when it convenes. This group has the power to impact all of those already retired and those currently contributing to TRAF. RTAM needs to have a seat at the table and a voice in those deliberations.
- Advocate that the province brings TRAF Account B to fully funded status and increase funding available to the Pension Adjustment Account (PAA) to help fund a Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA). The issues are complex, and the solutions could require significant investment by the government, but the longer it takes to address the concerns related to Accounts B and the PAA account, the more expensive it becomes to both the government and Manitoba taxpayers, and the more inflation erodes pensions and quality of life.
- Continue to advocate for an improved COLA and other inflation-fighting strategies to enhance pensioners financial health. These improvements should be for all members, but a special focus needs to be on individuals receiving a

pension amount below the “poverty line” for the province of Manitoba.

- RTAM needs to press for adequate funding and programming from government for:
  - a. Hospitals (Includes but not limited to ER rooms, admissions, nurses and other staffing)
  - b. Home Care supports (improved staffing) which will help seniors remain in their own homes for longer periods of time.
  - c. Long term care facilities which require proper staffing, government supervision and reporting to the public on a regular basis.
- Establish a seat for RTAM on the Ministers Council of Education Stakeholders.

## **Communication**

This past year we stopped printing our quarterly magazine for 10,500 members and partners. The reduction in printing results in an annual savings of \$75,000 each year moving forward. We continue to print the magazine for those who asked to stay on our mail list (we now print for less than 800 members per season), and new members and digital readers are directed to the online platform and magazine.

- We see about 3,000 digital readers to the 800 print readers.
- We can have unlimited content within a digital issue, whereas we have been limited to 32 pages in print.
- Currently we have seen teacher groups in the USA, Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines, the Dominican Republic, CUBA, Mexico, the Netherlands, and many other countries access digital copies for free through ISSUU our online platform.

## **Member Services**

Current Numbers - We continue to see slow growth with RTAM and its members. We were helped by the Winnipeg Teachers Association closing their teacher insurance plan this year. Many of the retired teachers in Winnipeg were given the choice to join the Manitoba Public Service Employees Benefits Plan through The Manitoba Teachers' Society (MTS) plan or the RTAM plan moving forward, which will help us further increase our membership into 2023. We currently sit between 10,400 and 10,500 members.

Due to our investment with the Winnipeg Foundation, we can use the interest to provide four \$1000 awards to Grade 12 students sponsored by an RTAM relative. Additionally, we have used funds from our budget to award bursaries to the University College of the North (UCN). This year three \$1000 bursaries were awarded with a fourth one to be awarded later.

Trip Merchant has provided us with options as to a future RTAM group trip. We are working on the details of such a future trip.

Increasing our Footprint and Communications - RTAM has applied for just over \$150,000 in grants (provincial and federal pathways) to help us create a new multi-

linguistic website. Our aim is to be more inclusive of not only languages, but how all our members interact online and their personal needs from technology and information sharing.

As we continue to add new partnerships as well, we have come to understand we will need a membership card and program to make it easier for our members to access incentives, deals and discounts. Some interesting discussions have come up around digital cards vs physical cards and the needs of our youngest members 55-60 and oldest members 95-107.

## **Wellness**

Please visit our website to see a list of upcoming RTAM programs, events and seminars for the next six months (July to December). Our Wellness Committee, Board of Directors and Office Team have worked to listen to the members and create opportunities for them to engage online and in person at a variety of price points moving forward.

Some highlights:

- We are offering a free online workshop or seminar the first week of every month.
- We are offering an in-person and online cooking class, focused on matters and topics that are important to our members. These take place the second week of every month.
- Lastly, we are planning competitive, sport and in-person events the last two weeks of each month. These sessions start with an introduction to disc golf in July, bi-monthly paint workshops (where members take home their canvas when done), terrarium building, pickleball and more.
- We are hosting the inaugural RTAM Golf Tournament sponsored by Johnson Insurance this year, which we hope will bring out our members but also act as a fundraiser for several key projects we are looking to undertake.

Respectfully Submitted,

Linda Blair  
RTAM President