

## **Political Advocacy Committee Minutes**

### **Zoom, December 13, 2024 11 a.m. Ottawa Time**

#### **In attendance:**

Lawrence Hrycan, Chair, Bill Berryman, Marilyn Bossert, Sharon Penney, Gerry Tiede, Katherine Snow, Grace Wilson, Devona Putland, Helen Sukovieff, Roger Régimbal, Bob Fitzpatrick  
 Regrets: Luc Handfield,

#### **1.0 Call to Order and Welcome**

**1.1** Meeting called to order by Lawrence Hrycan at 11 a.m.

#### **2.0 Approval of Agenda**

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

#### **3.0 Approval of Minutes from October 18, 2024.**

**MOTION 2:** Bob Fitzpatrick moved, and Grace Wilson seconded approval of minutes as modified.  
 CARRIED

#### **4.0 Business Arising – nothing that isn't covered in reports.**

#### **5.0 Reports**

**5.1 Pension and Retirement Income Committee –** Gerry Tiede. The Pension and Retirement Income Committee met on December 12, 2024. The committee reviewed the following: Alberta's tentative plan regarding CPP, the National Dental Plan, tax credit for seniors participating in physical and educational activities, and inconsistency in income tax rules regarding massage therapy. The committee spent some time thinking about their contribution to the election brochure and recommended that we stick with the defense of defined benefit pension plan as we have used in the past. They also spent time talking about tax fairness for single seniors. This was raised at the last Directors meeting and the committee was asked to explore this topic. On the 'tax for singles' website, the committee read through the five points the 'single seniors group' stated. They felt that this was not something they were comfortable with and not appropriate for ACER-CART to back at this point. One example discussed was that they wanted to raise the claw back amount for OAS, which currently sits at \$138,000. There aren't any retired teachers that this would benefit. Another example given dealt with RRSP's after a single person has passed away. They wanted the rules changed here. Gerry mentioned that every couple becomes a single person. A reminder needs to be passed along to our members to do some estate planning to minimize the taxes paid. The committee decided that they would not pursue this topic any further.

**5.2 Executive Committee** - Bill Berryman. The panel of experts for National Pharmacare has been chosen and Dr. Steve Morgan is on the panel. The job of this panel is to oversee the program. Over the next year, the committee of experts will offer advice and guidance on how to operate and finance a National Universal Single Payor Pharmacare Program in Canada. It is expected that the advice will go beyond the current program and be a road map to include a wider list of medicines in the future. Bill reminded us about his letter that he wrote to the membership on October 30, 2024, in which he stated that we are only on the first step and that the next step would be to include other medications to the formulary. The government talked about looking at a national strategy for rare diseases and making the drugs available to combat these diseases. Some of the cancer drugs are not affordable on our current formulary. Some people can access them through their own finances and others cannot. Bill reiterated that we need to push the provincial governments to sign bi-lateral deals in order to implement a full comprehensive single payor national pharmacare program. Bill is hoping that people will put pressure on their provincial governments. New Brunswick, British Columbia, and Manitoba have signed on. He is hoping that other provinces will join. Provinces who sign on will be able to increase the drugs they have in their formulary because some of the other costs will be covered by the federal plan. This is stated in the election brochure and hopefully people will become better informed when they have read it.

Bill referenced the letter he wrote in November to various government officials regarding the Dental Care Program. The letter asks who is going to do the reassessment and when it is going to take place. Bill stated that we need to keep things on the front burner.

Bill received an email from Trish McAuliffe, from the National Pensioners Federation, wondering if he would be interested in participating in a virtual round table session in February 2025. This would be for seniors and put on by the Canadian Radio and Television Commission (CRTC). The purpose of the session would be to better understand the lived experiences of seniors when dealing with their television, internet, mobile and phone services providers, and the challenges they face. As well there would be discussion about possible solutions to address these challenges. The round table will include seniors groups, consumer groups, and telecoms. After the session there will be a report published, and businesses can use this information to improve services for seniors.

Gerry left the meeting at 1:30 p.m.

At the executive meeting in January, the executive will be dealing with a strategy to come up with a document that are 4 pillars – 4 key issues that ACER-CART needs to work on. Example: Manitoba came up with 4 key areas: Information and Communication, Member and Community Advocacy, Organizational Growth and Governance, and Member Services and Partnerships. Bill also has documents from British Columbia and Alberta. Working on the document to come up with 4 pillars will be the start of the ACER-CART Strategic Plan.

Bill was pleased with the Board of Directors meeting which was held on November 5, with 28 participants. Bill feels that this was an excellent meeting and reinforces the fact that we need to continue to keep the Directors informed.

Trish McAuliffe, with the National Pensioners Federation, shared the RTO/ERO letter that Bill wrote with the 4 provinces where they have membership groups, giving them a heads up as to what Ontario is doing. Bill also spoke with the Executive Director of the Seniors Mechanism in Saskatchewan. Bill has spoken to one of the District Presidents in Ontario who contacted him. At the present time, any name change for Ontario Retired Teachers is on the back burner. She indicated to Bill that they do not hear about ACER-CART at their meetings. Bill let her know that Protocol 8 was written by the Executive Director from Ontario.

**5.3 Communications Committee** – Marilyn Bossert. There has not been a Communications meeting since the last one. Marilyn is working on the election brochure. The template is at the ARTA office and Marilyn will be working with Virginia at the ARTA office. There will be voting information like there was the last time. Bill commented that he would like to have the executive approve the brochure at the meeting in January and get it out to our members. Marilyn will see that the content will be done, so if there are some minor changes, they will be easily handled. Bill mentioned that at the Pension and Retirement Income Committee meeting yesterday that it was brought up that the Member Associations included at the bottom of the page is very important.

If there are changes that need to be made to the briefing notes that she places on the ACER-CART website, please let Marilyn know.

**5.4 Political Advocacy Committee** – Lawrence Hrycan. The minutes of October 18 were reviewed and passed at this meeting.

**5.5 Health Services Committee** – Sharon Penney. The Health Services Committee had originally developed 5 questions for their page on the election brochure, but they paired it down to 3 questions. The committee had a list of 5 areas they wanted to see worked on, which has now been expanded to 6. This information has been sent to Marilyn for the election brochure. Sharon does not see anything changing over the next 6 months since nothing was time referenced. The committee is seeking information from the provinces on each topic, one at a time. The first topic they are going to ask about is the one regarding access to health care in the community. Sharon is in the process of developing a chart that committee members will use to ask specific questions or to find specific information. The types of questions that will be asked are: “Is there a formal wait list for people waiting for primary care physicians?” “Is there a formal process for assigning primary care physicians once a need has been identified, or is it up to the person themselves to find a primary care physician?” This information will be brought to the Health Services Committee meeting on February 25.

On December 12, Sharon attended a webinar by the Canadian Health Coalition, entitled “Assisting Strategies for Long-Term Care Labour Force.” The webinar is available on the Canadian Health Coalition website for anyone to view. Presenters were Patricia and Hugh Armstrong, and Marta Szebehely (from Sweden). They are looking at what is needed in the long term to meet the needs of home care. Sharon expressed concern in the direction they are moving, since in the past, Canada has looked at the Scandinavian countries for health care information. Sweden is looking at moving away from home care into institutionalized care. The reason they give for doing this is that there is an unnecessary financial burden on families. Families have to make up the deficit if the person is at home instead of in an institution, or they have to pay for private care, which is a lot more expensive. Sharon says this is not what we are promoting here. The 5 strategies that the Canadian or Armstrong prospective are looking at are: Reduce, Reorganize, Replace, Recruit, and Retain. Sharon did not think that this was a positive thing for an aging in place philosophy.

Bill Berryman – at the last Health Services meeting Bill presented a request from McMaster University asking if ACER-CART would be a partner in a 2-year program where they are seeking funding from the federal government. Bill shared that for many years we have used the McMaster Optimal Aging Portal on the ACER-CART website. Bill says this is an excellent portal, which is kept up to date and written in plain language. Bill has written a letter to Dr. Anthony Levinson, telling him that his request was approved. The work is in the study of dementia. Roger stated that the portal is a good site if you want to know something about health. Marilyn shared that we have a link in our Communications links. Bill will keep the executive up to date on this proposal. He will also share the letter that he sent to Dr. Levinson.

## 6.0 Other

**6.1 Federal Election Preparation** – Bill Berryman– in the past we have done the brochure for our members. At the January Executive meeting, the election format on how to approach and communicate with our members and political parties, including questions for the candidates and the possible use of New Mode will be on the agenda. It was felt that whatever questions were developed should be shared with members so they would have them available to ask at meetings.

**6.2 Friends of Medicare** – Bill Berryman and Lawrence Hrycan are meeting with the Alberta Friends of Medicare in January of 2025. Bill has been working with them and has been sharing information on issues involving seniors, that he has been receiving from the Friends of Medicare, to the Health Services Committee. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss the things that we can work together on. Currently, the main topic is the privatization of health care. Bill expressed the opinion that it is important to see what is happening in Alberta because

if the government changes at the federal level, similar things could be happening across Canada. Bill also has been communicating with the Alberta Working Group for Pharmacare.

**7.0 Future Meeting Dates**

- 7.1 Executive meeting                      January 12, 13 (Toronto)
- 7.2 Executive meeting                      Thursday, March 20, 11 am Ottawa time
- 7.3 Board of Directors                      February 4, and April 15, both at 11 am Ottawa time
- 7.4 **Political Advocacy Committee**      **Friday, March 14, 11 am Ottawa time.** Roger is away so Gerry will handle the Zoom.

**8.0 Adjournment**

- 8.1 The meeting adjourned at 12:12 p.m.