



ALBERTA RETIRED TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

Member Report 2024

Major Concerns of Association at the Provincial Level

Health Care

The present Alberta government continues its goal of privatization of health care. The provincial government has restructured the health care system. Alberta Health Services will no longer oversee the 26 billion dollars going into health care in the province. Questions were raised and not answered as to how this money, going into the private domain of long-term care homes and the private surgical sector, is going to be held accountable. In long-term care discussion, there is no mention of minimum care hours or staffing ratio of health care workers to patients – just platitudes of “patients will be monitored so they will be well taken care of.” The government has stated over and over that they have consulted with the appropriate people in setting up this new restructuring but, do not tell us who they consulted with.

Many communities outside of the major centers have a shortage of doctors which means that many residents in Alberta are not able to get a family doctor. And, even if they do have a family doctor, they are forced to use walk-in clinics since the waiting period to see their family doctor is often 2 to 3 months.

As of February 2024, the provincial government has given Nurse Practitioners the authorization to prescribe drugs on the Prescription Drug List. This has not set well with the Alberta Medical Association.

Home Care

In January of 2024, the last remaining 130 Home Care workers under AHS were placed into the hands of private companies. These individuals are concerned for their jobs. There is already a shortage of Home Care workers. This will only stress out the existing workers, which may lead to more of them leaving.

Provincial Legislation

The provincial government is continually submitting bills to be passed. The following are a few of them that have raised some eyebrows.

Bill 2, The Alberta Pension Protection Act, was assented to in 2023. This legislation enables the Alberta government to conduct a **referendum** regarding the establishment and operation of a **provincial pension plan** for Albertans.

Bill 6, The Public Health Amendment Act - (*came into effect December 7, 2023*) This Act clarifies the roles and accountability of cabinet and medical officers of health, including the chief medical officer of health, in any future declared state of public health emergency. **Cabinet** would have discretionary authority to make the final decisions on public health orders respecting all persons or groups of persons, including groups of individuals, businesses and non-profits, and educational settings.

Bill 18, The Provincial Priorities Act - The Alberta government tabled new legislation April 17, 2024. The Provincial Priorities Act would require all of Alberta's public agencies, municipalities, Crown-controlled organizations, post-secondary institutions, school boards, regional health authorities, Covenant Health and its subsidiaries to receive provincial approval from the province before signing a funding agreement with the federal government. Municipalities and educational organizations are expressing their dissatisfaction with this as they feel they are finally getting some help from the federal government and say they do not need another layer of bureaucracy.

Other

In March 2024, it was reported that the Alberta government has not spent the money sent to them by the federal government. Alberta may have to return \$137 million in unspent oilwell cleanup funding.

The province is not making use of the available funding to implement the \$10 per day daycare programming. The province blames the federal government for the timing of the program to explain why the funds are not spent.

The UCP government is not willing to remodel family courts to get federal funding for 17 judges dedicated to hearing family court cases. As a result, the \$10.9 million a year set aside for those judges will be spent in superior court appointments across the country (CBC report April 19, 2024). Family law is a mix of provincial and federal statutes, which means some Canadians must navigate both provincial and superior court when disputes arise. Unified family courts are a one-stop shop for the public and lawyers. Seven provinces use unified courts.

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

- Housing - affordable housing has become a major concern in Alberta.

Federal Concerns

The National Pharmacare Program and the Dental Program laid out by the federal government are being monitored with interest. There is confusion in both programs as to who qualifies and who can benefit. There is a growing number of individuals and families who have low income who could benefit from a program that would be tailored for them.

The whole area of health care for Canadians is also a concern at the federal level since the provincial and federal governments would need to work together in order to do what elected politicians should be doing, and that is taking care of Canadians.

Priorities for ARTA in 2024

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. The target for completion of this initiative is December of 2024 or early in 2025.

Main Activities since our last AGM

Pension Webinars - The Pension and Financial Wellness Committee of ARTA held 3 excellent webinars via Zoom. They are as follows: Financial Wellness Webinar; Pensions (put on by personnel from the Alberta Teachers' Retirement Fund); and Cyber Crimes and Other Insurance Challenges.

These webinars were all well attended with the Financial Wellness Webinar having 375 attendees.

ARTA Office Facilities

April 1, 2024, saw the opening of a second ARTA office, this one in Calgary to serve members who live in the southern part of the province. There are now offices in Edmonton and Calgary. ARTA staff, including the pharmacy, now number 61.

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. ARTA is pleased to have University of Alberta students doing their practicum in the pharmacy.

Membership – Membership continues to grow, and as of April 2024, ARTA has approximately 31,500 members, with 28,300 members participating in the ARTA Benefit Plans, covering over 46,000 lives. This is a year-to-year benefit plan participation growth of 5.3%.

Annual Retreat - ARTA held a retreat on May 27-30, 2024, in Kananaskis, Alberta. The theme of the retreat was "Change". The icebreaker was an Amazing Race style activity around the resort. Keynote and breakout sessions included such topics as: Planning Your Senior Living (Chartwell Homes), Myths and Truths About Preplanning Funerals (Dignity Memorial),

Deprescribing Medications (Dr. Bill Gibson), and guest speakers, Brian Keating, Carl Honore, and Kristine Dernederlanden.

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 Calgary -	\$25,000
Bethany Care Foundation -	\$25,000
Carya Society of Calgary -	\$25,000
Eldercare Edmonton -	\$10,000

Award - We are pleased that ARTA has once again won the Non-Profit Employer Choice Award. The award recognizes Canadian organizations that have committed themselves to a better business management practice. ARTA received a special designation due to winning this award five times.

Lawrence Hrycan – ACER-CART Director
Deb Gerow – ARTA President
Marilyn Bossert – ACER-CART Regional Representative West
Daniel Mulloy – ARTA CEO & Executive Director