
ELK ISLAND RETIRED TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Fall is fully with us now. The days grow shorter and the nights are colder. The pandemic continues. Wow - that all sounds rather gloomy. It really isn't. The beautiful colours of autumn leaves against a brilliant blue sky. The crunchy frost on the lawn. Even as we face restrictions and strive to keep ourselves and others safe, we know there is hope. Having lost our opportunity to get together for 'To Hell With The Bells', we remain very hopeful that a Christmas event will be possible. The plans are being made, just in case, and it will be wonderful if/when it comes to be.

The ARTA AGM had been scheduled as an in-person event, but was changed to virtual as a precaution. Elk Island RTA was well represented by several members: myself, Inge Coates, Julie Ginther, Dolaine Koch, Ruby Okamura, Denis Schell. Two mornings were spent hearing updates from various committees and reports from executive and staff. Elections were held for executive positions and for the committees. You may be interested in reading the annual report available at <https://www.arta.net/news-events/arta-news/2020-2021-arta-annual-report/>

I hope you have received the mailings with information on updates to the Health Benefits plans and news about ARTARx. Some very exciting changes are coming!

As we move forward, let us also look back. November is a time of remembrance. Remember those who have served and who currently serve. Remember lives lost, lives saved, lives lived. Share your remembrances with people who need to know them.

Soon there will be times shared face-to-face. Handshakes, hugs, laughter and tears. We will look back and see that we did what we had to do. And we will remember.

The days grow shorter and the nights are chill,
A palette of vibrant colours splashed upon the landscape;
Insect voices stilled among the crunch of dry leaves;
The sky pales and welcomes streams of travelers,
Seeking warmer climes so far away;
Soon the land will sleep, cloaked in brown,
The autumn hues all blown away;
Bare branches and dormant grasses, dull and cold,
A lifeless limbo of emptiness and silence.

Like ARTA, Elk Island RTA supports an engaged lifestyle after retirement through member-centered services, advocacy, communication, wellness and leadership.

Fall Edition

October 2021

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Elk Island RTA website:

<https://artabranches.net/elkislandrta/>

NEW Elk Island RTA email:

newseirta@gmail.com



Elk Island RTA Executive

President	Karen Atkinson
Vice President	Denis Schell
Treasurer	Dolaine Koch
Secretary/Compassion & Congratulations	Carol Gilbertson
Past President, Websites and Email	Inge Coates
Newsletter	Julie Ginther
Membership	Thelma Baumgartner
Phoning Committee Chair	Dianna Millard
Social Committee	Sheila Busch Ruby Okamura Sylvia Roes Karen Carlson
ARTA Reps:	Dolaine Koch Karen Atkinson

News from ARTA



Health Benefit Improvements and Premium Reductions

Each year, the ARTA Health Benefits Committee reviews ARTA's long-term vision and the proposed changes to the ARTA Retiree Benefits Plan. Plan changes are determined by responses to legislative changes and suggestions made by covered members. This process ensures the plan provides ARTA members with the best retiree benefits available.

Once a potential change is approved by the Health Benefits Committee, the committee makes a recommendation to the ARTA Board of Directors, which then reviews and votes for the changes they think are most beneficial to plan members.

This year, ARTA is excited to announce plan improvements along with a reduction in monthly Extended Health Care premiums.

To review the plan improvements and rate changes in your personalized Annual Renewal Statement, sign into MyARTA.net and click on the My Documents page to download.

Membership Fees:

Due to the ongoing pandemic, the Elk Island Retired Teachers Executive, has again suspended membership fees. It is our hope that we will be able to again meet in-person during 2022.

Please Keep Us Updated

Please register changes in your membership information if...

- You have turned 80 years of age. (Membership is free after this age if you have been a member for the previous 10 years.)
- You have moved. (We need your new contact information.)
- You are not certain if your membership has expired.

To register changes, contact Thelma Baumgartner at 780 464 4129 or email her at thelbaumgartner@gamil.com

Agreement Reached on ATRF Investment Management Policy

Our voices were heard and recognized

An agreement was reached in September, that ensures that the Alberta Teachers' Retirement Fund (ATRF) will remain in full control of strategic investment policies for teacher pensions.

The new investment management agreement (IMA) between the ATRF and the Alberta Investment Management Corporation (AIMCo) replaces the previous IMA imposed by, Finance Minister Travis Toews in December 2020. The new IMA removes a controversial veto provided to AIMCo over investment directions made by the ATRF.

“This is a huge victory for teachers and the Association. Teachers mounted a strong, wide-reaching, relentless campaign in defence of their pensions, which provided the ATRF with the backing they needed to negotiate an effective agreement that protects the interests of teachers.”

—ATA president Jason Schilling

As the Association has now achieved everything it hoped to achieve through the legal action, the Association will be discontinuing its legal challenge.



Views & Inspirations

As we go through the fourth wave of Covid 19, many of us may have lost hope to ever return to being able to see family and friends. It is Thanksgiving Weekend, as I write this. I am feeling very optimistic about the future. We now have the 'proof of vaccination cards' allowing us to enter places such as restaurants, gym facilities, sporting events and to travel.

It is so uplifting to me to know we can begin visiting with our vaccinated family and friends. The future for our grandchildren is getting a bit brighter as the reality of vaccinations is drawing closer. Many of these special children are enjoying a return to classrooms where our colleagues are working very hard to keep them safe while educating them. The best part is welcoming our grandchildren back into our lives with hugs, laughter and chatter that we haven't been able to revel in for months.

I am not ready yet, but I know that some people are beginning to travel once again. This is so encouraging as many of us have loved ones in other provinces or countries with whom we can enjoy in person visits. Those who need a change of scenery and feel travelling is for them; are now able to satisfy these needs.

I was very excited to begin taking classes again through the Strathcona County and the Dow Centennial Center. It has felt wonderful to take part fitness classes. I was reunited with muscles that had become sedentary during the past eighteen months.

Rumours of plans for Christmas exhibits and markets are beginning to circulate. These offer such encouragement for us to resume some old favourite traditions. At the last meeting of our branch executive there was optimism that perhaps our retired teachers could enjoy a gathering soon. How exciting to think reuniting with our colleagues!

I may have put on my "rose coloured" glasses, but all these indicators provide confidence for the future.

Julie Ginther



Teaching Is Still About Caring

Our colleagues are really special. They have been called upon during the pandemic to be educators, assessment specialists, sanitizers, health officials, psychologists, mask enforcers and social distancing experts.

Teachers have always cared about their students and their families. This pandemic has required our colleagues to think outside of the box. Many teachers were sending home the following notice to the parents of their students at the beginning of this school year:

If your family is experiencing difficulties at home, I would like to provide additional support at school. I understand that you are not always able to share details and that's okay. If your child is coming to school after a difficult night, morning or weekend, please email me, "Handle with Care". Nothing will be said or asked. This will let me know your child may need extra time, patience of help during the day.

Thank you, teachers for caring during this difficult time!

ARTA AGM

On October 5 & 6, the Annual General Meeting of ARTA was held via Zoom. It was so wonderful to see the business of ARTA through this avenue. Even though we are in a pandemic the organization of ARTA has continued to grow and flourish. On January 2021, ARTA initiated self-administration of our benefit plan. While there were some “growing pains” at the inception of self administration, the bumps have been resolved. Daniel Mulloy, ARTA CEO and Executive Director, reported that “ARTA is looking to ensure the long-term sustainability and affordability of our benefit plans, all while keeping a focus on our members’ health.”. The focus on member health is being enhanced by introduction of a plan-sponsored pharmacy. This new pharmacy initiative is called ARTARx which should be in place by 2022. This will be another ground-breaking initiative for ARTA. Please watch your inbox and mailbox for upcoming information.

The Annual General Meeting included Standing Committee Reports. The Committees of ARTA have continued work to benefit ARTA members. The chairs of all committees reported on the work their committees have been working on throughout the year. An important report was the financial report which indicated that even with increased spending due to a new building, new staff and new initiatives, the growth of our funds is being well managed.

It was also quite exciting to hear Gary Tiede report on the Canadian Association of Retired Teachers. ACER-CART is collaborating with other organizations to advocate for a “National Seniors Strategy”, monitor the effects of COVID-19 on the Canadian Health Act, advocate for health care system that prioritizes care for seniors’ in their own homes and regulations governing Retirement and Long-Term Care homes.

The Alberta Teacher’s Retirement Fund report by Rod Matheson was filled with optimism for the future with an agreement with the provincial government establishing a new Investment Management Policy.

The ATA reports from President Jason Schilling and Denis Theobald were filled with thanks for all the support of ARTA members to our colleagues in education. We still need to make sure we let the government know our concerns regarding the new curriculum.

At the end of the second day of our Zoom meeting the impression I left with was one of HOPE. With a year of concern, worry and fear during the pandemic, it was refreshing to hear the reports from ARTA and Branches on new initiatives, growth, plans and optimism. I feel we can look forward to 2022.

Julie Ginther



Health Matters

“Health Matters” is a feature written by Carol Gilbertson that offers health reminders. These reminders are meant to be helpful, and are not to be taken as medical advice. At all times, readers are advised to consult their own physician to ensure that what they are doing health-wise is in their best interests.

THE BENEFITS OF WALKING

Just put one foot in front of the other, and before you know it, you could be walking your way to better health.

Walking may be one of the easiest and most effective forms of exercise out there for seniors. Whatever your level of mobility, it’s a great way to get active, at your own pace. A regular walk can help you meet all of the four core fitness areas recommended for seniors – endurance, strength, balance, and flexibility – while also encouraging you to get outside and connect with others. Regular walking has been shown to help older adults:

- improve cardiovascular health by lowering blood pressure and reducing stroke risk.
- have a natural way to give your immune system a boost.
- offer benefits to your muscles, bones, and joints all at once.
- reduce cravings and intake of unhealthy sweets.
- improve risks of insomnia.
- experience less age-related mental decline overall.
- improve your mental health and well-being.
- foster social connections.

Remember to start with small steps and work your way up. Every little step helps. If the weather is inclement, you can always walk indoors. Have fun adding some steps to your life.



Notes of Compassion

It is with heavy hearts that we send our condolences to the family of our colleague:

To the family of our colleague,

Irmgard Lindquist

Who passed away on September 18, 2021

**Note: Please contact us at newseirta@gmail.com if you know of notices that should be included in our Compassion or Congratulation section. We depend on our membership to keep us updated.*

Kindness

Are you aware of a member who is struggling?
Please let us know, and we will reach out with a call or a card.
Sometimes, just a little touch of kindness makes all the difference in the world.

