



PEIRTA

Newsletter

Prince Edward Island Retired Teachers' Association

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From the President

Welcome to 2021—a year of getting back on track. We wish to extend our “Thanks” to Dr. Heather Morrison and Marion Dowling and their support staff for their outstanding work on keeping Prince Edward Island SAFE! We tip our hats to thank them all for their planning and execution of a plan that works! Keeping everyone up to date on what is happening and what we should or should not be doing helps us all.

Thank you once again and continue your excellent work on our behalf.

On another front, congratulations are extended to Michel Plamondon who has been reappointed to the Teachers’ Pension Commission (formerly Superannuation Commission) to look after our interests for the teachers’ pension plan. Our plan has a COLA clause that has provided us with an 8.2 % increase over the last five years (2017-2021). There is no current threat to our pension. Index-

ing is awarded if the funding ratio is above 110%. If it falls below 110%, then indexing stops. If that happens, to help the recovery the contribution rate increases 1% for teachers and 2% for the employer. Since the implementation of this plan, the funding ratio has fluctuated between 122.7% and 111.0%. The fall was the result of COVID-19—the fund value has since started to rise slowly.

You may have noticed that Islanders have been invited to have their say on what the best ELECTED school board model for the English language schools in PEI should look like (*Guardian*, January 6/21). Islanders can submit online through a consultations web page or complete an online survey at www.princeedwardisland.ca/electedschoolsboards. Online consultation will be open until March 11, 2021. The information gathered will be reviewed by the Department of Education and Lifelong Learning and will be used to form a new governance model as well as to make required legislative and regulatory changes under the Education Act. The French Language School Board is already elected and will continue to operate as is. This is your opportunity to express your opinions for a change!

Our 2020 PEIRTA AGM was canceled due to COVID-19. The 2021 AGM is scheduled for Thursday, November 4, 2021 in Summerside—



site to be determined. Look for “Help Us Help You” in this newsletter and give us some suggestions for topics and/or speakers you would like to hear. Updates will be provided in the next newsletter and on our website.

Planning has started for our Annual Retired Teachers’ Golf Tournament to be held in early September at Eagles Glenn of Cavendish. Plans are being made for shotgun and tee times starts—depending on restrictions in place for play. We are open to any suggestions that you may care to put forth to make this day even better than before.

Take care of yourselves and your families. BE SMART! BE SAFE!

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**Visit our website at
www.peirta.com**

From the Editor

If anyone is trying to search the PEI Pharmacare drug formulary, you may encounter problems, as I did. Apparently Health PEI is working on a new format which will be more easily searchable. In the meantime, pull up the formulary, enter Control F, type the name of the drug in the search window, and you should be good to go.

Speaking of drugs, is anyone experiencing vaccine hesitancy as Health PEI rolls out several COVID-19 vaccines? If so, you are not alone.

According to Stats Canada, a poll conducted in September, 2020 reveals that approximately three in four Canadians over 12 are somewhat likely or very likely to get vaccinated. Those over 65 and those with higher levels of education are the most pro-vaccination. And Prince Edward Islanders lead the country in vaccine willingness, with 89% somewhat or very likely to get the vaccine. BC and Nova Scotia were also above the national average, at 82%.

Alberta was below the average, at 71%.

So why do almost 25% of Canadians and 11% of Islanders say they will not be vaccinated against COVID-19.

It's no secret that a number of people still believe that COVID-19 is a hoax, and therefore see no need to protect themselves against it. Some people have bought into one or more absurd conspiracy theories, including one that suggests that Bill Gates is using vaccines to insert trackable microchips in people. There are anti-vaxxers—people who are opposed to vaccines in general—believing that vaccinations are an infringement of their rights, or that a vaccine will give them a, for example, or in this case—COVID-19). Some have legitimate fears about severe allergic reactions (possible, but rare); short term side effects (fairly common flu-like symptoms, as described by our own Dr. Trevor Jain recently on CBC *Compass*); or long term side effects (about which little is as yet known when it comes to COVID-19).

I don't want COVID-19. I have to trust that the scientists know what they're doing, and that the risks associated with getting vaccinated are fewer than the risks associated with Covid-19 (for an old girl like me). Because I am immunocompromised, I don't know yet if or when I will be able to take the vaccine, but increasingly, based on much of what I have read, I'm optimistic that I will. Before my age group comes up, I will talk to my doctors and I will follow their advice. I hope I'll be rolling up my sleeve!

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 June, 2021. Submit material to marg-stewart@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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UPDATE for ACER-CART, from the Minister of Seniors, Hon. Deb Schulte

I want to share some of the highlights for seniors from the recent Fall Economic Statement.

Although long-term care is regulated by provinces and territories, the federal government announced several new measures to help protect residents and staff:

A new **\$1 billion Safe Long-term Care Fund** will help provinces and territories protect seniors in long-term care. It will support infection prevention, ventilation improvements and staffing.

Support for training up to 4,000 personal support worker interns through an accelerated online program and four-month work placement, to help address acute labour shortages in long-term care and home care.

To assist personal support workers, home care workers and essential workers involved in senior care, the Government will work to seek solutions to improve retention, recruitment and retirement savings options for low- and modest-income workers, particularly those without existing workplace pension coverage.

Funding for research to study the effectiveness of promising practices to protect long-term care homes from COVID-19, led by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research.

New funding for the **Canadian Red Cross**, which has provided surge capacity to protect seniors at long-term care facilities and other vulnerable populations.

Funding to expand the Canadian Foundation for Healthcare Improvement's **LTC+ initiative**. Through LTC+, participating long-term care facilities and seniors residences learn from each other's pandemic preparedness, and be-

come eligible for coaching and seed funding to help address gaps.

More supports of interest to seniors.

In addition to the supports mentioned above, we propose to:

Continue to move forward in establishing the foundational elements of **national, universal pharmacare**. The Government is working with provinces and territories on

a new Canadian Drug Agency that would negotiate drug prices on behalf of all Canadians, thereby lowering costs;

a national formulary to be developed by the Canadian Drug Agency; and

a national strategy for high-cost drugs for rare diseases, with funding of \$500 million per year, starting in 2022–23.

Provide \$150 million to improve ventilation in public buildings to help reduce the spread of COVID-19 and make them safer for workers and businesses.

Invest \$43 million to increase support for **Wellness Together Canada**, an online portal that provides free mental health.

Remove the **GST/HST from the purchase of face masks and face shields** to make them more affordable.



ACER-CART UPDATE

(Complete documents are available on PEIRTA website)

1) Our 2021 AGM will once again be an on-line event due to COVID-19. Our AGM features guest speakers on pertinent and timely topics. On Thursday, June 3, 2021 this will occur online and all our 170,000 members will be invited to participate—probably on YouTube live. Mark the date on your calendar! When the program is finalized, more information will be available for you.

2) ACER-CART President Gerry Tiede wrote to Prime Minister Trudeau supporting the government's commitment, released during National Seniors Day, to increase the amount of the Old Age Security Benefit when seniors turn 75 years of age. On behalf of our members (170,000 strong) Gerry urged the implementation of their commitment to increase the OAS amount for seniors with haste.

3) President Gerry also wrote to The Honourable Deb Schulte, Minister of Seniors, about the Supplementary Mandate letter (01/15/21) from the Prime Minister to her that itemized issues of great concern to our membership:

- a) Support for elder abuse prevention
- b) Aid for seniors to age in place and remain in their homes longer
- c) National Standards for long -term care
- d) Access to a primary health care team including a doctor
- e) Increased services to tackle mental health and substance abuse issues
- f) A national, universal Pharmacare program

4) Results of a Health Survey will be reported later.



View from the East- by Robin Carson

I didn't discover the Maritimes until I was 65. Having lived in Edmonton since I was three, I really didn't know much about the rest of Canada. Holidays mostly consisted of excursions west, never east. I knew Jasper, Banff, and Waterton and could find my way around Victoria and the rest of Vancouver Island, but I had never in my life been farther east than Toronto.

The year I began to draw my pensions, my wife and I decided to explore the Maritimes before we got much older. So, maps in hand, we blindly plotted an itinerary, booked bed and breakfasts, bought plane tickets to Halifax, rented a car, and off we went.

We took a tourist-approved loop from Halifax through Wolfville then west to Digby (with its world-famous scallops) and then via ferry to Saint John, New Brunswick. From there, we visited Hopewell Rocks (with the world's highest tides) then crossed the amazing Confederation Bridge to Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island.

The trip was a success in several ways. We fulfilled our ambition of being slack-jawed, camera-toting tourists in our own country, and we found a city that was absolutely comfortable for us: Charlottetown.

Prince Edward Island is very small. While it is not small enough to drive around in an afternoon (like some of our Western visitors have thought), the island is only a fifth the size of Vancouver Island. The total population is just over 150,000, not much bigger than Red Deer. Charlottetown itself has only about 36,000 people. The PEI legislature, with only twenty-seven members, is smaller than ARTA's Board of Directors.

Charlottetown has a small-town feel to it. People look at you, not at the sidewalk or their phones. In restaurants, servers happily strike up conversations, answer questions, and even sit down and chat.

Though Charlottetown is small, because of the tremendous influx of tourists in summer months (well over 1.5 million in 2019), it has most of the amenities of a much larger city.

Where Charlottetown really shines, though, is in its arts community. With both the University of Prince Edward Island and Holland College, there are plenty of young musicians and actors. Victoria Row, a street closed to vehicles in summer, has several restaurants with outdoor seating—and a small stage where live jazz plays all day. Many pubs feature good jazz and excellent blues. Two different stage productions feature Anne of Green Gables, and there is also a private theatre with diverse presentations and The

Guild, a small arts centre featuring art displays, music, and drama.

Confederation Centre of the Arts houses the library, several shops, and a wonderful theatre space that features both local productions and touring performers. There is also the PEI Symphony Orchestra which, this last season, presented music that ranged from Ravel to Holst to Mornlock—and even the symphonic accompaniment to Roch Carrier's "The Hockey Sweater."

In short, Charlottetown is a happ'nin' place near several beaches and good walking trails.

So, after almost ten years of visiting as tourists, my wife and I bought a house. Here we are, and we've discovered great new things about the Maritimes:

- Lots of people speak French. Although I took six years of French in school in Edmonton, and once could read Dumas (*père et fils*) in glorious subjonctif littéraire, nobody ever taught me to speak the language! I'm learning.
- The ocean actually freezes. Well, I knew that, but here the sea-ice is often pink from the red sand, and the slushie-like pinkness of sand and ice crystals will wet your feet even on the coldest days.
- Edmonton winters are truly pretty bad. Once people find out our previous home, they stop asking how we like PEI winters. Here, we can get a ton of snow that closes everything

and can make national news, but it is gone by the next week.

- Road-kill on PEI during the autumn is, well, potatoes. Huge potato trucks lose part of their loads with every bump in the road. If a person had no pride, it would be easy to lay in a good stock of potatoes for the winter.
- The restaurants and craft breweries are absolutely fabulous! It helps that Charlottetown has a school that certifies red-seal chefs.

On the downside, it is impossible to get a doctor! When you arrive, it is important to get a PEI health card and join the waiting list which is, literally, years long. Walk-in clinics do not take appointments and fill up quickly. Patients may only present a single issue to the doctor—kind of tough when you are in your 70s with complex health issues.

So, here we are, in a small house, surrounded by wonderful neighbours and an enormous yard with huge oaks, maples, and pines, and a “baby barn” to hold mower, trimmer, and assorted yard tools. And yes, snow shovels, too.

If there's a lesson to be learned here, it is that if a person is to be 4,716 kilometres away from friends and family, Charlottetown is a great place to do it.



Robin Carson is a retired teacher from Edmonton, and an affiliate member of the PEIRTA. This article originally appeared in news&views, a magazine published by the Alberta Retired Teachers' Association.

Group Insurance Update

~by Kimball Blanchard

The Group Insurance program, because of COVID-19, has had a certain degree of uncertainty in its functioning over the past year. Nevertheless, the Trustees are pleased to state that all aspects of our plan continue to operate on a sound financial basis and continue to offer a full program of protection for our active and retired teachers.

The Group Insurance website has been upgraded to make it much more user friendly and it can be accessed through the RTA website or the PEITF website. The Trustees decided to discontinue the printing of the Group Insurance booklet, which has traditionally been the source of information for the program, due to the lack of demand and the difficulty with keeping the booklet information up to date for our members. If a member requires a printed copy please contact the PEITF office and a copy will be made available.

Johnson will be implementing in the coming months an improved online claims process for active and retired teachers. If you are currently registered for submitting online claims you will receive an email in February outlining the new procedure. Service providers can continue to direct-bill Johnson, or you can continue to mail in claims directly to Johnson's office if you do not wish to use the online system.

While our program provides travel coverage for out of province and out of country travel it is highly recommended that people do not travel during the pandemic. The Provincial and Federal governments have established travel restrictions and members most likely have been aware of

the news item from Nova Scotia describing the costs involved in unplanned illness while out of the province. Do not travel!

The Group Insurance Trustees goal is to offer a complete program for our members at a reasonable cost. We do subsidize some aspects of the program to provide improvements to the program without an increase in premiums. As well, we purchase insurance to protect our plan from catastrophic losses in both the life and health aspects of our plan.

Any member who has a concern about coverage under our plan may contact me and I will direct the concern to Johnson or to the PEITF staff person working with our plan.



* *Reminder:* If you plan to travel, check <https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/advisories> for current travel advisories, and read your insurance policy very carefully to fully understand your coverage. Call your insurer if you are unclear.

I really don't mind getting older, but my body is taking it badly.

NBSRT DIMENSIONS OF WELLNESS~*By Wayne Denman*

The following information is taken from a document produced by the New Brunswick Society of Retired Teachers Wellness Committee, Fall, 2020. The document has been shared with the PEIRTA by the NBSRT..

The NBSRT Wellness Committee was established in 2017, making it one of the first such committees to be formed by retired teachers in Canada. Its mandate is to

collect and study materials related to wellness for retired teachers, provide leadership and guidance for Branch Wellness Representatives, conduct wellness activities, and make wellness recommendations to the Executive and Board of Directors for appropriate action.

Each of the Society's ten local branches is represented on the committee. Committee members meet regularly to gather information, share ideas, and advise the provincial executive. Individual members take on leadership roles, and sometimes form committees at the branch level to promote wellness locally. Branches can apply to the NBSRT and /or Johnson Inc. for financial support for local projects.

The committee takes its definitions of wellness and health from the World Health Organization:

"Wellness is an **active process of becoming aware of and making choices toward a healthy and fulfilling life**. Wellness is more than being free from illness, it is a dynamic process of change and growth."

Health is "a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity."

The Dimensions of Wellness as identified by the NBSRT are as follows. I have included several of their suggested activities under each dimension. There are many other possibilities for each.

PHYSICAL (sports, dance, gardening)

EMOTIONAL (meditation, sharing writing or travel, acts of kindness)

NUTRITIONAL (cooking class, apple picking, recipe sharing)

MENTAL (book exchange, mindfulness training, genealogy, trivia)

SOCIAL (sleigh ride, craft brewery visit, show and tell)

OCCUPATIONAL (fall clean up, food bank, SPCA)

ENVIRONMENTAL (composting, water and streams, buying local)

SPIRITUAL (yoga, meditation, wellness visits)



Is this concept something that we should be exploring? Would you be interested in participating in a PEI version of this? Should we contact other senior groups as well?



HELP US HELP YOU

We are looking for YOUR feedback.

* What can /did we do as an organization to assist you in your retirement?

* When did you need some assistance with retirement planning? University? Early/Middle/Late in Career? Retirement?

* Do you have a skill/interest to share with others?

* Is there something you want to learn about from/with others?

* Do you want to help organizing activities for others?

* Do you have any suggestions for a topic and/or speaker for our 2021 AGM?

Send all comments to Wayne Denman at werdenman48@gmail.com.

The Teachers' Superannuation Fund renamed the PEI Teachers' Pension Plan

It is important to keep your mailing address up-to-date with the Pensions & Benefits office.

Each year the Pensions and Benefits Office distributes pay advice slips, T4As, and newsletters directly to pensioners of the Teachers' Pension Plan (TPP). To ensure you receive these important mailings in a timely manner, please remember to inform the Pensions and Benefits Office if your address changes.

To provide your updated information, please call (902) 368-4200 or email peitpp@gov.pe.ca. You will be asked to provide your name and date of birth to confirm your identity.



Aldene Smallman



The world of education has changed dramatically in response to the pandemic. However, what remains at the core is teachers working very hard to support students and families through these difficult times. The history books will record this era in time, and generations to come will learn of our struggles. Hopefully, as history recounts, lessons will be learned and forwarded to reflect on the positive impacts that society embraced to carry on and push for a brighter and happier tomorrow. Our students require a great deal of support not just academically but also socially and emotionally to persevere through the trials and tribulations of a global pandemic.

The recent U.S. inauguration featured a young American who inspired the world with her beautiful poem. I have read her words numerous times in the past week. Amanda Gorman is an example of how young people can be sources of tremendous inspiration, providing such hope for this upcoming generation to shine a light where there has been mostly darkness. She would not have known the impact she would have on the world before her presentation last week. That's inherent in how many of us live our

lives. As teachers, we strive to release potentials and give students the confidence and knowledge to empower their lives by making a difference in others' lives. As I listened to Amanda, I thought about her past and present teachers. As teachers, we are so fortunate to have had the opportunity to shape and influence the future. We have all had students like Amanda, who have positively impacted our lives as well, by becoming all we hoped they would become. In Amanda's words, "if we merge mercy with might, and might with right, then love becomes

our legacy
and change
our children's
birthright."

Her message rings strong and clear. As 2021 unfolds, may we take these messages and put them into actions.

I know many of you have supported education during

these past few months by being on the substitute list. We continue to be grateful for your support. There is light at the end of the tunnel, and we are looking forward to the day that we don't have to be so mindful of masks, social distancing, operational plans, cohorts, and public restrictions and protocols! As Dr. Morrison reminds us routinely, be patient and be kind! We are blessed in this province for sure! We have all done our part and will continue so that a new day will soon dawn!

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Address Changes

If your address changes, or if you know anyone who has had a change of address and/or is not receiving this newsletter, please have him or her notify our membership chair (contact info on page 2).

Collège de l'Île~*by Maria Bernard*

Collège de île has existed under that name since June 23, 2008, when it received its official title of French Language Community College from the government of PEI. Before 2008 the Collège was known as the Société éducative de l'Île-du –Prince-Édouard, legally incorporated in 1993.

The Collège presents top-quality education that uses the most recent technology. It identifies the individual needs of the students so that they can gain the skills and abilities that are essential to meet the challenges of the job market. The Collège offers programs in French that fills the needs of employers and provide an excellent avenue for anyone who wants to study in French to improve their language skills.

The Collège offers these courses:

- Accounting Clerk
- Bilingual Administrative Assistant
- Early Childhood Assistant
- Early childhood Educator
- Human Services
- Practical Nursing
- Resident Care Worker
- Youth Worker

Beside these courses the Collège specializes in French second language training. It offers four different programs to individuals and groups who want to learn to speak French. The programs are offered in the classroom, online, as French language oral proficiency maintenance sessions, and in tutorials.

The three campuses of the Collège are Wellington, Charlottetown, and online.

The Collège offers to its students different scholarships and financial aid.

For more information about the Collège de l'île go to the website
www.collegedelile.ca

Public School Branch Requesting Assistance from PEIRTA Membership

The PEIRTA received a request from the Public School Branch (PSB) seeking assistance from retired counselors.

The PSB is in a favorable position to add to their complement of school counselors. Despite this being very positive for schools and students, the PSB is facing challenges to fill some part-time, temporary vacancies. As we did when they were seeking substitute teachers last fall, we agreed to send their message to our membership via our newsletter and the PEIRTA website. As it was last fall, whether or not you are interested is your decision to make.

If you are interested, contact Kelly Drummond, Director of Human Resources, at KTDRUMMOND@ihis.org or by telephone at 902-368-6819 for details on schools, grade levels, number of hours, waiver of fees to get licenses (as was done for substitute teachers), etc.

A distraught senior phoned her doctor's office. "Is it true," she wanted to know, "that the medication

you prescribed has to be taken for the rest of my life?"

"Yes, I'm afraid so," the doctor told her.



There was a moment of silence before the senior lady replied, "I'm wondering, then, just how serious is my condition. This prescription is marked 'NO REFILLS'."

PEITF Travel Insurance: Update on Pre-Existing Medical Conditions

Our out-of-province travel insurance plan has a 90-day medical stability clause. This means that if you have a pre-existing medical condition, it must be considered medically stable for 90 days prior to your departure date if you are to be covered in the event of a medical emergency related to this condition while you are travelling.

A pre-existing condition is considered stable if the member, in the 90 days before the departure date, has not:

1. Been treated or evaluated for new symptoms or related conditions;
2. Had symptoms that increased in frequency or severity, or examination findings indicate the condition has worsened;
3. Been prescribed a new treatment or change in treatment for the condition;
4. Been admitted to a hospital for the condition; or
5. Been awaiting new treatments or tests regarding the medical condition (does not include routine tests).

Number 3 generally does not include reductions in medication due to improvement in a condition, or regular changes in medication as part of an established treatment plan—but each case must be reviewed individually. A change shortly before departure, for example, with a subsequent reaction, might present problems. So if you have any doubt, call Medavie Blue Cross at 1-800-667-4511, Travel Department, for clarification if you are planning to travel outside PEI.