



ALBERTA RETIRED TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

Member Report 2025

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Major Concerns of Association at the Provincial Level

Health Care

The present Alberta government continues its goal of privatization of health care. You can now be paid for giving plasma and blood at certain clinics. I have spoken to several young people who think that this is a great way to make money.

People are flying to Ontario or Quebec for knee and hip surgery, which they have to pay for themselves. One of my neighbours received a letter stating that she is on a waiting list for 36 to 48 months for a consult for her knee surgery. Four individuals I know have bitten the bullet and paid to go to Ontario or Quebec for their surgeries. One of our major hospitals in Edmonton, where a number of these surgeries take place, cannot access funding from the provincial government so surgeries are no longer available through them. Instead, it was announced on April 30 that a private clinic that was given a contract by the Minister of Health, (and this is currently under investigation) has received an extension for six months.

There are concerns that the Minister of Health has been interfering with the Alberta Health Services forcing them to give contracts to private surgical companies. These private companies, for the same services, cost the government two to three times the amount that Alberta Health Services charges. There are protests on a weekly basis in front of her constituency office.

Home Care

In 2024, the last remaining 130 Home Care workers under Alberta Health Services 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 that have raised some eyebrows:

Bill 18, The Provincial Priorities Act - The Alberta government tabled this 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. The municipalities 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.

Bill 20, the Municipal Affairs Statutes Amendment, tabled April 25, 2024. This bill gives the Alberta government more power over municipalities, including granting cabinet the power to remove councillors from office, and forcing councils to repeal bylaws the province doesn't like. The bill also allows the creation of municipal political parties, but it comes in the form of a pilot project only affecting Edmonton and Calgary. It also allows for the continued plans for a Provincial Police Force.

Bill 24, the Alberta Bill of Rights Amendment Act, 2024.

This bill adds new rights for Albertans such as protections for personal autonomy, including the right not to be given medical treatment or a vaccine without consent. It also states that provincial laws should not interfere with the right to own legally acquired firearms. This bill would allow the government to place people (whether they wish to or not) into "drug treatment" centres and forcing them to take treatment. Opposition leaders point out that the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* remains the supreme law of the land, so that it will continue to be the best place to challenge unconstitutional laws.

Bill 27, the Education Amendment Act, 2024. Bill 27 requires Alberta parents to opt in rather than opt out of sex education for their children.

And, of course, we have to mention **Bill 6, The Public Health Amendment Act**, which gives Cabinet the discretionary authority to make the final decisions on public health orders. There currently is no Chief Medical Officer in Alberta as the current Chief Medical Officer, being a figurehead with no authority, resigned. It is no wonder the government cannot keep a Chief Medical Officer of Health.

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 on-line every month.

Many of the priorities of the Seniors’ Task Force are in line with the priorities of ARTA and ACER-CART. 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 continually being monitored. There is confusion in both programs as to who qualifies and who can benefit. There are a growing number of individuals and families with 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 2025

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 first draft is complete. The target for completion of this initiative is December of 2025.

Main Activities since our last AGM

Pension Webinars - ARTA, through its Pension and Financial Wellness Committee, held 3 excellent webinars via Zoom. They are as follows: 1). *Financial Wellness Webinar*; 2). *Pensions* (put on by personnel from the Alberta Teachers’ Retirement Fund); and 3). *Cyber Crimes and Other Insurance Challenges*.

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

In April of 2025, an in-person half day Financial Wellness Seminar was held in Calgary. Topics included *Recognizing and Avoiding Investment Scams*, *Bullet Proofing our Defense Against Cyber Crime*, and *Eight Issues in Estate Planning*. Two hundred people packed the hotel room where it was held. The evaluations were extremely positive and there are requests to hold more of these in-person seminars.

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 67.

ARTARx Pharmacy - The ARTARx pharmacy continues to increase numbers for Edmonton and the surrounding communities. Retired teachers and other retirees, such as provincial and federal government workers, are choosing ARTA as their primary private plan health provider.

Membership – Membership continues to grow, and as of April 2025, ARTA has approximately 33,238 members, with 30,305 members participating in the ARTA Benefit Plans, covering over 47,965 lives. This is a year-to-year benefit plan participation growth of 4.4%.

Annual Retreat - ARTA held its annual retreat on May 26-29, 2025, in Lake Louise, Alberta. The theme of the retreat was *Mapping the Future*. This was a working retreat as participants were involved in preparing ARTA for the next 5-year Strategic Plan. There were a number of guest speakers who contributed to the retreat.

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:

Alzheimer Society of Calgary - \$20,000.00
Carya Society of Calgary - \$25,000.00
Jewish Family Service Calgary - \$20,000.00
NorQuest College Foundation - \$8,000.00

Parkinson Association of Alberta - \$20,000.00
The Bethany Care Foundation - \$25,000.00
The Calgary Chinese Elderly Citizens' Association - \$13,000.00

On August 28 and 29, the foundation will be operating a casino fundraiser, with proceeds supporting charitable causes such as those mentioned above.

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