



PEIRTA Newsletter

Prince Edward Island Retired Teachers' Association

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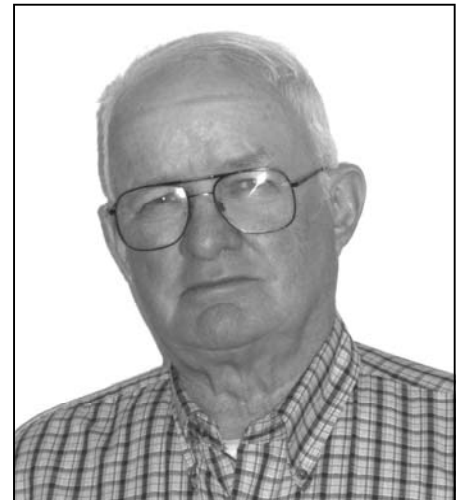
From the President

In November of 2009 we had a very interesting and informative annual meeting. As we begin our new term I would like first of all to welcome all the new executive members who were sworn in at this meeting. They will represent you for the next two years, and have been spending their time since the annual meeting preparing for their task.

Our organization faces a number of challenges as we move forward. Most challenging, and the issue that will take most of our time in the immediate future, is our group insurance. In Kimball Blanchard we have a very experienced and dedicated chairman of our insurance committee. Kimball and I have been in numerous meetings

with our insurers and government to discuss the future of our plan. As Kimball will be pointing out over the next few months, we have discovered a number of issues that need research and attention. For example, we want to be absolutely sure that we are paying only for what are legitimate expenses to our plan. As all members no doubt realize, our health plan is a pay-for-service plan, and each member should make absolutely sure that only legitimate costs are billed to the plan. We have discovered that this is not always the case—that we have been billed for expenses which should not be ours. The extent to which this is happening is one of the things that needs to be researched. We need to be totally sure of our facts and figures so that we can adequately represent all retired teachers who are members of this plan.

I look forward to our next two years with enthusiasm. We have an excellent executive, supported by an excellent contingent of committee chairs. Our ongoing committees continue to work hard on our behalf. It is truly a pleasure to



work with such dedicated people. And over the past two years we have established an acceptable newsletter format. This has been noted on several occasions both by our members and by those in other teacher organizations who receive our publication.

In closing, I want to say a sincere thank you to the executive members who are retiring this year. It was a marvellous journey over the past two years. I will always be able to look back with fine memories of your dedicated service.

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Visit our website at
www.peirta.com

From the Editor

It was great to see such a good turnout at the AGM on November 5. Welcome back, James, and congratulations to our new executive. And a big thank you to outgoing members. Some of these people have been actively involved in the RTA since the day they retired, and it is largely due to their dedication and hard work that the PEIRTA is becoming a much stronger voice for retired teachers in PEI.

Speaking of which, I wonder if anyone else heard the same thing I think I heard at our annual meeting—essentially the same message at least three times?

Kimball Blanchard, in his report on the work of our Group Insurance Committee, spoke of the complexity of the problem they have been grappling with. Faced with what seem to be almost inevitable changes of some kind, there are no easy solutions. Ideally, I think, we would maintain the status quo—with retired teachers remaining members of a group plan which includes two groups of retirees along with active teachers. Kimball suggested at one

point, I believe, that political intervention might be needed if that particular goal were to be achieved. I wonder who he thinks is going to harass influence Government.

Tom Gaskell, our Atlantic representative at ACER-CART, spoke eloquently about the role of ACER-CART as the voice of approximately 167,000 retired teachers, and briefed us on some of the issues that they have been actively involved in. He especially emphasized concerns about escalating drug costs—all in the context of “creeping for-profit medicine” in spite of medicare. He too called upon us and other member organizations to become more involved in actively seeking to bring about change.

Sandy MacDonald, Superintendent of the Eastern School District, raised the issue of educational funding and class size in the context of a burgeoning provincial deficit and a general economic downturn. As class sizes approach more workable numbers, he fears that government will soon take the position that classes are too small, and that money saved by increasing the student-

teacher ratio can be spent in other areas. He too appealed to us to get involved if there is a threat of reduced funding—by writing letters and opinion pieces, making phone calls, and/or preparing position papers in defense of adequate funding for public education.

So everyone wants a piece of us. Given that we are one of the largest groups of educated, knowledgeable people in the province—why wouldn't they? And what will we do about it?

PEIRTA Executive does not necessarily agree with opinions expressed in material authored by those other than official representatives of the PEIRTA, and information about opportunities offered by others is for information only—no endorsement is implied.

Next issue in late May. Submit material to margstewart@pei.eastlink.ca.

If you wish to read this newsletter online, instead of receiving a hard copy, send me an email and I will let you know when each issue should appear on our site and on the PEITF site.

Letters to the editor should be a maximum of 200 words, must include a one-line bio, and may be edited for length.

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Group Insurance Representative: Kimball Blanchard

PEIRTA Webmaster: Bill Oehlke oehlke@islandtelecom.com

PEITF—The early years (Instalment 4)

Editor's note—In the spring of 2007 I was asked to address the PEITF Area Association annual meetings and attempt to answer the question "What gains have been made by PEITF over time?" What follows is the fourth instalment of a somewhat amended version of my text. I am indebted especially to Arlyn Leard's early history of the Federation, and to Jim Blanchard, Paddy Murphy, Sterling Stratton, and the staff at PEITF.

Group Insurance

A rudimentary group health and disability insurance plan was established in 1964, but it appears to have been available to Charlottetown and Summerside teachers only. One of the outcomes of the 1972 agreement was the creation of the first province-wide group insurance plan. Government initially contributed a dollar amount equal to about 25% of the teacher premium. Currently, the employer pays for \$20,000 basic life insurance, and \$20,000 AD&D for all teachers. Medical, dental, and additional life insurance are cost-shared 50/50 by the teacher and employer. Benefits in this plan dictate the premium—if you want to pay more, you can get more. Coverage for services such as chiropractic and massage therapy have been added relatively recently, and new drugs are added periodically.

Pension

Prior to 1931, there was no pension plan, although there was at one stage a \$150 retirement allowance for teachers who had taught for 50 years. Hansard also records some very small pensions acquired for teachers by private members' bills introduced in the legislature.

A brief strike for higher pay in 1929 resulted in a Royal Commission, but no increase in salaries! The Commission did, however, recommend that a pension plan be introduced. A Federation

pension committee was struck, their proposal was approved by government, and the Teachers' Superannuation Act was proclaimed in 1931. All teachers could now look forward to a small retirement or disability income. Teachers paid the whole premium, and government was supposed to cover a shortfall if there was one. Pensions could range from \$365 to \$1000 annually. There was no indexing for retired teachers. Several years later a government co-pay was introduced (50% of teacher contribution), but teachers had to be 60 to retire.

Interestingly, Charlottetown teachers for a time had an additional pension!

In 1946 an actuarial survey showed that the pension plan had a significant deficit. At this time, with no consultation with teachers, Government doubled the teacher contribution, stopped their own contributions, and guaranteed the plan—although no one was quite sure what that meant.

Throughout the 50's and 60's teachers became more active in the administration of their plan, and by 1972 deferred pensions, survivor benefits, and indexing for retired teachers had been introduced, and the plan had been integrated with the Canada Pension Plan (with 84% approval of teachers). But while Government had put some money into the plan, they had contributed nothing for a twenty-six year period, and although teacher contributions increased a number of times, they were insufficient to cover benefits. The deficit continued to grow. Matching employer contributions were reinstated in 1979, but by this time the plan was drastically underfunded—a situation which was not addressed until 1993, when steps were finally taken to shore it up. In 1994, contributions were increased,

indexing was decreased, and the age of integration with the CPP was changed from 65 to 60—all significant losses for teachers. At the same time, Government committed to paying approximately \$130 million over a ten-year period. Since then, under the watchful eye of the Federation, government has paid this amount, and has recently committed an additional \$160 million over the next ten years. Survivor benefits have been improved, and the age of integration with CPP has been changed back to 65. Improved indexing is very much a long-term goal of the Pension Committee.

While our pension is not a negotiated item, Government no longer changes the plan without consulting and gaining the approval of teachers.

Public Relations

Public relations has always been a concern for teachers. As part of its mandate, Federation has from the beginning made a valiant effort to raise the profile of teachers and promote the value of education, and for many years this was quite a challenge. A public relations low point was reached in 1949, when the Premier of the day, who was also the Minister of Education, addressed the teachers' annual convention. In his address, he berated teachers for continually "*harping*" on salaries. He said, among other things, that "*until the farmers' income goes up, yours won't. The government simply cannot do more until the new tax agreement is made with Ottawa in 1952.*" He went on to say "*Considering other wages, if you consider that today's teacher averages only one hundred and ninety five-hour days teaching per year, the teachers are not doing too badly. Everybody lives here for a little less. Teachers may supplement their earnings by working in tourist camps or eventually go into nursing where there is better* →

money. I suggest that teachers should think more of their obligations than of their rights. Instead of dwelling on thoughts of security, think of the contribution you can make to your country. Work both brains and muscle to capacity and be happy.” He concluded that permanency was not expected in the profession. “You’re in it as a transitional job,” he said. “You are teaching until you find something else.”(Leard)

One can only imagine the reaction of modern-day teachers and their leadership if the Premier or Minister of Education were to make such remarks!

Today, teachers are generally highly regarded by the public, particularly by parents—even if they don’t really want them to make more money or stay home on storm days! Teachers’ Federation is respected by Government, school boards, and other public sector unions. Relations with the Department of Education are generally positive—varying somewhat from issue to issue, and almost always respectful and professional.

ACER-CART

Editor’s note ~What follows is information disseminated by Vaughn Wadelius, President of ACER-CART. A copy of his letter to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General, Rob Nicholson, is posted on the RTA website. The recommendations are included here.

At the 2009 ACER-CART annual meeting, the following motion was passed:

That ACER-CART lobby the federal government and opposition parties to establish a National Securities Regulator through legislation that enhances the rights of investors, and seek support of other national seniors.

A request for support via the Congress of National Seniors Organizations (CNSO) was made in the Fall of 2009 for the concept to be included in CNSO’s annual brief to the federal government, but support was not possible as CNSO required the agreement of all its member organizations before it could be included, and their brief’s presentation was imminent.

A support document for the concept of a National Securities Regulator and a list of recommendations on the issue were developed by Vice-President Arnold Hull, who chairs the ACER-CART Pension & Retirement Income Committee. These documents were reviewed by the ACER-CART executive at its December conference call and direction was given to proceed. Our immediate objective was to communicate these recommendations to the Canadian government and Opposition, as well as to ACER-CART member organizations. Letters have recently been sent to do this.

Directors are asked to assist by relaying the two documents to their organizations and requesting that the recommendations be used to solicit support from the Members of Parliament in your jurisdictions, and to communicate support for the recommendations to the federal and/or respective provincial governments.

[It is recommended that] Canadian Securities Regulator

parliament seek immediate confirmation that it has the constitutional authority to enact and implement a federal securities regularity regime;

a Canadian securities regulator create an efficient and streamlined securities regulatory system that reinforces financial stability, strengthens

enforcement, protects investors, is accountable to parliament and encourages worldwide investing in Canada;

Reforms to Criminal Code

comprehensive reforms to the *Criminal Code* and restructuring of its overall justice and regulatory system, including *Victim Impact Statements*, be instituted in co-operation with the provinces and territories to meet the challenges of dealing with all aspects of white-collar crime;

extensive mandatory white-collar crimes training for judges be instituted;

sentencing should include mandatory jail sentences and restitution orders for victims;

Partnership

provinces and territories be supported financially, on a shared basis, by the federal government to hire sufficient staff with credentials for surveillance, prevention and to bring the perpetrators to face the courts of law in a timely manner;

Investor’s Bill of Rights

an investor’s Bill of Rights be developed in co-operation with the provincial and territorial governments;

support services be made available for victims who have to deal with stress, anger, depression, loss and isolation;

strategies be developed to educate the public about their financial options when they reach retirement age.

***** For additional background information, and to read the letter to Minister Nicholson, please visit the PEIRTA website.*****

Group Insurance

By Kimball Blanchard

Group insurance issues continue to be a concern for the Retired Teachers' Association, and the major concerns centre around the health care part of the coverage. During the last round of negotiations a commitment was made by the PEITF negotiation team, at the request of government, to deal with the issue of the relationship between the active teachers and the retired teachers with regard to the health coverage and the manner by which rates are established for this coverage. The contract terminates on June 30, 2010, and a working committee has been established with members representing the PEITF, the RTA, and Government. The present method of rate setting has been in effect

since retired teachers were taken into the plan back in the 1970's, but the Government representatives have asked for changes, primarily because of changes in accounting regulations. The Committee has had several meetings and has gathered information about the PEI Government drug program for those over age 65; has reviewed the Civil Service health plan; and has looked at other programs for retired teachers in the Atlantic area and in Ontario. No decisions have been finalized, but some changes have to be made by the end of June.

To move the process along, the PEITF Group Insurance Trustees have instructed Johnson Inc. to study the impact of various plan design changes on the premiums paid by retired teachers. As well, the Trustees have made some internal changes to the administration of the health plan to try to get a better grasp on the claims made by active teachers, retired teachers under the age of 65, and retired teachers over the age of 65.

During the past year the experience for our health care program has been reasonably good considering how health care costs are rising across the country. The concern for retired teachers, however, is that in spite of the overall picture being relatively good, the retired teacher segment of the plan continues to be in a deficit position. Improvements have been made in the financial position of this segment of the plan over the past few years, but we must continue to be aware that our plan is a "pay-in-pay-out" plan—that is, we pay the premiums and we pay for the claims. There are no subsidies involved. You, members of the RTA, can help to fight the rising costs by using generic drugs where possible; and by making certain that when your doctor prescribes a new, more costly

drug, it in fact has improved medical benefits for you. Some informed reports indicate that new does not necessarily mean better. If you are 65 or older, be certain that you are covered by the government DCAP (Drug Cost Assistance Plan) program through your pharmacy, and that any of your prescriptions that are covered by the DCAP are paid for by this program. If a drug is covered by the government program, there should be no direct cost to you, as the cost of the drug is covered by DCAP and the dispensing fee is covered by your plan. If you go to a pharmacy other than your regular one, be certain that the pharmacy knows that you are eligible for coverage under the DCAP. Every time you do this will help to reduce the deficit for your health plan.

Changes will be forthcoming, and every effort will be made to keep you informed. The PEITF Group Insurance Trustees will have input into the decisions that will be made, and they will be acting in your best interests. As well, your RTA Executive will be kept up-to-date on the negotiations and will certainly be working on your behalf.



"I GUESS RETIREMENT IS O.K.,
BUT WHAT I MISS MOST IS GOOFING
OFF ON COMPANY TIME."

2010 County Socials

Keep these dates in mind!

Prince—Thursday, April 29

1:30p.m. to 3:30p.m.

Queens—Wednesday, May 5

Jack Blanchard Family Centre
7 Pond Street, Charlottetown

1:30p.m. to 3:30p.m.

Kings—Thursday, May 13

1:30p.m. to 3:30p.m.

Other venues and further details will be advertised later—closer to the event. Watch your local papers in April.

President's Report to AGM 2009

By Jim MacAulay

In the beginning I once again want to express my pleasure at being able to serve as your president for the past two years. It is easy to serve as president if you have an active and interested executive. I can assure you that not only do you find these qualities in our executive members, you also find them in our committee chairpersons. Over the past two years these people have worked well to serve you. They have also opened new doors for our organization. Our newsletter is well respected across this nation; our insurance and pension chairpeople have really put forth much effort over the past two years; our website has grown and hopefully will continue to grow. As you will note from your agenda these items will all be addressed by the people who are responsible, so I will comment no further on these matters.

I do want to extend my sincere thanks to the people at PEITF. In practically every issue we have we are interconnected with PEITF in some way. The co-operation we receive from our former organization is most heart warming. All our executive meetings, plus other activities such as the mailing of our newsletter, are facilitated by the people at PEITF.

At last year's annual meeting you voted to increase your dues to \$1.00 per month. We are still experiencing minor problems with our automatic deduction and deposit. These are being worked upon and will no doubt be solved in time. We have an excellent working relationship with our Department of Education. This is fortunate because we have continuing discussions with the Department, especially on group insurance and pension issues.

We are a member of ACER-CART, the national association of retired teachers which claims membership of approximately 165,000. I will not comment on the activities of this organization as we have our Atlantic Director, Dr. Tom Gaskell, with us today. Dr Tom will be reporting to you a little later on the activities of this organization. I have had the pleasure of representing you at the last two annual meetings in Ottawa. I will tell you that this organization has potential to influence decisions which will be made for seniors in general, and for retired teachers in particular.

After our last annual meeting we proceeded with our incorporation, which we completed in mid-winter. We also put into effect all resolutions which were passed at our last annual meeting in 2009. Our executive meets monthly, usually on the second Thursday of the month, except during July, August, and November. At these meetings all business which could affect retired teachers is discussed. It is becoming clear that more and more organizations are looking at us. As you noticed today we have organizations bringing materials to you from their groups. We are continually receiving calls from organizations for assistance of various natures. While this is good, in the future we may have to formalize policy in this regard. You will notice that issues which are deemed important for you appear on our website or in our newsletter. Sometimes they appear in both. Over the past year we have continued with our prize and bursary program at the University of PEI. I have had the pleasure of making both presentations. Over the past year also we have been invited to take part in the pre-retirement seminars put on by PEITF. This gives us an excellent opportunity to bring our message to teachers who are about to consider retirement. We do, however, still have a rather large

group of people who are eligible to join our organization but have not. It is unfortunate that some of these people feel that they are members. A good test is whether you receive your newsletter or not. If you are not receiving a newsletter, you are most likely not a member. Presently our newsletters are mailed to members only. If you know of anyone in this situation simply get in touch with Joyce McCardle and she will add him/her to the list.

This past spring we elected our county representatives for the first time. As this was new, some were probably not that clear on what we were doing. The process went very well and we have three outstanding former teachers to be installed at the end of our meeting. The process did need a bit of refining and you will find a resolution in your package today to address this matter.

The two major issues which we still have to work with are pensions and group insurance. As I said earlier, you will receive presentations on both matters today. Especially in the matter of group insurance, I want you to pay close attention. As the number of retired teachers swells, and as the number of active teachers goes down, we are bound to have to consider some adjustments in the future. As Kimball will explain, we are currently holding discussions and at the end of the day decisions will have to be made.

In closing, let me say that I look forward to a very interesting and informative meeting today. I want to thank you again for allowing me to be your president for the past two years. Later today you will have the opportunity to elect a new executive for the next two years. I know that those years will bring challenges to our organization, but with your support I am sure that our new executive will be equal to the challenge. I thank you.



Carrie St. Jean



Greetings to all retired teachers.

A belated Happy New Year to everyone! 2010 is off to a great start here at Federation House in Stratford. I have happy news to share about our General Secretary Shaun and his wife Angela. The MacCormacs welcomed their first child, Colin Joseph, on December 22, 2009. He is a beautiful contented baby, and the new parents are over the moon with their new addition to the family. His arrival for a visit at Federation House creates lots of excitement. Congratulations to Shaun and Angela!

By the time you read this, our Take an MLA to School Day will be set to un-

fold. We have had a very high percentage of our MLAs agree to participate in this special event. We know there are many great things happening in our schools. We also know there are many challenges. What a great opportunity for the decision makers in this province to see firsthand what classrooms look like in 2010. In addition to seeing firsthand many of our classrooms and great teachers at work, we hope everyone has fun.

Our Economic Welfare Committee is hard at work preparing for negotiations in the spring. And in April the General Secretary and I will participate in

CTF's Hill Day. This event involves meeting with MPs on Parliament Hill and discussing educational issues from a national perspective. This is a great opportunity to highlight the challenges and successes of education in this country.

I want to thank the RTA for inviting our provincial executive to a meet and greet on February 5. So many of our retired teachers exude enthusiasm and support for those of us still on the front lines. We appreciate their concern and interest and look forward to maintaining links and advocating in any way we can to help our former colleagues.

Enjoy the rest of the winter!

Travel



The following websites might be of interest to those who like to research travel almost as much as they like to travel. I use all of the review/information sites regularly, and have friends who have successfully used the last minute/reduced rate sites and condo rental sites. I also subscribe to Travelzoo, which simply lists best deals with info about how to access them. Marg

Condos, houses, etc., generally privately owned

<http://www.vrbo.com/>

<http://www.vacationrentals.com/>

Professional and consumer reviews, tips

<http://www.tripadvisor.com/>

<http://www.debbiescaribbeanresortreviews.com/>

<http://www.cruisecritic.com/>

<http://www.frommers.com/>

Last-minute travel, reduced rates/fares

<http://www.vacationstogo.com/>

<http://www.sellloffvacations.com/>

<http://ca.travelzoo.com/>

home & auto insurance

enjoy



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PEIRTA 2010-2012 Executive and Officers



Front row L-R: Barb Foster (Secretary); Sheridyth MacNeill (Queens); John Rowe (Past President)

Back row L-R: Jim MacAulay (President); Sherrill Barwise (Prince); Spurgeon Robbins (Vice-President); Pat McCardle (Treasurer); George Knox (Kings)



2009 RTA AGM



PEIRTA AGM 2009

Resolutions approved

1. Changes to bylaws re election of county representatives at spring socials
2. Honorarium for webmaster