**Political Advocacy Committee Minutes**

**Zoom, March 27, 2024, 6 p.m. Ottawa Time**

**In attendance:**

Lawrence Hrycan, Chair, Bill Berryman, Marilyn Bossert, Sharon Penney, Roger Régimbal, Gerry Tiede, Katherine Snow, Grace Wilson

Regrets: Don Gabel, Bob Fitzpatrick

1. **Call to Order and Welcome**

**1.1** Meeting called to order by Lawrence Hrycan at 6 p.m.

**2.0 Approval of Agenda**

**2.1** **Dental Care** discussion added under ‘Other’ on the agenda. The Legislative Committee Report will be covered during the Executive Report.

**MOTION 1: Bill Berryman moved, and Katherine Snow seconded approval of the agenda. CARRIED.**

1. **Approval of Minutes from January 26, 2024.**

**MOTION 2: Bill Berryman moved, and Gerry Tiede seconded approval of minutes. CARRIED**

**4.0 Business Arising**

**4.1 Motion** 4 on page 3 of the minutes. **MOTION: Moved by Don Gabel and seconded by Grace Wilson that the Political Advocacy Committee recommend to the Executive of ACER-CART that they encourage affiliates to consider joining the National Pensioners Federation and CARP. Carried.**

Discussion on this as pertains to CARP will take place in the ‘Other Section’ of the agenda.

1. **Reports**

**5.1 Executive Committee** - Bill Berryman. The Executive Committee met on March 25, 2024. The Executive, in discussing the National Pensioners Federation, wondered whether to focus on the National Chapter, or do we look at the idea of having our Members join Regional Chapters. Grace Wilson, from BCRTA, is the representative in that province at the National level. Four provinces have affiliations with the National Pensioners Federation: B.C., ON, N.S., and SK. Bill Berryman will have further talks with Trish McAuliffe, from the National Pensioners Federation.

Bill also mentioned the Canadian Health Coalition, with whom he has a contact. They have expertise that we may be able to use. The Executive spent time looking at the proposed changes in the by-laws, constitution, and the protocols, and they will bring these to the attention of the Directors at the meeting on April 10. The changes in by-laws and the constitution will need to be passed at the Special AGM Meeting at 1 p.m. on June 6, 2024. There are no changes to the belief statements. The Protocols are the responsibility of the Executive, and the Executive has approved the changes. These Protocols deal with the makeup of the Executive and timing of the AGMs.

* 1. **Communications Committee** – Marilyn Bossert. The Pharmacare campaign that ACER CART has been doing for the past month is on the website on the Homepage. The first Pharmacare letter that our President put on the website was background information regarding pharmacare which was included to clarify for members what was happening. The second letter was the ACER-CART reaction to Bill C-64. Both letters are stored on the website in the Advocacy section under CALLS TO ACTION. The first letter sent through New Mode only had the MPs and MLAs on it. New Mode has been adjusted so that it now also includes the opposition leaders and all the Ministers in the Province. New Mode allows a person to send a letter more than once.

The Advocacy links include a record of what ACER-CART has done over the past years. Highlights from the February 1, 2024, meeting of the ACER-CART Board of Directors is on the website. It was pointed out that these highlights are to keep people informed of what is going on but are not official minutes. There are now 3 banners promoting Pharmacare, found under the Membership Section. Member organizations have different deadlines for publications. To accommodate the flow of information, the thoughts are to send out shorter blurbs, more often, that can be used at the discretion of the organizations.

There are analytics for the ACER-CART website. The month of February showed that the number of hits had increased dramatically because of the National Pharmacare campaign. If people have a reason to come to the website, they will do so. The analytics also indicate which sites are the most visited. In February, it was the Pharmacare Section. In December, January, and February, the Advocacy Section was one of the most visited sites. The section listing the AGMs for Members was not being updated and therefore it has been removed. The place to go for information on a particular Member is to go directly to their website. The two provinces that currently have the most hits on the ACER-CART website are British Columbia and Nova Scotia.

* 1. **Pension and Retirement Income Committee** – Gerry Tiede. The next meeting is on March 28, 2024, and Gerry will be able to update after that meeting. There are three areas that the committee is currently working on. The first is the continuation of cost of living and information gathering and sharing. The second area is Alberta’s threat to leave the CPP. The third deals with high inflation and small pensions. There are several low-income teachers with small pensions and not many things to help them. The question was asked if there are ways to help this situation. Some provinces have had some success lobbying for better pension outcomes. Different provinces have different issues. If we can help each other, we should do so. It was pointed out that some provinces have their teacher pensions clawed back when they start to receive their old age pensions.
  2. **Political Advocacy Committee** - Lawrence Hrycan. We all sit on this committee. At the meeting of Directors on February 1, 2024, Lawrence shared a summary of the previous two meetings. A summary will once again be prepared and presented at the meeting on April 10, 2024.
  3. **Health Services Committee** - Sharon Penney. The committee is pleased that the wording of the National Pharmacare Program does say ‘single payer’. Although we would like to see a larger formulary, it is an important start. Now that New Mode is up and running, the committee has started to work on the next priority which is ‘Ageing in Place.’ The Eastern Canadian Retired Teachers’ Organization (ECRTO) will be meeting on April 9. They are going to look at their own provinces to see if documentation exists that could guide our discussion. The Eastern Canadian Retired Teachers’ Organization want to do one act of Advocacy on behalf of seniors. Examples could be posting the New Mode letter on their website and drawing awareness to it. Another might be to post a letter about seniors’ issues on a particular issue.

Discussion ensued on differences between rural and urban seniors ageing in place. Issues seem to be around transportation and access to resources like doctors and specialist appointments. Grace Wilson said that the B.C. Seniors Advocate had just released a report on seniors and transportation and medical emergencies and family doctors. Grace will send this to committee members. Bill Berryman pointed out that 8 years ago in Nova Scotia he worked with the Deputy Minister of Seniors to establish a network where people could access transportation to get to a doctor’s appointment or a visit to the hospital. It took cooperation on the part of several departments to make this work.

1. **National Pharmacare Follow-up**
   1. Discussion involved a possible third letter sent by the President of ACER-CART to keep the pressure on. Bill indicated that he would like this letter to go out sometime in April. Katherine Snow told the committee that the Quebec government had a Pharmacare Program that was developed with the pharmaceutical companies. In discussion, it was pointed out that both Quebec and Alberta are against the National Pharmacare and Dental Programs. Both provinces would like the money given directly to them. The following motion came out of discussion.

**MOTION 3:** **Moved by Gerry Tiede and seconded by Katherine Snow that the President of ACER-CART, Bill Berryman, write a follow-up letter regarding National Pharmacare.**

Rationale: pressure needs to be placed on governments to promote and further the development of the National Pharmacare Program. This follow-up letter would be written to keep the New Mode momentum moving.

1. **Aging in Place**
   1. **Ageing in Place** covers a huge array of topics, and it was felt that no more than 3-5 areas should be explored. The Health Services Committee will work on ‘Ageing in Place’ and will bring forth what they feel are the top issues to the next Political Advocacy meeting. It was agreed that when letters are sent to the Minister of Health, Minister of Seniors, the Prime Minister, and so on that there should be a letter from the President of ACER-CART on behalf of its members. Individuals would also be encouraged to continue to send their own letters.

**8.0 Directors Meeting**

**8.1** The next meeting of the Directors will be held on April 10. Bill Berryman will send out the agenda. It was agreed that it is important for all members of the Political Advocacy Committee to attend.

**9.0 Other**

**9.1 Discussion on Dental Care.** Gerry Tiede shared that BCRTA have written letters to various government people expressing their concerns. This concern is for low-income people who do not qualify for the Dental Program because they might have a dental program available to them. There is confusion in how the Federal Government has laid out the plan. Katherine Snow shared that in Quebec, even though she has her eligibility card, dentists have been discouraged from taking part at this time. The committee decided that a letter expressing our concerns would be drafted by Gerry Tiede and Grace and then passed on to committee members for comment.

**9.2 CARP** – Regarding Motion 4 on page 3 of the minutes.

**MOTION: Moved by Don Gabel and seconded by Grace Wilson that the Political Advocacy Committee recommend to the Executive of ACER-CART that they encourage affiliates to consider joining the National Pensioners Federation and CARP. Carried.**

Discussion on the above motion. It appears, upon reflection, that the values of CARP are currently not totally in alignment with ACER-CART. ACER-CART will not pursue anything with CARP at this time.

**10.0 Future Meeting Dates**

10.1 Directors Meeting April 10

10.2 Health Services Committee April 22

* 1. **Political Advocacy Committee May 13 @ 11 a.m. Ottawa Time**

10.4 AGM in Ottawa June 6 & 7

**11.0 Adjournment**

11.1 Meeting adjourned at 7:34 p.m.