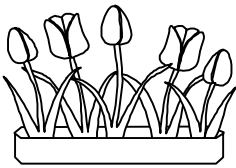




Edmonton Retired Teachers' Association Spring Newsletter

www.edmontonrta.org

March 2009



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THE EXECUTIVE

President:
Vi Oka, (780) 459-8013

1st Vice-Pres:
Joan Harrison, (780) 467-3885
2nd Vice-Pres:
Joyce Liska, (780) 487-3029

Treasurer:
Bernie Lemay, (780) 469-5031
Membership:
Maurine Maslen, (780) 418-8032

SPRING LUNCHEON

Join us for our Spring luncheon at

Chateau Louis

11727 Kingsway Avenue

Date: March 25

Please note venue

Lunch: 11:45 a.m.

The banquet room is in the building behind the hotel where there is ample parking.

Menu: Roast Chicken Buffet

Cost: \$20 per person (includes GST and gratuity)

Speaker: Noel Somerville – Chair Seniors Task Force

Topic: "How the Government's Proposed Pharmaceutical Strategy Will Impact Seniors"

Door Prize: Everyone is eligible for a door prize.

PLEASE NOTE:

The phoning committee will be contacting you prior to March 18th so we can have an accurate count for our caterer.

Please note that ERTA has to pay for lunches that have been booked even if the individuals do not attend.

Donations to the Food Bank are appreciated.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

With the continuing doom and gloom in the news regarding the further collapse of the stock market and growing unemployment, there is little consolation in the fact that Canada's banking system is the only one in the industrialized world that did not require a bailout; in fact, several Canadian banks posted a profit in 2008.

While preparing residents for provincial belt-tightening when she tables a predicted deficit budget on April 7, Finance and Enterprise Minister Iris Evans warned Albertans a couple of weeks ago that the government will post a deficit at the end of the current fiscal year as a result of a decline in the value of the Heritage Savings Trust Fund. At that time she also stated that 50 jobs are being lost every day and predicted a job loss of 15,000 in the province by year-end.

Health and Wellness Minister Ron Liepert's response to the new economic reality is the proposed Pharmaceutical Strategy (see p. 3) that will negatively impact a significant number of Alberta seniors.

The guest speaker at the spring luncheon is Noel Somerville, Chair of the Seniors Task Force for Public Interest Alberta, who will enlighten us regarding various aspects of the aforementioned Pharmaceutical Strategy. The Edmonton Retired Teachers' Association (ERTA) extended an invitation to Ron Liepert to attend the luncheon as our guest; however, as of the date of publication of this newsletter, there has been no response from his office.

Unfortunately, due to rising food and labour costs, the Chateau Louis Hotel and Conference Centre has increased the luncheon price by \$1.00, which is less than the \$2.00 increase anticipated last September.

Active teachers will soon be announcing their intent to retire at the end of June. If you know of any teachers about to retire, please invite them to the brunch on May 2 or contact Maurine Maslen (when she returns) so that

she can issue them a one-year complimentary ERTA membership.

If you know of anyone deserving of an honorary ERTA membership, please contact Vi Oko at (780) 459-8013. According to Association bylaws, the names must be submitted by May 15.

As the Ides of March approach, we look forward to the spirit of hope and the promise of renewal that the arrival of the spring equinox brings each year. We look forward to seeing you at the luncheon.

Vi Oko

SUMMARY OF EXECUTIVE MEETING

A meeting of the ERTA Executive was held at Barnett on February 25, 2009 where the following information was shared and decisions were made:

- Ed Friss passed on a reminder to members of ARTA's Extended Health Care Plan to use Johnson's direct pay drug card that allows the pharmacy to direct bill the portion of the purchase covered by the ARTA Health and Wellness Benefit Plan, thus eliminating the need to submit claims. He also pointed out that implementation of the government's proposed Pharmaceutical Strategy will result in higher premiums.
- Vi Oko stated that the ARTA Pension Committee will continue to pressure the government on outstanding pension issues.
- Bernie Lemay reported that total revenue to date is \$12,130.68 while expenses equal \$8,747.84, leaving a bank balance of \$3,382.84 for the current fiscal year. Association assets amount to \$21,809.02 including \$6,316.00 in prepaid dues.
- The hot entrée at the luncheon will be roast chicken. The cost per plate was increased to \$20.00.
- A speaker from Public Interest Alberta will be invited to speak about the government's proposed drug policy as it pertains to seniors.
- ERTA brochures will be available for distribution at a booth at the Edmonton Teachers' Convention courtesy of the

Edmonton Public and Edmonton Separate School Locals.

- Vi Oko will represent ERTA at the ARTA retreat at St. Edouard March 1 to 4.
- Letters were sent to all government MLAs in Edmonton voicing concerns regarding the government's proposed Pharmaceutical Strategy.
- Tickets have been purchased at a cost of \$60.00 apiece for the May 5th performance of *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels* at the Mayfield Dinner Theatre.

DATES TO REMEMBER

Spring Luncheon	March 25, 2009
Teachers' Time Out	April 17, 2009
Retiree Brunch	May 2, 2009
Mayfield Dinner Theatre	May 5, 2009
ERTA Executive Meeting	May 13, 2009
Summer Luncheon & AGM	June 10, 2009

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

Maurine Maslen is presently teaching in Bujumbura, Burundi located in eastern Africa. She plans to return on April 12, 2009. Anyone interested in joining ERTA is encouraged to contact Bernie Lemay at (780) 469-5031 in the interim. Changes to e-mail addresses can be sent to Joyce Lukasiewich at ertanewsletter@edmontonrta.org.

Of the 386 current ERTA members, which include the 5 lifetime and 16 new retirees receiving complimentary memberships, 246 receive their newsletters via the postal service and 140 receive them electronically.

Everyone in the Greater Edmonton area will be contacted by a member of the Telephone Committee before Wednesday, March 18. If you do not receive a call or if your availability for the spring luncheon changes, please telephone Joan Harrison at (780) 467-3885 immediately.

NOMINEES TO NEW EXECUTIVE

According to our revised bylaws, our Annual General Meeting will be held in conjunction with our summer luncheon scheduled for June 10, 2009. A few members will be retiring from the ERTA Executive at that time. Joy de Mello, Nominating Committee Chair, is

interested in hearing from the membership recommending someone or, better still, volunteering to serve on the Executive. Please telephone her at (780) 455-9003 or speak with her privately at the upcoming luncheon.

PHARMACEUTICAL STRATEGY ACTION

Your executive has been actively lobbying the Progressive Conservative MLAs in Edmonton regarding Health and Wellness Minister Ron Liepert's recently announced Pharmaceutical Strategy as it pertains to seniors in this province.

Members of the Strategic Planning Committee met for a special meeting in mid January to draft a political action plan in an effort to dissuade the Alberta Government from changing the existing drug policy as it applies to Alberta seniors aged 65 and over during the current sitting of the legislature.

As of January 2010, drug costs for low income seniors will be eliminated; however, a sliding scale of deductibles will be implemented for anyone whose before-tax earnings are more than \$21,326.00 a year to a maximum of \$149,999.00. For example, a single senior earning \$41,325.00 would have a deductible of \$1,157.00 while a couple whose joint income is \$62,650.00 would be required to pay the first \$1,754.00 of their combined medical expenses. Even though some ATRF pensions are low, the Association estimates that fewer than 10% of the ARTA membership will qualify for reduced or similar drug costs once Old Age Security and Canada Pension Plan benefits are factored in.

Paul Boisvert, ARTA President, wrote a letter on behalf of the Association membership to all Alberta MLAs vehemently opposing the plan for the following reasons:

- It is both demeaning and divisive. Income disparities should be addressed through taxation rather than the provision of health care services.
- It is not a question of entitlement as stated by Mr. Liepert. Instead, by paying taxes even in our senior years we continue in a "social contract" that sees us sharing equally the responsibility for all of the services that are

available to everyone, be they health care, public education, police or fire – even if we never use them. A means test transfers the cost of a health and social benefit away from society as a whole and places it on a select group of seniors who have a higher need for medication; in effect, it is a form of a tax on the sick.

- ARTA believes that this new policy would be a violation of the universality principle of the Canada Health Act under which health care benefits should be available to all on the basis of need regardless of ability to pay.
- There is no doubt that some seniors whose income level falls just above the cut-off line on the means test will avoid seeking medical advice or using prescribed drugs until their health deteriorates to the point that hospitalization is required at a much higher expense for Alberta Health Care.
- The proposal is contrary to the Alberta Government's taxation policy, which states that income should be taxed at a maximum flat rate of 10%. It seems to be appropriate, however, to tax seniors who earn more than \$21,325.00 at a flat rate of 17%.
- By choosing to use the flat-rate system instead of the progressive model, the Alberta Government has chosen to forgo approximately \$2 billion a year in tax revenue.¹

The stability of many seniors' retirement will be altered significantly by this change in government policy without proper consultation of the stakeholders since they basically live on fixed incomes.

Initial analysis indicates that implementation of this strategy will likely result in a substantial increase in ARTA Extended Health Care premiums, perhaps as much as 50%. The current premium of \$84.50 for a single individual is expected to increase to \$126.25, which represents an annual increase of \$500.00 for single members and \$1,000.00 per couple. The effect on other health care plans is expected to be similar.

A number of articles regarding the implications of this proposed change have been included in the March 2009 edition of

the *News and Views*. You are encouraged to contact your MLA and make your concerns known about this attempt to off-load more costs onto seniors. Seniors can positively influence government decisions as was evidenced last fall when the decision to charge seniors for prosthetics was quickly reversed. If we do not denounce this government strategy, we can expect other health care costs to go up as well, as government programs de-list and transfer additional health care expenses to the individual.

Health care costs are expected to rise as much as 30% in the next 20 years due to the demographic bulge of baby boomers reaching their senior years along with the cost of new technology and drugs. The pharmaceutical strategy is expected to save the Alberta Government \$30 million a year, which is slightly more than the \$25 million the Government has announced it will spend to rebrand Alberta since the slogan "the Alberta advantage" is no longer a viable one.

What are this government's priorities? Tell your MLA what you think they should be.

¹ **Sustainable Healthcare for Seniors: Keeping it Public**, Parkland Institute, September 2008

RETIREE BRUNCH

The brunch scheduled for January 24, 2009 at the University of Alberta Faculty Club was cancelled a few days prior to that date due to the lack of response from the membership as well as the impending inclement weather.

We hope to have a better response to the one planned for Saturday, May 2, 2009. The cost of the brunch is \$18.00 per person. We usually meet in the lounge on the lower floor between 11:15 a.m. and 11:30 a.m. Courtesy parking located on the corner of 114 Street and Saskatchewan Drive immediately west of the Faculty Club can be accessed from 114 Street.

Mark the date on your calendar now and telephone Vi Oko at (780) 459-8013 or Adrienne Coull at (780) 452-6284 if you plan to attend. You are encouraged to bring a spouse, a colleague or a friend to meet

members of the ERTA Executive, connect with old friends and acquaintances and become better informed about pertinent retiree issues.

TEACHERS' TIME OUT

The Edmonton Public Teachers Local No. 37 Social Committee has extended an invitation to all ERTA members to attend their Teachers' Time Out on Friday, April 17 from 4:15 to 6:00 p.m. in the cafeteria at Barnett House located at 11010 – 142 Street. It is strictly a social event where drinks are available at a nominal cost and snacks are complimentary. You are encouraged to attend and spend some time mingling with colleagues still active in your chosen profession.

MAYFIELD DINNER THEATRE

Your executive has organized an outing at the Mayfield Dinner Theatre on Tuesday, May 5, 2009.

Based on the popular film *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels*, the theatrical presentation centres on two con men living on the French Riviera. The first is the suave and sophisticated Lawrence Jameson, who makes his lavish living by talking rich ladies out of their money. The other, a small-time crook named Freddy Benson, more humbly swindles women with fabricated stories about his grandmother's failing health. They unsuccessfully attempt to work together only to find that this small French town is not big enough for the two of them. They agree on a settlement that involves the extraction of \$50,000.00 from the young heiress, Christine Colgate. The first one to do so wins and the other must leave town. A hilarious battle of cons ensues that will keep you laughing, humming and guessing to the end!

A variety of pasta dishes are featured at the dinner theatre on Tuesday evenings. Four of the thirteen cold salads have a pasta base as do three of the hot selections. Hot dishes also include chicken, broiled salmon and prime rib of beef along with jasmine rice, mashed parsnip and seasonal vegetables. Teriyaki mushrooms, fresh vegetables with dip, pickles, olives, devilled eggs, paté and a deli

platter round out the cold selections. Four kinds of bread and a variety of condiments are available as well. Dessert options include international cheeses, a torte, cheesecake, chocolate fondue, petit four platter and a seasonal fruit platter served with coffee and specialty teas.

The doors open at 6:00 p.m. and the show begins at 8:00 p.m. The dress code is business casual.

Tickets in the Broadway section are \$60.00 each, which includes G.S.T. Cheques made payable to the Edmonton Retired Teachers' Association are preferable. There will be a sign-up sheet at the spring luncheon or forward your cheque to Vi Oko at 20 Glenhaven Crescent, St. Albert, Alberta, T8N 1A5 if you are unable to attend the luncheon. Tickets will be available on a first-come, first-served basis.

SAGE TOURS

The ERTA membership is encouraged to join the Seniors Association of Greater Edmonton (SAGE) on one or more of the following excursions that they have planned for the spring and summer months:

- April 28 – Devon, Calmar, Beaumont (visit the special features of each town)
- May 26 – Bee Maid Honey (Spruce Grove) and the Devon Botanical Gardens (lunch)
- June 24 – Peaceful Valley (a walk through a quiet natural area south of Pigeon Lake)
- July (3rd week) – Ellis Bird Farm (east of Lacombe)
- August (3rd week) – Meeting Creek, Buffalo Lake and Donalda (tour small museums)
- September (3rd week) – Rochfort Bridge and Mayerthorpe (community museums and R.C.M.P. Memorial)
- October 3 – Smoky Lake Pumpkin Festival
- A tour cost of \$45.00 – \$55.00 covers both bus transportation and lunch. Participants must sign up in person two weeks prior to the trip at the SAGE office located at

15 Sir Winston Churchill Square
(Telephone – (780) 423-5510).

ARTA-JOHNSON SCHOLARSHIPS

ARTA disburses a \$5,000.00 annual ARTA-Johnson scholarship made possible through the generosity of Johnson Inc., ARTA's benefit plan administrator.

Students who have completed the first, second or third year of an undergraduate or transfer program leading to a degree are eligible recipients. Community involvement and volunteer work is recognized in addition to academic achievement. Future goals, personal accomplishment and supporting letters of reference will also be significant in the overall determination of the scholarship winner(s). Applications must be sponsored by relatives who have an ARTA membership and received in the ARTA office no later than July 31 of the current year.

Application forms and criteria are available by writing to:

ARTA, 409, 11010 – 142 Street N.W., Edmonton, Alberta, T5N 2R1 or may be downloaded from ARTA's website at www.albertarta.org.

2009 ALBERTA 55 PLUS SUMMER GAMES

The 2009 Alberta 55 Plus Summer Games will be held in Airdrie July 23 to 26. All Alberta residents 55 years of age or older by December 31, 2009 are eligible to compete in playoffs for any of the 17 activities – athletics, bocce, contract bridge, creative writing, cribbage, cycling, darts, disc golf, eight ball, floor curling, golf, horseshoes, military whist, slopitch, swimming, tennis, and visual arts and crafts.

Zone 6 (Edmonton) playoffs are listed in the chart below. Age categories vary depending on the activity. A fifteen-dollar ASCSRA membership is required in order to participate in the competitions. It is essential that you register with the activity contact person at least one week to ten days (depending on the activity) prior to the competition date. For a hundred-dollar registration fee, zone qualifiers will be provided all meals, accommodation and transportation to all competition venues for the duration of the Games. For those individuals who prefer not

to drive, zone buses will transport competitors free of charge to the Games.

Activity	Date	Contact Number
Athletics	June 3	Arnold Nett (780) 475-8971
Bocce	May 13	Ken Shaw (780) 455-7864
Contract Bridge	April 15	Jessie Trottier (780) 452-4917
Creative Writing	April 15	Henry Edwards (780) 444-0538
Cribbage	May 29	Vic Larson (780) 475-5022
Cycling	May 23	Harvey Ford (780) 434-1063
Darts	April 22	Albert Hancock (780) 454-4911
Disc Golf	June 11	Jim Normey (780) 469-6989
Eight Ball	TBA	Leo Giesinger (780) 451-2953
Floor Curling	April 24	Mike Dolynny (780) 457-5036
Golf	June 10	Walter Mollenkoph (780) 469-0844
Horseshoes	June 9	Dave Chalmers (780) 476-0039
Military Whist	May 8	Vic Larson (780) 475-5022
Slopitch	June 1-5	Rollie Ulmer (780) 466-4221
Swimming	April 30	Jackie Scott (780) 476-4448
Tennis	May 26-28	Eunice Barron (780) 435-7541
Visual Arts & Crafts	May 30	Ardath Buckaway (780) 481-7828

For those ERTA members who reside in Zone 5 (Greater Edmonton area), please telephone Vi Oko at (780) 459-8013 for playoff dates and contact numbers.

ARTA RETREAT

The ARTA Board of Directors along with the Chairs of each Standing Committee met for a retreat, which incorporated a full-length board meeting as well, at the St. Edouard Renewal Centre near St. Paul from March 1 to 4.

A number of idea-generating strategies were employed that resulted in small group discussions where a list of priorities relating to expanded membership, focus, image, political action, benefits and wellness were identified. Plans were generated outlining

actions to be initiated and indicating the committee responsible for its implementation in the next few years. Motivated by a renewed sense of direction, participants left the final session feeling inspired and re-energized despite enduring horrific weather conditions.

JOB OPPORTUNITIES

Heartland Transmission Project

If you are an outgoing, people person who has good speaking and listening skills, is detail-oriented and enjoys team work, this short-term project is an excellent opportunity to earn some extra money.

The Alberta Electric System Operator (AESO) has forecast a major increase in the demand for electricity in the Heartland region (northeast of Edmonton) due to rapid residential, commercial and industrial growth, including proposed bitumen upgraders. Expansion of the electrical transmission system is required to meet this growing demand, which involves the construction of a new high voltage transmission line connecting power generation in the Keephills/Wabamun area (west of Edmonton) to the Heartland region, which includes parts of Strathcona County, Sturgeon County, Lamont County and the City of Fort Saskatchewan.

Teams are required to speak to stakeholders about the potential construction of transmission lines in and around the communities of Edmonton, Sherwood Park, Fort Saskatchewan, St. Albert and Spruce Grove.

The positions required include field agents, field team leaders, information centre representatives and administrative personnel. Wages will range from \$20.00 to \$60.00 per hour depending on the position.

The consultation period is from March to June 2009. Daytime, evening and weekend hours may be required. Training will commence in March.

For more information call Rochelle Zimburg at (780) 412-4089 between 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m.

Executrade

Executrade has several temporary job opportunities that involve clerical processing of student exams for Alberta Education.

Applicants require basic computer skills, keen attention to detail, enthusiasm while completing repetitive tasks and the ability to lift up to 30 lbs. A security/criminal check may be necessary.

DATES: Late May 2009 for 6 – 7 weeks

RATE: \$13.25/hour

LOCATION: Downtown Edmonton.

Applicants are encouraged to contact Executrade at their earliest convenience to discuss further details.

Marilyn Chorney

(780) 944-0023

marilyn.chorney@executrade.com

Dina Ghani

(780) 944-1258

dina@executrade.com

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Seniors Assisted Transportation Society of Greater Edmonton (SATS)

The Seniors Assisted Transportation Society of Greater Edmonton (SATS) is currently seeking volunteers to drive low-income, elderly, frail seniors to medical appointments, shopping, and on other personal errands. Although rides are given on a voluntary basis, money for gasoline is provided. Keeping seniors healthy and active allows them to retain their independence.

The Society also requires office personnel to work one day a week from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. This volunteer position provides retirees with the opportunity to be active, involved and have fun while meeting new people.

Please call Ben at (780) 732-1221 or drop by their new offices at 9907 – 108 Avenue if you are interested.

Habitat for Humanity

Habitat for Humanity is looking for volunteers to answer telephones and perform light office duties 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. weekdays. A one day per week commitment is required.

If you or anyone you know is interested in this position, please contact Angela Robichaud at (780) 479-3566 ext. 223 or e-mail her at arobichaud@edmonton.hfh.org