

The Retired Teacher

Nova Scotia Teachers Union

Vol 55, No 3 Summer 2024

The Retired Teacher is available online at rto.nstu.ca



Sunrise Over Barrington Bay - Arthur O'Donnell, Shelburne County Branch



A newsletter for the retired teachers of Nova Scotia
A MEMBER OF ACER/CART



RTO Executive 2023-2024

President: Ambrose White(nsrtopresident@gmail.com)	Vice President: Pat Hillier
Past President: Alyson Hillier	Treasurer: Jim Kavanaugh
Secretary: Bonnie Mahaney	MAL (Cape Breton-Victoria): Mickey Gouthro
MAL (Chignecto-Central): Cindy MacKinnon	MAL (Halifax Metro): Hugh Fraser
MAL (South West Shore): Stephen Surette	MAL (South Shore): Charles (Chuck) McLellan
MAL (Strait): Tammy Landry	MAL (Valley): Shelley Morse

RTO Branch Presidents 2023-2024

Annapolis: Wendy Rodda	Antigonish/Guysborough: Ann Marie Morris
AER – Baie Sainte-Marie: Jocelyne LeBlanc-Tidd	Colchester-East Hants: Jim Harpell
CPX: Mary Hammond	Cumberland: Holly Faulkner
Dartmouth: Judy Knowlton	Digby: Jane Power-Grimm
Glace Bay District: Reg Johnston	Halifax City: Bob Hayter
Halifax County: Marilyn Jardine	Inverness: Eileen Coady
Kings: Kevin Carver	Lunenburg County: Hank Middleton
New Waterford: Lorraine Sheppard	Northside-Victoria: Reid Moore
Pictou: Cindy MacKinnon	Queens: Charles (Chuck) McLellan
Richmond: Donna Machin	Shelburne County: John MacKay
Sydney & Area: Joyce Lively	West Hants: Mike Knowles
Yarmouth/Argyle: Maureen Duffy-Mason	

RTO — Additional

Newsletter Editor: Glynda Wimmer (rtoeditor@gmail.com)
Webmaster: Colin J. Campbell (colin@colinjcampbell.ca)
NSTU Staff Liaison: Simon Wilkin (swilkin@staff.nstu.ca)
Nova Scotia Teachers Union: 902-477-5621 / 1-800-565-6788 (rtoadmin@nstu.ca)
Teachers Plus Credit Union: 902-477-5664 / 1-800-565-3103
Johnson Inc: 902-453-9543 / 1-800-453-9543
NS Pension Services Corp.: 902-424-5070 / 1-800-774-5070
Medavie Blue Cross: 1-800-565-8785
CPP and OA: 1-800-277-9914 English / 1-800-277-9915 French / 1-800-255-4786 TTY

IMPORTANT MESSAGE

To help reduce the carbon footprint of the RTO, *The Retired Teacher* newsletter will be sent digitally to new retirees via email. If a new retiree wishes to receive a paper copy, they must request this when they fill out the RTO Membership Authorization Form.

Existing members can change over to a digital copy by sending our RTO administrative assistant an email with their request to rtoadmin@staff.nstu.ca

As always, please remember to update your contact information with our admin assistant if anything has changed.

CONTENTS

- 3 President's Message
- 5 Editorial
- 6 Committee Reports
- 12 Seniors Advisory Council
- 14 ACER-CART Update
- 15 Frailty Impact on Longevity
- 21 Branch NEWS
- 38 Almon Travel Article
- 39 Inverness County Cares
- 41 Branch Presidents' Meetings
- 43 Encounter with Frau Schulte
- 44 Derailed
- 45 AGM 2024
- 48 Disposition of Resolutions
- 52 Curling Bonspiel 2024
- 54 Legacy Foundation
- 58 Scavenger Hunt & WebQuest
- 59 RTO Golf Tournament Form
- 61 RTO Curling Bonspiel Form
- 63 Member Update Form
- 64 Beautiful Nova Scotia

The Retired Teacher, a newsletter for retired teachers, is published by the Retired Teachers Organization, an affiliate of the Nova Scotia Teachers Union.

The opinions expressed in stories or articles do not necessarily reflect the opinions or policy of the Retired Teachers Organization or the Nova Scotia Teachers Union, its professional staff or elected provincial representatives.

We assume no responsibility for the loss or damage of any unsolicited photographs or articles.

Submissions should be directed to the editorial staff c/o RTO Newsletter, 3106 Joseph Howe Drive, Halifax, NS B3L 4L7.

© Retired Teachers Organization 2024

President's Message Alyson Hillier



With the end of our 2023-2024 year in sight, it is time to pause and take stock of where we are as an organization. With over 7,300 members, the RTO strives to serve the many diverse needs of our members, Branches, and communities.

We are grateful to the many volunteers who continue to contribute to this success at the Branch, Committee, and Executive levels. Their collective efforts have allowed us to enjoy many successes and support our members from one end of the province to the other.

Pension Review Panel

We had hoped that by this time we would have received the results of the review conducted in 2020 but unfortunately, there has been nothing. However, we are assured the talks between the province and the NSTU are continuing.

Despite the delay, we continue to monitor the situation and the NSTU assures us that, as stakeholders, we will receive the report before it is released to the public. As we have indicated before, our Ad Hoc Pension Committee will be pulled together to study it and determine the impact on retirees.

In the past, we received the opinion of Ari Kaplan, a lawyer, that we must be consulted if there is any impact on retirees. We intend to hold to that opinion when the report and recommendations are released.

Website

Work is underway on our new website and we expect it will be ready for a launch by the end of the summer. Focus groups with members from Branches across the province provided SimpliCanada with a wide range of suggestions for inclusion and consideration in the design and functioning of the website. If you or any member of your Branch have comments and suggestions, please send them to me and I will forward them to SimpliCanada.

Golf and Curling Events

This year we had two very successful provincial events for our members.

In September, the Golf Tournament was hosted in Comeauville by the Baie Sainte Marie Branch. It was a great day and approximately 60 members got to enjoy the hospitality of the South Shore.

In March, the Kings Branch welcomed 24 curlers for the annual RTO Curling Bonspiel at the Glooscap Curling Club. The day-and-a-half event provided the participants with an exciting competition and good times.

At this time, we have not had any offers to host this event for the 2024-2025 year. If your Branch is interested in hosting either of these events

and would welcome our members to your community, please contact me.

Membership

We are pleased to see an increased number of newly retiring teachers who are joining the RTO. In the 2024 year, 236 retiring teachers joined the RTO - this represents 70% of those who retired. This certainly is encouraging and a tribute to the work done in the Branches and by all members to promote the RTO.

Symposium

On April 17, the RTO hosted our fourth RTO Symposium, entitled “We Are All in This Together”. It was a busy day with approximately 70 members coming together to think about what contributes to healthy active aging. The theme, “Aging, Inclusion and Diversity”, was delivered by speakers who provided information about what we need to age in our communities, reminding us of how diversity enriches our lives and encourages us to see the lighter side of life. Look for a report in the newsletter.

Travel Partner

In February, we entered into a three-year agreement with Danny Almon of AlmonTravel. Now that many of our members are beginning to travel again, we are happy to establish a relationship with a local agency. Look for more information in the newsletter.

Strategic Planning

This summer, during our planning session, we will be looking at several issues which will be timely to review.

- Committee Schedules
- Accommodation Allowances
- Financial Planning for Retained Earnings
- Review Service Contracts and Administrative Assignments
- Branch Presidents Meetings
- Update on Pre-retirement Seminars

Year End

As is the case at this time of year, there will be several changes to the Executive Committee.

Ambrose White will be assuming the position of President and Pat Hillier will become Vice President.

Shelley Morse from the Valley Region and Chuck MacLellan from the South Shore were re-elected to represent their respective regions. Meanwhile, Mickey

Gothro from Cape Breton-Victoria was elected to represent his region, and Cindy MacKinnon of Chignecto Central was appointed to fill the position left vacant due to the election of Pat Hillier as incoming VP. We thank all for their interest in the RTO and appreciate their commitment to our members.

There are other members whose terms are completed. Bill Berryman, Past President, and Margie MacNeil from Cape Breton-Victoria will be completing their terms.

Bill has been providing strong, dedicated, and well-informed leadership to our members for 12 years. His commitment to the RTO, as well as to many other organizations that serve seniors and all Nova Scotians is admirable and note-worthy. His involvement in the Seniors Advisory Council of Nova Scotia, ACER-CART (the national retired teachers' organization), Medication Appropriateness and Deprescribing Network, and the Legal Information Society of Nova Scotia has garnered the attention of government and elected officials bringing attention to the concerns and needs of our aging population.

Margie has been a valued member of the Executive who has brought both energy and spirit to the table. As Chair of the Symposium in April, Margie and her team hosted our members from across the province with her Cape Breton style of hospitality, enthusiasm, and warmth.

This will also be my last newsletter as President. I want to thank members from across the province for the support you have provided me during the past four years - in particular, Executive members, Branch Presidents, and Committee members. Together we have weathered a pandemic, the devastating Hurricane Fiona, and a record-breaking snowfall and yet, the commitment of our members has shone through it all. A phrase comes to mind - “it takes a village” - and that sentiment was evident as we established and found new and effective ways to support our members.

I thank every one of you for enabling the RTO to strive, and even thrive, during these very difficult times. As the symposium theme confirmed, “We are all in this together” supporting each other as we advance, promote, and protect our members.

*Have a great summer,
Alyson*

Changes

Changes, changes, changes - life is nothing but one change after another, and so it goes with the RTO. As you already know, a change is pending regarding the website as it is in the process of being updated and becoming more user-friendly.

As for *The Retired Teacher*, we too have made a change in this issue, but would you even notice without my telling you?

After much discussion with the members of the Communications Committee, and after checking the options available through our publisher, Advocate, we have decided to change the paper quality in this issue from an 80 lb test to a 70 lb test weight. The paper is slightly thinner but still able to produce a good resolution of pictures and text. Because of the reduced weight, we should notice a slight saving in printing costs, as well as some savings in postage.

The members of the Communications Committee need to know your thoughts regarding this change. Do you notice much difference, if any? Do you find the photos are still clear and the text legible? Would you prefer we go back to the 80 lb test or continue with the 70 lb test going forward?

Please send your thoughts and suggestions either to me (rtoeditor@gmail.com) or to our Communications Chair, Tammy Landry (tammylandry@nstu.ca) before September so we can discuss this further at our fall meeting and make alterations, if necessary.

Remember too that, whether you receive it digitally or through Canada Post, the newsletter is a very important mode of communication for the RTO. It has to be accessible by all members in their preferred format. New retirees will now be receiving it digitally, however, should they (or anyone) wish to change their current preference they can contact our administrative assistant at rtoadmin@staff.nstu.ca and it will be processed.

In closing, I hope you find this issue interesting and informative. Please keep the newsletter in mind if you have any great stories, poems, or pictures to share. We look forward to hearing from you.

It's always sunny in Hubbards and I hope it is where you are, too. Enjoy the summer and stay safe!

Cheers - Glynda

Hilton Smith Has Left the Building!

At the end of March, Hilton Smith retired as Custodian for the NSTU after more than 30 years of dedicated service. He has always been supportive and dedicated to us, and his friendly face has always welcomed our members to events and meetings.

Dorothy Smith and Alyson Hillier presented Hilton with a token of our appreciation for his support throughout his time.

Hilton, all the best for a healthy, happy, and well-deserved retirement!



Committee Reports

Communications Committee

The members of the 2023-2024 Communications Committee included Anita MacDonald, Cindy MacKinnon, Tom Riga, Newsletter Editor Glynda Wimmer, Webmaster Colin Campbell, and Chair Tammy Landry. The committee met on September 7, November 21, February 7, and April 9. Below are some of the highlights followed by recommendations for Resolution 2023-8.

- Webmaster Colin Campbell gave an overview of what has taken place on the website for the benefit of the new members of the committee. Many hours of updating and changing around the information on the website to keep it user-friendly took place this year. Much of the personal contact information had to be removed from the website due to the hacking of members' emails. Following the November meeting, with input from the committee, Colin revamped the categories and information to avoid duplication on the site. The 2022-2023 Communications Committee had moved that the Executive explore the option of having the RTO website constructed and maintained by an outside agency. In March of 2024, the Executive accepted a bid from SimpliCanada to construct a new website which the RTO will have ownership of. This construction is currently in progress.
- Newsletter Editor Glynda Wimmer put together two wonderful editions of our magazine in the fall and winter, with June 15 being the next deadline. Lots of time and effort go into each issue with interesting and informative articles for our members. Extra copies of the most recent newsletter will be in the new retiree packages. Resolution 2023-8 was discussed at several meetings and the recommendations are included at the end of this report. Resolution 2024-2 will be debated at the AGM in May with recommendations from the committee presented.
- I am happy to report that both Colin and Glynda have

graciously agreed to continue in their roles for the coming year.

- The roles and responsibilities of the committee will be reviewed in the fall during the September 2024 meeting.

The Communications Committee continued to discuss Resolution 2023-8 which was carried at the 2023 AGM suggesting that the *RTO look into the addition of an "In Memoriam" section of the RTO Newsletter and make recommendations to the Editor of the Newsletter, if feasible.*

Each Branch in the province has its own way of honouring deceased members. The committee has discussed several ways this could happen within the individual Branches. It is not in the committee's purview to direct the Branches on how to do this, if they choose to.

The committee has been discussing the possibilities and are sensitive to the many issues which would need to be considered: confidentiality, potential errors and omissions, and the logistics around assembling the list. Presently, names are read at the AGM each spring.

The committee suggests that the best way to honour our deceased members at the provincial level would be to publish an "In Memoriam" page in the fall edition of our newsletter. This page would not include specific names. The committee further recommends that if any Branch should submit "memoriam information" in their Branch Update to the newsletter, this information should be removed before publication.

A huge amount of thanks go out to Anita (our secretary at each meeting), Cindy, Tom, Glynda, and Colin for all their support and work this year. I was extremely lucky to have a great team for my first year as chair.

—*Respectfully submitted,*
Tammy Landry - Chair, Communications Committee

Finance Committee

During March and April, the Finance Committee began to address our retained earnings issue. During the pandemic years, because of reduced spending and particularly because of much less travel, the RTO added substantial dollars to its retained earnings. By the end of 2023, the total had exceeded half a million dollars. This figure was

approximately one and a half times the RTO's annual income.

The Finance Committee felt strongly, and the Executive agreed, that it was time to start looking at putting some of this money to work to increase and improve the services being provided to all RTO members across the province

Committee Reports

and, at the same time, provide more money to our 23 Branches so that they could better serve members at the Branch level.

The following initiatives were recommended and approved by the Executive to achieve the stated goals:

- At the provincial level, SimpliCanada was contracted to redesign the RTO website.
- Although it was slated to end in 2024, the approved 2025 budget allowed for the continuation of the Regional Initiatives Program. Funds were also approved for Provincial Initiatives in 2024 and 2025.
- At the Branch level, the requirement for Branches to contribute 20% for all approved Branch Initiative Program grants was removed.
- Beginning with AGM 2024, the requirement for Branches to cost-share a second delegate was removed.
- Beginning in 2025, an additional \$7,000 will be added to the amount given in Branch Grants.

The Finance Committee and the Executive have yet to decide what is a reasonable amount to be kept in retained earnings but this matter will be addressed again at the

August Strategic Planning session.

The demeanour at the AGM was very positive this year, and there was great support for the direction taken regarding retained earnings. The proposed budget for 2025 was approved with one amendment.

The elimination of the 20% input by Branches and the sharing of ideas and positive feedback amongst Branches has resulted in a dramatic increase in BIP applications. In 2023, 46 BIP applications were approved. To date this year, 37 applications have been approved indicating a dramatic increase in engagement and participation.

Finally, I would like to extend thanks to Finance Committee members Alyson Hillier, Ambrose White, Bonnie Mahaney, and Steve Surette for their hard work and dedication. A special thank you is extended to outgoing Past President Bill Berryman who always had great ideas for improvement. Although leaving the Executive, we are very pleased that Bill will continue to offer his expertise and knowledge to RTO members in a consultative role. A sincere thank you is also extended to Helen Dawe-Webb and Janice Ruddock of SimpliCanada who are doing a great job in overseeing all aspects of our finances.

—*Respectfully submitted,*
Jim Kavanaugh - RTO Treasurer

Legacy Committee

This year, the Foundation received 14 grant applications by the March 31 deadline. The Legacy Foundation AGM was held on April 15, 2024, where the grants were reviewed and decisions were made regarding eligibility and the amounts to award each recipient. The Foundation was able to provide funding to 12 of the applicants for a total of \$11,480. The recipients have been notified and the appropriate MALs have cheques to deliver to each organization. Funds will be disbursed over the next few weeks.

This year, the funding for our Legacy Foundation grants was exceptional. RTO Branches, NSTU Locals, school communities, and individuals all donated funds to allow us to award more grants through greater funding levels. Our 50/50 fundraisers brought in \$252 in ticket sales from the October 2023 Branch Presidents' meeting with

the winner receiving \$137.50. The March 2024 Branch Presidents' meeting netted \$230 in ticket sales with the winner receiving \$115. Another sale of tickets will happen at the 2024 AGM. We appreciate all donations and are grateful for the donations received thus far.

Work is continuing to promote the Legacy Foundation through various means, including an information article which was submitted for the April 2024 edition of *The Teacher*. I appreciate the work of the Branch Presidents who also share information with their members regarding the Legacy Foundation. A huge thank you goes out to all who continue to support our work to honour retired teachers.

—*Respectfully submitted,*
Shelley Morse - Chair, Legacy Foundation

Next submission deadline is October 15

Committee Reports

Membership Committee

The Membership Committee met four times this past year - three in person at the NSTU Building and one by ZOOM in February.

One of our major concerns continues to be the management of our list of members. With over 7,000 members, maintaining accurate contact and communications information is problematic. Many thanks must go to President Alyson Hillier and Karen Staples, the NSTU RTO liaison, for the hours they have spent reviewing and revising these lists - it is a most daunting task! The committee will be recommending that each Branch appoint an Executive member who will be responsible to monitor and update Branch member contact information.

At the first Presidents Meeting, the committee surveyed the Branches regarding member engagement - 100% response! On review, it was determined that each Branch had excellent and effective systems in place to communicate and engage their members. With the launch of the renovated website, the committee is suggesting an information session be offered to members, and a social media workshop is included.

The committee contacted and had responses from our Atlantic partners. All have similar concerns with member engagement and contact.

The Membership Committee continues to update “The Wall” to showcase activities and put a face to the name. The input from Presidents is appreciated and many thanks go out to John MacKay and Colin Campbell for their invaluable help in forwarding newsletter photographs for display.

The *Benefits of Membership* and the *Accomplishments of the RTO* documents were reviewed and updated.

The committee reviewed additional items to offer for sale to the membership. With possible renovations to the website and logo, it was decided to defer any additional acquisitions until the fall.

At the April meeting, we assembled three hundred New Retiree packages for newly retiring teachers. We included membership registration, RTO information, and a copy of the most recent newsletter. These will be available to Branch Presidents for distribution.

I must truly thank the members of the Membership Committee: Kathy Evans, Holly Faulkner, Lesley Smith, and Judy Knowlton for their knowledge and commitment to the RTO. Their ability to get things accomplished is truly inspiring.

—*Respectfully submitted,*
Hugh Fraser - Chair, Membership Committee

Pension and Benefits Committee

The Pensions and Benefits Committee met four times this year (September, November, February, and April), with one of those meetings being held by ZOOM.

I extend my sincere appreciation to the committee for their hard work and commitment to the various tasks they took on and completed throughout the year.

The committee was anticipating the release of the non-binding recommendations from the Pension Review Panel regarding fully funding the Pension Plan within a reasonable period of time. This report was to have been submitted to the province and the NSTU by July 31, 2022. Unfortunately, there is nothing to report on any aspect of the review, its findings, or recommendations. This is indeed of significant concern to the committee, and the RTO. The Ad Hoc Committee, which was formed to analyse

the report when released and communicate information to RTO members, remains at the ready.

Those members who retired pre-2006 do receive a cost-of-living allowance formulated at CPI - 1. For those who retired post-2006, they may receive a cost-of-living allowance when the funded liability of the plan reaches 90 percent or better. While the *Annual Report* for 2023 is not available at the time I am writing this report, it has not been a good year for our investments.

The RTO will update its members when information is available on pension issues. Retirees are reminded to check the NSTPP website to review the 2023 *Annual Report* (due by the end of April) and the *Actuarial Valuation* to understand better how the figures are calculated and their impact on the pension plan.

Committee Reports

In February, we invited a representative from the New Brunswick Teachers Society of Retired Teachers and one from the PEI Retired Teachers' Association to join our meeting, via ZOOM. The purpose was to follow up on research done by the committee the previous year, to hear how the plans in both these provinces reached fully funded status, and the safety features in place to ensure the health of the plan is maintained. The representatives were very informative and the committee learned a great deal.

The committee worked to put a travel partner in place for RTO members who could benefit from having a company specifically able to provide travel opportunities with possible deals and group excursions locally, nationally, and internationally. Our last travel partner was contracted in February 2020, and at that time had a local representa-

tive to work with members. However, COVID changed many aspects of travel and the company moved from Nova Scotia. As we reviewed the travel offerings from the previous provider, the committee also looked at other companies and did interviews. AlmonTravel, a company based in Halifax, was the company recommended to the Provincial Executive. AlmonTravel was contracted for a 3-year term and is working to provide information for our members who may be interested in using their services.

Questions related to insurance should be directed to Johnson Insurance, travel to AlmonTravel, and Pension questions and contact updates to Nova Scotia Pension. The contact information is available in *The Retired Teacher*.

—*Respectfully submitted,*
Pat Hillier - Chair, Pensions and Benefits

Programs Committee

The Programs Committee met four times this year. Three meetings were in person, and one was by ZOOM to plan and prepare for the Symposium. At each meeting, we discussed details of the RTO Symposium Day to bring forth a smooth, successful event for our RTO guests.

As a committee, we felt the evaluations spoke volumes. The 65 RTO attendees gave high marks to the knowledgeable guest speakers, the delicious food, the spacious venue, the registration procedure, the great swag bags, the prizes, and the many details that went into the planning of this day. Every speaker was given special mention in these evaluations. Neville MacKay even received a standing ovation on his presentation as the last speaker of the day. The theme was “We Are All In This Together” with a focus on Ageing, Inclusion and Diversity. All topics were addressed by our speakers.

Guest speakers included the Honourable Barb Adams, Minister of Seniors and Long Term Care; Wendie Wilson, NSTU Executive Staff Officer; Karen Nicholls, Director of Frailty; Dr. Janice Keefe, PhD. Department of Family Services and Gerontology; and Neville MacKay, Floral Designer.

So many new folks attended and expressed their joy in seeing what the RTO Executive supports and what the Programs Committee planned for the day. They also expressed an appreciation for this new opportunity to attend an RTO event.

Not only did members enjoy the important information the speakers put forth, but they also expressed pleasure and

many thanks to the mini-expo participants. There were ten booths. Guests had a chance to have their blood pressure checked, get a mini-massage, have their hearing checked, and learn about de-prescribing some medications. They asked estate planning questions from LISNS, learned about travel tips from AlmonTravel, and scam awareness from the RCMP and Halifax Regional Police Officers. Efficiency NS gave information on the popular heat pumps. President Alyson Hillier explained Advance Care Planning and the importance of making a plan for when we can no longer speak for ourselves. MAL for the Valley Region, Shelley Morse, explained how to contribute to the RTO Legacy Foundation which supports youth projects for Initiatives to help 5 to 21-year-olds around the province.

The Programs Committee's goal was to provide an enjoyable, relaxed environment where lots of learning and fun would happen - we feel we certainly achieved our goal.

As Chair of the Programs Committee, I would like to express my appreciation for the thoughtful, respectful and “fun to be with” members of this group: Diane Davis, John MacKay, JoAnn Cuvelier, and Cathy Reimer. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the RTO Executive for their continued support at every turn of our initiative. Last but not least, to the RTO members who always volunteer to help: Dorothy Smith, Judy Knowlton, and Linda MacNeil. Your work does not go unnoticed. Thank you all very much.

—*Respectfully submitted,*
Margie MacNeil - Chair, Programs Committee

Committee Reports

Research and Review Committee

The Research and Review Committee met a total of four times during the 2023-2024 term, with the last meeting being held on April 9, 2024. All members were present at the April meeting, and a full agenda of items was reviewed.

At the April meeting, several BIP-approved grant applications and final reports were reviewed. There continues to be a wide variety of topics and events being offered in the Branches with the direct support of BIP grants. Branches are reaching out to members and endeavouring to promote the physical, emotional, and intellectual well-being of the membership. New ideas and activities continue to evolve and several Branches are beginning to plan activities (supported by a BIP grant) for the whole year. The value of such an approach is that it promotes relevant dialogue with the membership about activity options and leads to effective long-term planning and predictability. The Research and Review Committee feels that the BIP grant program is very valuable and strongly recommends its continuation.

The Research and Review Committee also completed an in-depth review and analysis of the Branch Presidents Roundtable Discussion responses from the March 6 (2024) Branch Presidents meeting. These questions probed for responses regarding attendance at Branch meetings and BIP activities, how to effectively inform members about the new RTO website being developed, and suggestions about provincially sponsored events and regional workshop models.

Branches reported that attendance at meetings and events was beginning to improve. Good communication and a variety of activity options, well-planned in advance, were noted as key ways to get members to attend. A wide range of suggestions for provincially sponsored events, both in-person and virtual, were offered. These will be passed along to the Provincial Executive for future consideration.

As far as the proposed new RTO website was concerned, the resounding message received was to keep it simple and user-friendly. It was mentioned that workshop information sessions would help explain the website's usage to members. Other suggestions offered included YouTube virtual tours, provincial webinars, and trivia hunts on the new site.

Many interesting suggestions were advanced for possible regional workshops. The regional workshop model can allow for the sharing of resources and help lessen the

financial strain of one Branch presenting an offering on its own. As well, regional workshops can promote greater communication, social interaction, and camaraderie among the Branches.

As part of a year-end review, the Research and Review Committee undertook a comprehensive analysis of its mandate, priorities, and work product at the April meeting. We feel that the committee has fulfilled the mandate set out at the outset of the 2023-2024 term. In addition, the committee asserts that it has maintained the priorities established, with due diligence and attention to detail. As a workgroup, the committee has consistently used the issue of social isolation, accessibility needs, and member demographics as key components of the lens used through which to view and analyze BIP proposals, Roundtable responses, and other items brought forward.

As a result of the aforementioned discussions, the Research and Review Committee therefore presents these recommendations for consideration:

- Next year's committee should continue with the 2023-2024 *Mandate and Priorities*. To be clear, those 2024-2025 priorities should include:
 - > Continue to address the issue of social isolation and its impact on members.
 - > Continue to report on collated Branch Presidents' Questionnaire responses to the Executive.
 - > Continue to make recommendations to the Executive to address the needs of our members as noted in the collation of Presidents' responses to assist the Executive in finding solutions.
 - > Continue to update the Branch Initiatives Grants summaries.

****** The committee also noted that new ideas from new retirees and Branch Executives will require the Provincial Executive and the Research and Review Committee to be nimble and responsive to other priority needs as they evolve.

- The 2023-2024 Research and Review Committee will compile a list of all approved and completed BIP activities in 2023 and have it shared with Branch Presidents. Such a summary could prove helpful to Branches in their selection

Committee Reports

and planning of BIP activities, based on the committee's experience.

In closing, as Chair of the 2023-2024 Research and Review Committee, I wish to sincerely thank this year's committee members - Mike Knowles, Holly MacDonald, Garland Standing, and Sharon Sullivan - for their hard work, com-

mitment to tasks, and important input throughout the year. It has been a great pleasure and privilege to be part of the Research and Review Committee this year.

—*Respectfully submitted,*

Chuck McLellan - Chair, Research and Review Committee

RTO at NSTU Annual Council - May 2024

Once again, the RTO was invited to have a display table at the Annual Council of the NSTU. Here, we were able to present to active teachers the many benefits of membership and the history of the RTO.

Many teachers stopped by to see our archives and the various information we displayed about our organization. Many also asked questions about the benefits and the activities.

Brenda MacDonald from Guysborough was the lucky recipient of the prize package and will make good use of it when she retires in June. Congratulations Brenda, and all the best in your upcoming retirement!



Deals and Discounts

rto.nstu.ca

Did You Know:

rto.nstu.ca

1. Chuck McLellan has been acclaimed as Member-at-Large for the South Shore for 2024-2026
2. Shelley Morse has been acclaimed as Member-at-Large for the Valley for 2024-2026
3. Mickey Guthro has been elected as Member-at-Large for Cape Breton-Victoria for 2024- 2026
4. Cindy MacKinnon has been appointed as Member-at-Large for Chignecto Central for 2024-2025

Seniors Advisory Council of Nova Scotia

Seniors Advisory Council of Nova Scotia - March 28, 2024

1. The SAC members met during the morning to discuss issues that have developed with the Department of Seniors and Long-Term Care since the signing of the *Terms of Reference* and *Code of Conduct* document.
2. SAC members feel that seniors' issues are not receiving priority in the new department as the government seems to be focused on health care and long-term care.
3. As the SAC provides advice and recommendations to the government, the Deputy Minister believes my letters requesting the high-dose flu vaccine and shingles vaccine free-of-charge for all seniors over the age of 65 were in the form of "lobbying", and more than providing advice.
 - My response was the government wants seniors to "age in place" and this is one of the ways of keeping seniors healthy in their own homes.
4. The SAC believed that it was time to move forward and therefore completed a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) Analysis that morning.
5. After the analysis was completed, there was a discussion on how we now proceed with working with the Department of Seniors and Long-Term Care.
6. In the afternoon, officials of the Department participated in an animated discussion on how both groups can collaborate and work together on seniors' issues.
 - The SWOT Analysis was provided to the Department; they were pleased to see the opportunities both parties can work on.
 - Department officials did agree that seniors' issues needed to be dealt with responsibly and effectively and agreed there were lessons learned from our discussion.
7. The SAC was also forthright in seeing the work completed on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion and questioned why this was no longer a major issue with the Department.
8. I believe both parties left the meeting satisfied that the open and spirited discussion was timely and necessary as we move forward in dealing with important issues that affect seniors in Nova Scotia.

—Bill Berryman

Vice-Chair, Seniors Advisory Council of Nova Scotia

Seniors Advisory Council of Nova Scotia - April 25, 2024

1. The Department of Seniors and Long-Term Care is exploring barriers related to enabling and encouraging older workers to join, or stay in, the workforce.
 - Nova Scotia's participation rate in the labour force is lower than the national average and the Department wants to understand more about the barriers preventing Nova Scotians from engaging in the workforce.

2. The Department expects the SAC to be an important partner in this initiative. The Council will have an opportunity to influence the project's outcome by reviewing documentation, gathering feedback from members, and discussing project components including potential outcomes.
3. At this meeting, the SAC was provided with a presentation on the government policy process and how this initiative would be developed and hopefully accepted by the government.
4. The timeframe for the initiative will be as follows:
 - SAC members will begin to review documentation before the next meeting.
 - At the May 23, 2024 meeting, there will be a presentation on data, statistics, and surveys to gather members' input.
 - During July, the surveys will be analyzed and consolidated.
 - At the September 26, 2024 meeting the SAC will be updated on the next steps.
5. The afternoon session was an open discussion with the following cabinet ministers:
 - Barbara Adams, Minister of Seniors and Long-Term Care and Minister of Justice and Attorney General,
 - Michelle Thompson, Minister of Health and Wellness,
 - John Lohr, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing,
 - Ava Czapalay, Deputy Minister of Labour, Skills, and Immigration.
6. Minister Adams began with opening remarks about the expansion of CORAH (Centre for Rural Health and Aging) and CAPABLE (Community Ageing in Place; Advanced Living for Elders) programs, the new medical school at Cape Breton University, the new nursing school at Acadia, new courses for Licensed Practical Nurses and Continuing Care Assistants provided by Shannex, and the investments in new long-term care facilities.
7. Each of the nine organizations in the SAC were given five minutes to provide the ministers with information on seniors' issues, as they affect each organization.
8. The Ministers responded to the roundtable discussion and provided more information on each department's initiatives.
9. Minister Thompson discussed concerns regarding the lack of doctors and health care workers, virtual care, pharmacy clinics, a central referral system for surgeries, and transition to care facilities.
10. Minister Lohr discussed rent supplements, more public housing, working with Efficiency Nova Scotia to allow seniors to remain in their own homes, increasing beds for the homeless, and immigration putting stress on health care and housing.
11. Deputy Minister Czapalay discussed upskilling the workforce, recruitment/retention of skilled workers and university graduates, and her department's mandate to provide settlement programs for newcomers.
12. On a personal note, this will be my last report on Seniors Advisory Council meetings. I want to thank members for taking the time to read my reports and I want to thank members who have provided positive compliments on these reports.

—*Bill Berryman*
Vice-Chair, Seniors Advisory Council of Nova Scotia



ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE DES ENSEIGNANTES ET DES ENSEIGNANTS
RETRAITÉS
CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF RETIRED TEACHERS

ACER-CART Update

On October 19, 2023, ACER-CART was notified in writing that the Retired Teachers of Ontario/Enseignants Retraites de l'Ontario (RTO/ERO) were withdrawing their membership and associated funding in ACER-CART effective January 1, 2024. This withdrawal will result in a drop in membership in ACER-CART from 163,864 to 84,204 and a loss of \$20,000 in dues.

The ACER-CART Executive called an emergency meeting on November 1, 2023. At that meeting, we received letters of resignation from Martin Higgs (President) and Martha Foster (Ontario Representative). The Executive decided it was necessary to continue functioning before waiting until January 1, 2024, therefore the following motion was approved:

- Effective November 1, 2023, and for the remainder of 2023-2024, the ACER-CART Executive will consist of:
President – Bill Berryman (Nova Scotia)
Eastern Representative – Sharon Penney (Newfoundland and Labrador)
Western Representative – Marilyn Bossert (Alberta)
Past-President – Gerry Tiede (British Columbia)
Roger Regimbal – will continue in his role as Executive Director

The Executive met twice - on December 1, 2023, and again, in person in Toronto, on January 14-15, 2024. These meetings resulted in the following decisions being approved by the Executive. These decisions will, however, need to be approved at a special Annual General Meeting on June 6, 2024. Updates will need to be placed in the *Constitution and By-Laws*.

- The Executive will increase by one member with two representatives from the East, and two representatives from the West.
- Executive positions will now have a two-year term of office rather than the present one-year term.
- As a cost-saving measure, there will be in-person Annual General Meetings in Canada in even years (2024, 2026, 2028). Elections for positions on the Executive will take place at these meetings.
- In odd years (2025, 2027, 2029) there will be abbreviated Annual General Meetings via video conference, as Industry Canada requests annual meetings.
- In the odd years, there will be conferences in the East and the West with guest speakers, association reports, ACER-CART updates, etc. This would be similar to Eastern Canadian Retired Teachers Organizations (ECRTO) Conferences held every two years. ACER-CART would provide funding support for these conferences.
- A special Annual General Meeting will be held at 1:00 PM on June 6, 2024, to ratify the decisions noted above.
- As a cost-saving measure, the meetings of the 2024 Annual General Meeting will take place at the Canadian Teachers Federation Building rather than the hotel.
- The two priorities for the rest of the year are lobbying for a National Pharmacare Program and providing documentation on Ageing in Place.

In losing the national perspective without the presence of RTO/ERO, the following motion was approved at the Executive meeting held on January 14, 2024.

- That ACER-CART approves the National Pensioners Federation's request that both organizations work collaboratively on national projects/issues affecting seniors in Canada.

The National Pensioners Federation has over a million members in British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Ontario, and Nova Scotia and is open to having our members join the provincial affiliations.

—Bill Berryman
President, ACER-CART

Thinking About Frailty's Impact on Longevity

An Interview with Karen Nicholls

Director of Policy and Planning, Frailty and Elder Care Network

By Pauline Murray, Halifax County Branch

Whether you've recently retired or you've been enjoying this chapter of your life for a while, you've probably asked yourself, "How do I want to spend the last decades, years, or 1,000 days of my life?" Probably the most important aspect of how we will spend our time is our health. Did you know that frailty is about living longer, disease-free?

Karen Nicholls is the Director of Policy and Planning, Frailty and Elder Care Network with the Nova Scotia Health Authority. I recently met with Karen at the QEII Hospital, where I've been spending many hours in the last few weeks with my 87-year-old father. I have certainly been thinking about frailty and longevity in the last few weeks but more in the context of my octogenarian dad. Karen helped me to understand why we should all be thinking about frailty at a much younger age.

Karen, what do you want people to know about frailty?

Frailty is one of the most important determinants of your healthcare outcomes. We probably all know two different 80-year-olds. One requires mobility assistance and perhaps a care provider to remain in their home. The other person is still very active both physically and socially, maintaining most, if not all, aspects of their independence. If they were to both contract a disease such as pneumonia, the active person is much more likely to have a positive health outcome even though both patients were treated with the same healthcare.

I'm only 60, why should I be thinking about frailty?

I would like people to start thinking about frailty in their 20s! With aging populations globally, frailty is becoming one of the biggest challenges for world health. Canada now has more people over the age of 65 than under the age of 15. We have more "rollers than strollers"! With the advances in medical science, we are living longer. We need to think about how we can help people to live their later years with dignity and independence. It's about prevention rather than care response. We know that multimodal exercise is by far the number one longevity drug. We need to stretch, work on our balance, do resistance training, and move! A healthy diet, a good sleep routine, avoiding cigarettes, and limiting alcohol intake are other important factors for avoiding frailty. We now know that vision and hearing play an important role, as well.

Is there a way to know how we are doing now in terms of frailty?

Dr. Ken Rockwood, geriatrician, has developed The Clinical Frailty Scale, which allows us to measure our vulnerability from 1 (being very fit and completely independent) to 9 (which is end-of-life care). Some degree of frailty is likely for all of us as we age, however, it is within our own control as to how quickly this happens and how independent we can be.

What if my health routines haven't been stellar?

The good news is that no matter what your age, you can maintain or improve your score on the Clinical Frailty Scale. My siblings believed that our 80-year-old mother required a walker. Instead, I signed her up for a seniors' exercise class. She has gone from a 6 back to a 5 or 4 on the Clinical Frailty Scale. She says she is so happy with her improved mobility and strength!

"I'm not working on my beach body, I'm working on my aging body!"

If you would like to know more about Aging Well, Karen Nicholls provides in-person and online information sessions through the Nova Scotia Health Authority <http://healthyns.ca/>

CLINICAL FRAILITY SCALE



Clinical Frailty Scale ©2005-2020 Rockwood, Version 2.0 (EN). All rights reserved. For permission: www.geriatricmedicine-research.ca
Rockwood K et al. A global clinical measure of fitness and frailty in elderly people. CMAJ 2005;173:489-495.

	1	VERY FIT	People who are robust, active, energetic and motivated. They tend to exercise regularly and are among the fittest for their age.		6	LIVING WITH MODERATE FRAILITY	People who need help with all outside activities and with keeping house . Inside, they often have problems with stairs and need help with bathing and might need minimal assistance (cuing, standby) with dressing.
	2	FIT	People who have no active disease symptoms but are less fit than category 1. Often, they exercise or are very active occasionally , e.g., seasonally.		7	LIVING WITH SEVERE FRAILITY	Completely dependent for personal care , from whatever cause (physical or cognitive). Even so, they seem stable and not at high risk of dying (within ~6 months).
	3	MANAGING WELL	People whose medical problems are well controlled , even if occasionally symptomatic, but often are not regularly active beyond routine walking.		8	LIVING WITH VERY SEVERE FRAILITY	Completely dependent for personal care and approaching end of life. Typically, they could not recover even from a minor illness.
	4	LIVING WITH VERY MILD FRAILITY	Previously "vulnerable," this category marks early transition from complete independence. While not dependent on others for daily help, often symptoms limit activities . A common complaint is being "slowed up" and/or being tired during the day.		9	TERMINALLY ILL	Approaching the end of life. This category applies to people with a life expectancy <6 months , who are not otherwise living with severe frailty . (Many terminally ill people can still exercise until very close to death.)
	5	LIVING WITH MILD FRAILITY	People who often have more evident slowing , and need help with high order instrumental activities of daily living (finances, transportation, heavy housework). Typically, mild frailty progressively impairs shopping and walking outside alone, meal preparation medications and begins to restrict light housework.	SCORING FRAILITY IN PEOPLE WITH DEMENTIA The degree of frailty generally corresponds to the degree of dementia. Common symptoms in mild dementia include forgetting the details of a recent event, though still remembering the event itself, repeating the same question/story and social withdrawal. In moderate dementia , recent memory is very impaired, even though they seemingly can remember their past life events well. They can do personal care with prompting. In severe dementia , they cannot do personal care without help. In very severe dementia they are often bedfast. Many are virtually mute.			

Did You Know:

rto.nstu.ca

In the late 1940s, the male teachers in Halifax City began meeting socially after school hours. They did not invite the female teachers to join them, so some female teachers (some active, others retired) decided to form their own social club. Their membership grew as more female teachers retired and joined.

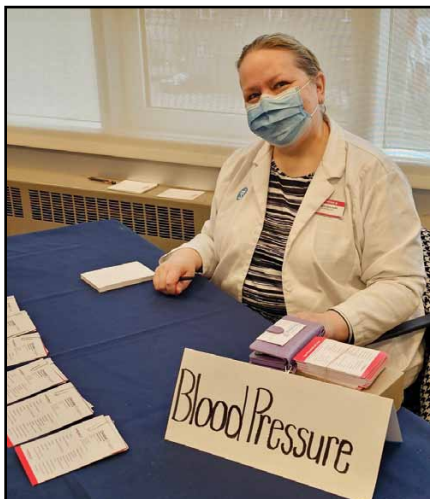
In 1953 Queen Elizabeth II was coronated and these ladies decided to finally give their group a name - thus CPX was formed.

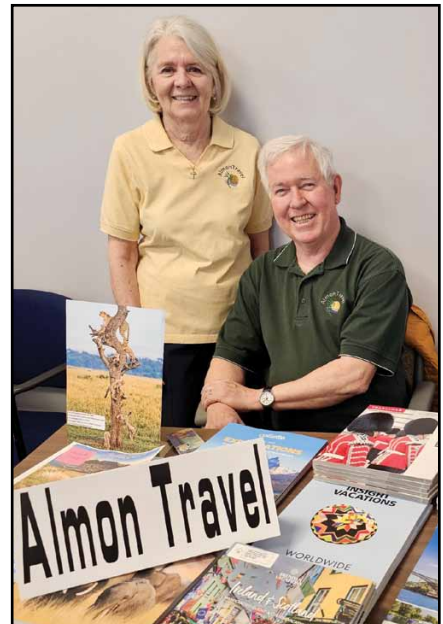
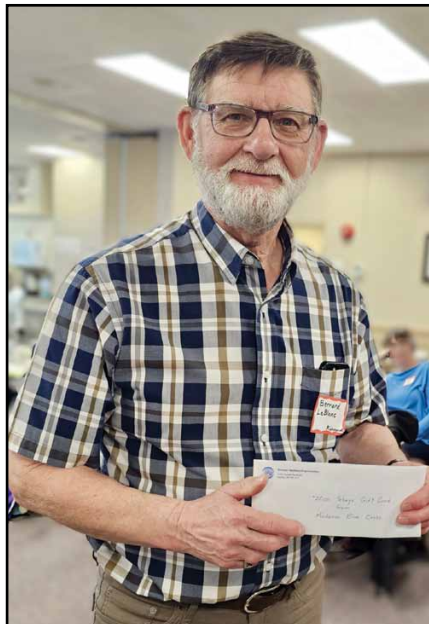
- C - to honour Queen Elizabeth II's Coronation
- P - for Pedagogy, meaning teaching
- X - meaning we exited the classroom

In 1956, some retired male and female teachers in Nova Scotia wanted to create a retired teachers group. They used CPX as a model and became the Retired Teachers Association (RTA). This later became the Retired Teachers Organization (RTO)

To become a CPX member, you must be a retired female teacher who taught in Halifax City. There is no membership fee. When you become a member of the Retired Teachers Organization (RTO), you are invited to become a member of the Halifax CPX Branch.

"We Are All In This Together" Symposium April 17, 2024





IMPORTANT NOTICE

We regret to inform you that we will not be able to hold the annual golf tournament this fall.

Since no Branches have applied to host it, we made efforts with the help of one of our members to arrange it ourselves. However, due to the lateness of our inquiries, there were very few options available. Many factors needed to be considered - the time of day and the date, the availability of staff to provide a meal, increased costs and green fees (approximately 30%) and of course, the uncertainty of the number of participants because of these factors.

Rather than hold an event which would not be up to the expectations of previous events, we agreed it would be prudent to cancel the event for the 2024 year. That, of course, should encourage us to give thought to ensuring we are able to hold the event in 2025. We hope that any Branch that can host it will consider making an application early and have lots of time to put together a plan. Applications are available in this issue of the newsletter and on the website. Financial support is available from the RTO and our sponsors to assist with the costs of this event.

Once again, we regret the cancellation and hope the tournament will return in 2025.

**Look no
further for
exclusive
group
savings**



NSTU members can receive exclusive home and car insurance savings and enhanced coverages.

belairdirect.
car and home insurance

Certain conditions, eligibility requirements, limitations and exclusions apply to all offers. Visit belairdirect.com for more details. Offers may change without notice. We offer car insurance and home insurance in Alberta, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Labrador and Prince Edward Island and home insurance only in British Columbia. © 2023, Belair Insurance Company Inc. All rights reserved.



Danny & Debbie Almon

www.almontravel.ca
danny@almontravel.ca
902-431-4932
1-855-902-4937



Have a look at our travel videos at <https://www.almontravel.ca/videos/>

Specialties:

1. River Cruises (Worldwide)
2. Coach Tours (Worldwide)
3. Long-Stay Vacations (Portugal, Spain)
4. Caribbean Area Vacations, (including Mexico)
5. Exotic Trips: Vietnam, China, Egypt, Africa
6. Ocean Cruises (Worldwide)
7. Special Group Trips: anniversary, special occasion
8. Multi-generational Travel (Florida theme parks a specialty)
9. Solo Travel

We would be happy to help you with your future travel plans!

Dartmouth High School 50th Reunion

Classes of 1973, 1974, and 1975

Please join us in celebrating our **50th** DHS reunion

When: July 27, 2024

Where: Banook Canoe Club

Meet & Greet Social from 7 to 9 PM,
followed by a dance from 9 to midnight

A complimentary ticket(s) for you and a guest (name required) will be offered to any DHS teacher who taught within those three years.
Contact us at **dhs737475@gmail.com** and a ticket(s) will be forwarded to your email address.

We are also offering a Golf Tournament and a Harbour Cruise on Friday, July 26th
(fees applicable).

Tickets are limited to all events so we encourage you to email us ASAP. If you have questions, please get in touch with us at the email address above. We hope to see you there!

For more details, visit our Facebook Page DHS Reunion 2024, Classes of 73, 74, 75



Antigonish-Guysborough

The Antigonish-Guysborough Branch of the RTO has been very busy. Our focus this year was to give our membership more engagement opportunities. To that end, we looked at ways to encourage younger retirees and provide opportunities for older retirees.



February's generous snowfall set the stage for an unforgettable winter escapade. Thanks to the support of a BIP grant, our Winter Adventure unfolded amidst the serene landscape of FireLoch, a 55-acre retreat haven nestled in the heart of Lochaber, Antigonish County and perfectly suited for snowshoeing and hiking. The day was enchanting as members traversed the pine-dotted trails and expertly groomed woodlands. It was truly a winter wonderland.

Our adventure didn't stop there. Our gracious hosts had more in store for us, including axe-throwing activities, a crackling bonfire on site, and a rustic yet delectable outdoor woodfire pizza-making experience. Armed with dough and an assortment of tantalizing ingredients, we crafted our own personalized pizzas before watching them bake to perfection in the woodfired oven. It



was culinary delight mingled with camaraderie - a feast for both the senses and the soul, and members relished reconnecting and reminiscing.

On February 12, we started a Coffee Club for members at the Snow Queen Restaurant. This event takes place on the second Monday of the month and starts at 10 AM. A free coffee or hot beverage is available to the first ten members who arrive! We hope to see you there for some chat and social time.

Our Small Grant Initiative allows members to apply for \$200 to assist folks who want to get together and hold an event. This spring, one of our grants went to a group of RTO members who wanted to share a meal and gather donations for the local food bank. Twelve members attended.



Our AGM was held on June 5 and was well attended. We followed the meeting with a beautiful roast turkey dinner held at the East Coast Credit Union Building and catered by the CACL. Executive members Donnie Campbell, Michel DeNoncourt, Mike Hinchey, and Phil Doucette will be on to other adventures. New to

Branch NEWS

the Executive are Yvonne Quik (Communications) and Cathy DeCoste-Coutere (Secretary).

The Antigonish-Guysborough RTO Branch would like to wish everyone a wonderful summer.



Colchester-East Hants

It has been an eventful year for the Colchester-East Hants Branch!

At our 2023 AGM, after a determined VP stood firm that every position had to be filled before accepting the nomination for President, volunteers stepped up and all nine positions were filled! And after our 2024 AGM, we only had one vacancy left on the Executive - that of newsletter editor. I wish to thank our members for their support.

Our year began with the Bye-to-the-Bells Breakfast at the Truro Golf Club, with fifty-four members in attendance. We also held our usual Christmas and Valentine's Socials. This was also the year for our bi-annual Talent Showcase which, once again, proved to be a hit. As well, two of our members attended the very impressive Wellness Symposium in April.

On May 8, a BIP grant enabled thirty of our members to board a bus for a trip to the Jost Winery in Malagash. Upon arrival, we were greeted by our host, Nick Rector, who led us through a wine tasting. Several varieties of wines were sampled as Nick gave us details about the process of wine-making, in general, and the history of their business, in particular. Following that, we were treated to a delicious lunch consisting of soups, sandwiches, delectable desserts, tea, and coffee. Nature provided us with a beautiful, sunny day, allowing us to

enjoy these activities outdoors.

After sustaining some hurricane damage to the vineyards during the past few years, Jost hasn't been offering tours. However, we were invited to go through the vineyards, if we wished. Some members took the opportunity to do so. Products were available for sale at a discount and judging from the happy chatter and several positive comments, the trip was deemed to be one worth repeating.

We have already received confirmation that some newly retiring teachers have joined/will join at the end of the school year. Great news! I encourage members to reach out to welcome all retiring teachers to the RTO and to see that they have signed the application forms. Let's see how close to 100% of the retirees in our Branch we can sign up.

Much gratitude and best wishes to Christine Caudle for stepping forward to fill the position of President for the coming year. Additionally, thanks to all the members who faithfully come out to attend the regular meetings and who provide the many wonderful goodies we so enjoy, and which have permanently lodged around my waist! - Jim Harpell

Branch NEWS



CPX

In October of 2023, several CPX members enjoyed a bus trip to Peggy's Cove along with members from the Halifax City RTO.

On November 30, 2023, we held our annual Christmas Dinner at Hope Church Hall in Halifax. The head table guests included Alyson Hillier (RTO President), Hugh Fraser (MAL for Metro and Area), and Judy Knowlton (Dartmouth President). Our Vice President, Sue Kent, said grace and everyone enjoyed the delicious turkey dinner that followed.

As in previous years, during our Christmas Dinner, we again donated to the Legacy Foundation in memory of our deceased members.

The names of our sick and shut-in members were read and Christmas cards were sent to each member. We also continued our tradition of bringing gifts for Ivy Meadows Continuing Care Home residents - these were given to them on Christmas morning.

The Wellness Symposium in April was discussed and

a sign-up sheet, along with a sheet for suggestions for a venue for our next AGM, were both placed on the table for names. Our AGM was scheduled for June 18, 2024.

We wish everyone good health, fun adventures, and lots of laughter in 2024!

Cumberland

Marie Osbourne is celebrating 24+ years of service to our Cumberland Executive. She served many years as Secretary and finished her time as Member-at-Large. Marie is a dedicated and engaged volunteer leader and a Cumberland Branch Rock Star!!

Pat Hillier is seen sporting a very special T-shirt designed by a former student. He works for Joe Fresh.



These are available to order through Superstore. Pat wears her new colourful shirt with Pride!



Dartmouth

Did you know St. Patrick's Day was celebrated on March 18 in Newfoundland? It is celebrated on the Monday closest to March 17 every year. This year, the Dartmouth Branch celebrated St. Patrick's Day in Newfoundland-style on March 18! Members were encouraged to come in their creative green outfits to an informal lunch at Pilot's Pub in Dartmouth. A gift card was awarded to Judy Dupuis for her efforts of wearing "head to toe" green.

April brought sunshine and an introduction to chair



yoga, presented by one of our members. Patricia Power guided us through an hour of gentle movements as we explored this activity. All present agreed that it was a great session and many expressed a desire to continue this activity in the future.

On a beautiful sunny day in May, 35 members gathered at Brightwood for our Spring Luncheon. Special guests were Danny and Debbie Almon from Almon Travel, who provided an information table on travel adventures. They also spoke after the meal about their own adventures overseas, in Egypt, and in other exotic locations. Three lucky guests won major prizes and six attendees won the plants at each table. As well, Danny and Debbie offered a door prize from Almon Travel.

Stay tuned to your email as we plan for fall activities. These will include the "Ignore the Bell" brunch, a trip to the valley, chair yoga, informal gatherings, and our first luncheon of the season!



Digby

Several Digby Branch members happily took advantage of Yarmouth Branch's generous offer to join in on a couple of their informational sessions.

Thanks to an Eud-Wellness grant that the Yarmouth Branch was awarded, our members headed down in March to our neighbouring county to learn helpful info about memory and aging diseases, fraud, scams, and other safety tips for seniors.

In April, we were happy to learn from a pharmacist about the new Primary Care Clinics, and from a lawyer about wills, estates, and personal directives. We loved the

Branch NEWS

free lunch, the prizes, and most of all, the collaborative spirit of the Yarmouth Branch! We hope to reciprocate and open some of our programs to nearby Branches in the future.



In late May, a BIP grant enabled some of our members to gather in the Program Room in Digby's Library to make scented candles. An instructor from Back to our Roots Candle Shop (located in Deep Brook, NS) led us through the whole process. These were poured candles involving precise temperatures and measurements.

Each participant made a 5 oz. scented candle and a



set of tea lights, choosing the scents they wished from a large selection of lovely, interesting scents. While the group was smaller than usual, it was great because it was an opportunity for some of our less mobile members to participate. As one member said, "Fun to chat and work with the hands."



Glance Bay

The first luncheon meeting of the year was held on April 18 at the Warden United Church in Glance Bay. The membership again got to enjoy a delicious buffet meal after another long, cold winter. It was great to get out and socialize with friends and enjoy a delicious buffet meal in the process. A hearty welcome was bestowed



Branch NEWS

upon our newest member, Allister Moore. With the anticipation of spring, the mood was upbeat.

On May 9, a group of aspiring artists gathered at Oceanview Education Centre to get instruction from

art teacher Brenda Donahue on how to paint a masterpiece. It was a fun-filled evening with lots of laughter and pleasant social interaction thanks to a BIP from the Provincial RTO.



Halifax City

The past few months have been busy for the Halifax City Branch of the RTO.

Thanks to grants from the Branch Initiative Program (BIP), we were able to hold several events. In February, we had a terrific subsidized yoga and lunch session at the NSTU Building. In March, we subsidized a fun sea glass art project at By the Ocean Art in Eastern Passage. We will be applying for more grants for events in the fall.

In April, two of our Executive members attended the Wellness Symposium at the NSTU Building. As a result, we have several promising ideas for health-related presentations for our membership.

We had a successful Annual General Meeting in May. We are so glad that so many members came out to join us. Our meeting featured a book/puzzle swap, a catered lunch (free!), insurance information, and travel



information.

Our new President is Carmel Rooney. Many thanks to outgoing President, Bob Hayter, for his years of service and wisdom in that position.

Thank you, too, to Halifax member Alyson Hillier, who served as President of the Provincial RTO and liaison to the Halifax City Branch. We are fortunate to benefit so much from your experience.

Halifax County

This winter, the Halifax County RTO was pleased to offer an exciting craft workshop opportunity to our members to create 'Pebble and Sea Glass' Art. The activity was held on March 27 from 1-3 PM at the Interpretive Centre in Fisherman's Cove, Eastern Passage. The venue was accessible to all members, including those with mobility issues.



The resident artist/teacher of this class, Sandra Varner, along with her assistant Kat, began with general instructions for the craft. For the remainder of the session they moved from person to person to provide individual guidance.

All materials were provided, including framing. There was a choice of three designs which participants could choose from when they arrived.

Sandra and Kat did all the setup and take down, and were incredibly organized and helpful to everyone! When they weren't instructing, they circulated and encouraged the entire time.



At the end of the class, each participant left with their own completed and framed piece of Pebble Art. The results were outstanding, and everyone was very pleased with their take-home craft.



Branch NEWS

The friendly, chatty atmosphere in the room was a great indication of how much everyone enjoyed getting together with friends and colleagues to create their masterpieces! Many also felt that this activity was something they would try on their own at home.

This activity was subsidized through the Provincial RTO Branch Initiatives Program.

Inverness

Spring 2024 has been a busy time for our Branch. In early May, Inverness co-hosted a regional presentation with the Richmond Branch on insurance coverage and special programs for senior care, presented by Bill Berryman. Close to fifty members were in attendance and they very much appreciated the information provided by Bill.



Inverness Branch President Eileen Coady and Richmond Branch President Donna Machin at the Bill Berryman Insurance Session in May

The Spring General Meeting was held on June 5 in Northeast Margaree. We had excellent attendance from across the county. President Eileen Coady convened the meeting and welcomed everyone, and MAL Tammy Landry provided an informative update from the provincial table. Additional presentations were given by members of the Executive, including reports on the Symposium and the AGM. Guest speaker Karen MacKinnon, a nutritionist with NS Health, spoke on healthy eating and diet concerns for seniors.

After our meeting, a delicious roast beef dinner was

enjoyed, prizes were drawn, and members had time to browse the book exchange, pick up some of the numerous information sheets available, and socialize with their friends and colleagues.

Our future BIP events in June promise to be very enjoyable. First, we will have a gardening workshop in Inverness where members can assemble a beautiful flowerpot for the season, and enjoy tea and treats afterwards. On June 26, we will celebrate summer with a most anticipated 90-minute boat tour for members and guests on beautiful Baddeck Bay.

Executive members will meet in August to plan for the AGM and dinner, which is likely to take place in Port Hood in late September. As well, our Branch Executive will continue working on membership updates and developing more wonderful events for the Inverness members.



Kings

It's been another busy spring in Kings County! We held a tech-sharing session again this year, making good use of the space and technology made available to us by the Kings Local, NSTU. Members brought their own devices and with the use of a big-screen smart TV, we passed along some useful tidbits and help to those who had been struggling to stay connected.

Perhaps it has something to do with living in a part of the province where agriculture abounds, but Kings Branch members always seem to enjoy morning events and activities. Breakfasts at Rosie's continue to be popular, with members kick-starting their day with a wonderful and inexpensive breakfast while catching up

Branch NEWS

with friends and colleagues. If the weather cooperates, it's not unusual to see two dozen or more at these events.

A group of 20 members and guests also enjoyed coffee and muffins at our second Coffee Klatsch held in Woodville. Like our breakfasts, there was much laughter and enthusiastic conversation. This event was made possible and free-of-charge to members through a BIP grant.



Just before March Break, the Kings Branch was pleased to host the Provincial RTO Curling Bonspiel at Glooscap Curling Club in Kentville. Thanks go out to Ed Getson for stepping up as head of the organizing committee. Participants had an enjoyable two days with great competition and a lovely banquet, along with plenty of snacks and prizes!

A few members from Kings were fortunate to attend the fantastic RTO Wellness Symposium in April. The organizing committee, of which our own Cathy Reimer was a member, is to be commended on a fantastic, informative, and entertaining day for all participants!

Kings Branch joined Annapolis and West Hants in hosting a wonderful regional initiative at Paddy's Pub in May. Organized by Valley MAL Shelley Morse and funded by a generous BIP grant, over 20 members enjoyed excellent presentations on Carepath and Internet Fraud. Along with some great door prizes, the snacks and service provided by Paddy's were second to none!

Our wine-tasting event last fall proved to be so popular that a second one was held this spring at the Benjamin Bridge Winery in the beautiful Gaspereau Valley. We learned about types of wine, varieties of grapes, and how to make champagne in the traditional method.



Our small but dedicated group of hikers continued to meet every other week during the winter and spring (weather permitting). The only time they cancel is when Kings County students enjoy a snow day!

If you follow the provincial RTO news, you will know that the Kings Branch brought forth a number of resolutions at the 2024 AGM. We were delighted to see support for these ideas and suggestions that resulted from considerable thought and meaningful conversations. The positive relationship between our Provincial Executive and the Branch Presidents is wonderful to witness.

The Kings Branch held its own AGM in June, where we elected two Executive members:

- Theresa Pelley - Pension Information Chair
- Cathy Reimer - Communication Chair

MaryLou Rockwell completed her term as Chair of Membership and was presented with a token of appreciation. We also voted and approved an updated version of the *Kings Branch By-Laws*. Following the business portion of the meeting, members had the opportunity to meet with the Executive and enjoy some lovely snacks.



Branch NEWS



Our Branch website has seen the addition of a useful tool: a Deals and Discounts Calendar informs members of businesses that offer a discount to RTO members or seniors on specific days of the week or month. (www.KingsBranchRTO.com)

We have been successful in gathering a few more email addresses for our mailing list but we are still missing out on reaching many of our members. If you are a Kings Branch member who is not receiving our weekly emails, please contact us. (info@KingsBranchRTO.com)



Lunenburg

The Lunenburg County Retired Teachers Organization had two recent dinner events which were very well attended. We attempt to hold our events and meals throughout the county, as much as possible.

The first dinner took place in March at the Bridge-water Legion, which is a very central area in the county. We were able to rent the main dining area and kitchen, and supply door prizes, thanks to a \$450 BIP grant.

All in attendance enjoyed a delicious roast beef dinner which was supplied by the New Germany Lions Club.

In May, our Branch Annual General Meeting and Dinner was held at the West Northfield Community Centre. It had been years since we had been there and we were very happy to be back at that location for their tasty turkey dinner.

The new Executive for 2024-2025 was presented to those assembled. Heather Jeffers was selected as one of the new Members-at-Large replacing Glynda Wimmer. We thank Glynda for her many years of service as an active teacher to the Lunenburg County Local, NSTU and in retirement, her service to the Lunenburg County RTO.

We will be hosting our "No Bell Breakfast" on September 4. Our tentative location is the Chester Golf Club. We welcome all new 2024 retirees to become members of our Branch. New retirees will receive a complimentary breakfast on September 4.

New Waterford

The New Waterford Branch, RTO had its AGM/ Dinner Meeting on Monday, June 10. As it was that time of year when senior students were graduating, we presented students from the Breton Education Centre (who are related to one of our Branch members) with a bursary.

This year we awarded four bursaries. Shown in the photo with Outgoing Secretary Beth Pfeifer and Treasurer Doug MacSween are bursary winners L-R twins Alexah Marie and Ainsley Murphy (nieces of Ambrose



Branch NEWS

White), Luke MacKinnon (grandson of Nancy and Dan Willie MacKinnon), and Kate Morrison (granddaughter of Patsy MacDonald).

We also elected our new Executive. Pictured are L-R which consists of Lorraine Sheppard, President; Ambrose White, VP; Doug MacSween (Treasurer), Lorraine Sheppard (President), and Tom Riga (Secretary). Missing from the photo is Ambrose White (VP). Beth Pfeifer was presented with a small gift of appreciation for her 12 years of service as Branch Secretary.



Mary MacMullin informed the group that we had donated \$300 to World Vision. This works out for them to \$2100 to be used for children's lunches in India. Jean MacDonald of the Benevolent Committee informed us of our donations to the Legacy Foundation.

Members enjoyed a delicious, stuffed chicken dinner and social time with their former colleagues.

Northside-Victoria

Carpe extra diem! In keeping with our unofficial motto, the Northside-Victoria Branch seized the chance to meet for a leap-year breakfast on February 29 at the Bras d'Or Hall. Here we enjoyed a great start to the day with all food groups well-covered.

Our guest speaker was Terry Dwyer, from a newly formed Sydney Mines Branch of the Souls Harbour Rescue Mission. This group provides meals and other services to those in need. Terry outlined the many challenges facing families in Sydney Mines and Area. A donation of \$300 was made to help with their work. As usual, food items and money were collected for one of



the many food banks within our Branch's boundaries.

Additional business was reserved for a subsequent meeting, as the central purpose of this get-together was to reassure each other that everyone had survived the "snowmageddon" earlier in the month.

Our next meeting was held at the usual venue, the Bras d'Or Hall, on April 16. This meeting was presided over by Past President Cathy Anderson, as President Reid Moore was away. As always, we enjoyed a delicious meal - in this case, roast beef. Following dessert (many kinds of pie, making choice a challenge), we were addressed by Terri Dennis, Executive Director of the Northside/Harbourview Hospital Foundation. Ms. Dennis explained how the Foundation supports the two hospitals, not only in the purchase of equipment but also in the expansion of existing services. Many members were amazed at the scope of help the Foundation provides.



Past President Cathy then gave a detailed President's Report. Recent letters of thanks from local food banks were shared, and a further donation of food plus \$61 to the Sydney Mines Food Bank was announced.

A plan to go bowling together has been deferred till

Branch NEWS

the fall. Our final meeting of 2023-2024 will take place on June 19 at the Bras d'Or Hall.

Wishing all RTO members a happy summer!

Pictou

On February 15, 2024, the Pictou Branch had its Second Dessert Cafe. Again, it was a wonderful and decadent success. Thank you to Alison MacPherson, Wendy Ross, and Cindy MacKinnon for preparing delicious desserts for all to enjoy.



April was a creative and rewarding month for our members. On April 10, Debbie van Vulpen organized a hand-knitting workshop. The 12 ladies who attended ended up going home with beautiful, cozy blankets to curl up in. A big thank you goes out to the NSTU Pictou Local for allowing us to use their space for our workshops and meetings.

Also in April, four of our members prepared a delicious meal at Viola's Homeless Shelter for all the clients to enjoy. Lasagna and garlic bread were prepared for 40+ clients and a big pot of spaghetti sauce was left to put in

the freezer for another time. It was a very humbling and rewarding day for those who participated. Thank you to Nancy Doyle, Cindy MacKinnon, Wanda McKenna, Wendy Ross, and Edith Turner, for helping us make this day happen.



On May 1, the Pictou Branch held a fun-filled night of bowling and dinner - always a good way to be social and stay active with friends. Also, the Pictou Local of the NSTU invited our members to join them for an evening of curling followed by games and snacks at a local distillery, Blue Lobster Public House. Only a few RTO members attended, but a good time was had by all.

To round out the year, we had a wonderful AGM dinner at the Marina Bar and Grill in Pictou. During the meeting, two Executive positions were filled through acclamation. Congratulations to Nancy Doyle, who will step into the position of President, and to Debbie van Vulpen who will complete her second, 2-year term as Vice President. Thank you to both Debbie and Nancy for putting their names forward and committing their time and effort to the Pictou Branch of the RTO.





Queens

After a lull in activity during the winter months, the Queens Branch began meeting in earnest in mid-March. At the general meeting held in Liverpool, preparations were made for the election of a new Executive at the upcoming Annual General Meeting in April.

It should be noted that a number of our Queens members were involved in a musical production, entitled *Follies*, presented at the Astor Theatre in Liverpool in late February and early March. Several members performed on stage while others worked behind the scenes with producing the show. The musical was very well received by our community, and it was a real treat to see so many retired teachers involved in making the play such a success.

In mid-April, the Queens Branch held its AGM in the Liverpool area. The meeting was well-attended and many items of interest to the membership were discussed and acted upon. In addition, Branch elections were conducted in accordance with the by-laws, resulting in a new Executive being elected and the appointment of



chairpersons for several Standing Committees for the upcoming year. A new committee was also struck at this time - the Branch Wellness Committee. This committee recently provided leadership in submitting a successful application for a BIP grant for the Branch. This grant will be used this year to provide additional activities and opportunities of interest and value to our members.

On June 10, the Queens Branch held a spring dinner at the Royal Canadian Legion in Liverpool. Over 30 members and special invited guests attended the event and enjoyed a full-course turkey dinner and lots of great conversation. More events and meetings are being planned for the fall.



Richmond

Since our last update, the Richmond RTO committees have been actively pursuing social and business activities.

Our Social Committee has been exceptionally busy during the winter. They have added a 'teamwork activity' to the end of our meetings, engaging our members to communicate and move about the room spending time not just with their friends, but becoming acquainted with other members. For example, in February we added a game of "Valentine's Family Feud". Members were divided into teams and competed to win Tim Horton's and Robin's gift cards if their team placed first.

During the March meeting, we had an Easter "Year of Identity" game, estimating the year of invention on common items. This was both entertaining and enlightening, and although we struggled to follow directions

Branch NEWS

at times, participants were certainly entertained by the mishaps and answers provided. The top three walked away with small prizes to encourage them to return for the next month's meeting.



During the winter months, the BIP Grant Committee ambitiously worked on developing activities that would entice more involvement from members. The grant was approved in April. We have already completed our Annual Pancake Breakfast (that became a brunch this year) with a local artisan coupling with last year's creation of pebbles and canvas by adding paint and having members complete a winter scene with different mediums. This was interesting and well-received by all.

There were also areas in the hall set up for other members to try their hand at Beanbag Toss, Rocks 'n Rings, and Cribbage while offering an opportunity to gather with peers. Once again, people walked away with door prizes of the plants that decorated the tables, smiles on their faces, and the interest to see what we might do next.

The We Care Committee was also busy coming up with plans to visit and include our shut-ins in what was happening with the RTO and checking in on them to see that they are not alone and isolated. We brought these members plants that could be either indoors or



outdoors, depending upon their preference. Our shut-ins were thrilled with this thoughtfulness. Those who visited enjoyed their time with the shut-ins too, and often a half-hour visit became an hour-and-a-half to two hours!

We are now preparing for an early Summer Tour of Lobsters 'R Us followed by a social, and our June AGM to finish the traditional school year. We are also busy getting our fall start-up organized. Our goal is to bring in as many new retirees as possible and to make our Branch sustainable for many years to come.

Shelburne County

There are a few changes coming up this year in Shelburne County! A new Executive was elected at the AGM in June: John C. MacKay (President), Helen Goreham (Vice President), Lesley Smith (Treasurer), and Rena Balcom (Secretary). We are looking forward to working together to keep our members smiling.

At our latest AGM, we also had the opportunity to update our *By-laws* and map out a few donations to the area. The meeting was held at the beautiful Sandy Point Lighthouse Community Recreation Centre and, as always, the meals were delicious.



This year, we had a Wool Felting event sponsored by an RTO BIP grant. Held at the Barrington Woolen Mill, it was an ideal location for the group to see the process of dyeing the wool and the unique equipment which was once powered by the rushing water of the Barrington River. We were working in a place of deep history as this location was especially important to the Mi'Kmaq people and the Acadians.

To create our works of art, we brought pictures with

Branch NEWS



us to recreate in felt by using special barbed needles. There were a few of us that needed band-aids after poking our fingers, but that added to the uniqueness of our art pieces. Many thanks to the RTO for providing this worthy grant to assist our Branch.

On behalf of the members of the RTO Shelburne Branch, have a safe and happy summer.

Sydney & Area

The spring was relatively quiet for Sydney & Area as

many of our members like to travel. We have learned that planning spring events is somewhat risky, financially. We are exploring activities and venues that bring less risk to the Branch.

That being said, the Branch did have a lovely brunch meeting where it was decided that our general meetings will be held during the day, separate from social dinners, except for our AGM in June.



We hosted a travel presentation with AlmonTravel for the three other Branches on the east side of Cape Breton. The weather that night was frightful but the attendance was delightful! A great deal of interest was generated for potential trips in the future.

President Joyce Lively was invited to the retirement banquet of the CBDL. She was proud to invite this year's retirees to join our ranks and was excited to note that several had already registered.

The Branch will close the year with the AGM on June 18 with a lobster/ham dinner, during which the new Executive will be elected.



West Hants

The West Hants Branch of the RTO continues to be active. The Executive meets regularly and are planning interesting events for our members to take part in.

We were fortunate to have two members attend the Wellness Symposium in April. Ann Knowles and Karen Mulloy reported that they enjoyed the day very much and thought it was very well organized, with great speakers and plenty of learning opportunities.

On April 28, 2024, we held a pork dinner at the Three Mile Plains Hall with over sixty members attending. These dinners are by far the most popular ventures we undertake. Christie Hartlin, a retired teacher, was the guest speaker and spoke about her writing and her most recent book. It was very interesting.

Also at this dinner, a cheque from the Legacy Foundation was presented to the Ellershouse Hall to help fund a summer music camp. It was also mentioned that Brooklyn Elementary School received a Legacy Foundation cheque. Well done.

Several events are planned for members for the summer and fall including a visit to a valley winery, a “Not Back to School” lunch, a cooking school, and another sit-down dinner in December. We hope these prove to be popular activities.



Yarmouth/Argyle

Sunshine and adequate snow greeted our members in Ellenwood Park on February 15 - perfect for their enjoyment of the annual winter snowshoeing and picnic.

With help from a BIP grant, Retired Teacher Night at the Yarmouth Junior A Mariners League hockey game, held on February 25, was a success. Our Branch rented a skybox and reserved a nearby section of seats, offering them for \$10 each. Three of our members who are still active hockey players (Roland Bourque, Armand Doucette, and Austin Doucette) dropped the first puck, with much humour. Retired and active teachers were acknowledged with a hearty round of applause by the 1000 Mariners fans who were in attendance.



At the first intermission, our sole female active hockey player, Louise Doucette, and NSTU teacher Glen Doucette had a close puck shoot-out. Hot pizza was delivered to our skybox at the second intermission and was enjoyed by members and guests.

Having obtained an Eduwellness Grant from the Nova Scotia Insurance Trustees, our Branch presented six information sessions in recent months for our members, and for those of Digby and Baie Ste. Marie Branches. The first presentation on March 21 was on “Memory and Aging Diseases” by Sandra Hubbard Leblanc of the Alzheimers Association of Nova Scotia. This was followed by a delicious lunch catered by Brian and Liz Noble. Our second presenter, Senior Safety Coordinator Ashley Rhyno, gave good information and advice on “Frauds and Scams” and “Safety for Seniors”.

Branch NEWS



Our next session was offered on April 25. Pharmacist Darlene Mooney explained the pilot “Community Pharmacy - Primary Care Clinic” which is now in place at City Drug in Yarmouth and other provincial locations. Again, attendees enjoyed the lunch provided by the Nobles. This was followed by important information on wills, power of attorneys, and personal directives presented by lawyer Lynette Muise. Question and answer opportunities following all presentations were well received.

Sessions 4 and 5 took place outdoors on May 23 at Ellenwood Park. Member Rollie Hannam spoke on “Insurance - Ins and Outs”. A barbecue lunch was enjoyed, followed by walks on the various park trails.

On June 14, following a delicious turkey dinner, our AGM was held at the Yarmouth Legion Hall. Election of Officers saw Maureen Duffy-Mason re-elected as President, Wayne Leblanc returning as Treasurer, and Rollie Hannam being welcomed as incoming Vice President. Framed Certificates of Appreciation were presented to three former Executive members who had served for many years: Anne Cardoza Boudreau as Phone Tree Coordinator, and Marilyn MacDonald and Sharon



Raynard as Co-chairs of the Social Committee. The 75 members in attendance showed grateful appreciation to the Executive for all their dedication.



BOWLING TOURNAMENT

The RTO/NS Teachers Bowling Tournament was held on April 20 at the Woodside Bowlarama. Ten teams participated from Metro, the Valley, Truro, and Cape Breton.

I would like to thank the Provincial RTO for their donation and the Halifax County RTO for providing the funds for lunch. A good time was had by all.

Next year's tournament will be held again in April. For further please contact Peter Balcom at pgbalcom@gmail.com or 902 292-2230.



*Great Egret Bird Sighting, Liverpool
- Joanne Uhlman, Queens Branch*

AlmonTravel – taking you where you want to go...

By Danny Almon

(902)-431-4932 or 1-(855)-902-4937

Danny@AlmonTravel.ca www.AlmonTravel.ca



Among our specialties in travel are two that are gaining a lot of interest: I am referring to Solo travel and Multigenerational travel.

As we get older, sometimes we find ourselves in situations where in order to travel, we have to travel alone. Many companies are beginning to recognize this phenomenon and are accommodating the solo traveller. In years past, it was inevitable that a solo traveller would be required to pay an additional traveller cost called a single supplement which, in many cases was double the cost: in other words, though you were single you paid for an additional guest.

Nowadays, many companies, from river cruise to ocean cruise to coach tour, to Caribbean Resorts, are reducing that cost, in some cases to nil, allowing for affordable travel for a solo vacationer. Cruises in particular are adding some solo cabins to their options: the cabin may be smaller and in the less popular locations on the ship but the price is kept more affordable. However, keep in mind that the cabin choice is relatively small and needs to be booked as early as possible: ie. a year in advance

If you have grandchildren you may want to consider Multi- generational travel where you as grandparents, your children, and your grandchildren travel together. The key here is to choose a destination that everyone can enjoy. This can range from a Caribbean resort destination that has a section dedicated to children such as a water park, a visit to a major theme park like Disney World, Universal Studios, or an ocean cruise that caters particularly well to families. The benefit of having two sets of adults along with the children means that there is always an opportunity for the adults, in rotation, to take some time to themselves, as well as, of course, enjoying the company of the extended family. And if enough family members attend, depending on the location, there may be some group perks to enjoy.

Personally, we are planning multigenerational travel with our grandson (age 10 at the time of travel) and his parents and our venue will be a Disney cruise (very interesting – and different – cabin setup: check it out!) which offers a lot of the benefits (including fireworks!) of a Disney World resort vacation but in a limited space. Disney is world-wide known for its “family-friendliness” and enjoyment will be abundant for everyone! Lots of “adult-only” areas on board ship, as well.

These are only some of the specialties we at AlmonTravel are developing.

Please visit www.almontravel.ca for more ideas, downloadable travel tips and a library of videos about travel to different destinations with different tour operators.

And call us (902) 431-4932 if you wish to explore other travel options: we have some wonderful river cruise options (a Christmas cruise for under \$8000 per couple – very limited options at time of article submission) Branch Presidents: if you can gather 20+ members for a travel presentation in your area, we would be glad to arrange a time to meet with you in your local district.



Inverness County Cares Making Life Better for the Blind in Zambia

Inverness County Cares (ICC) is a group of Inverness County people brought together by the desire to make life better for children who lack basic needs. The group has approximately 20 core members (including seven retired teachers) and many additional people who can be called upon to help. Formed in 2012, the group entered into a partnership in 2014 with Chalice.ca which is a global charity based in Bedford, Nova Scotia.

ICC's current project is with two schools located in Northern Zambia. St Mary's in Kawambwa (115 students) and St Odilia in Mporokoso (350 students) are special schools that cater to the blind, visually impaired, and persons with albinism. The schools are administrated by the Sisters of the Child Jesus, an indigenous Zambian order.

Albinism in Sub-Saharan Africa is a condition which is very much misunderstood. Because of the lack of genetic understanding, it is believed that the bodies of persons with albinism possess magical qualities. This leaves them prey to people who assault them to sell their body parts to witch doctors for fantastic prices. The witch doctors make up potions using albino body parts and sell them to people for good luck in love, business, or even political appointments. Therefore, persons with albinism must be ever vigilant when in public. In addition to this, albinism causes sight to diminish and causes much discomfort in the eyes.

In 2020, three ICC members travelled to Zambia to establish a connection with the teachers, administrators, and children at the two schools. This resulted in a closer relationship with the students and staff. This year (2024) from January 22 to March 1, six members of the ICC travelled to Zambia to strengthen our understanding of the schools, to volunteer, and to get an idea of the general needs of the buildings. John Gillies, John MacInnis, Charlotte Rankin, Betty Jane Cameron, Winnie Rankin, and Colleen MacDonald MacLeod divided their time between the two schools.

Betty Jane focused on Music lessons, Winnie worked with the Home Economics teachers, Charlotte tutored individual students and taught in class, and Colleen worked with teachers on classroom practices.

John and John worked on an inventory of the needs at the schools which the sisters then prioritized. They also coordinated the repairs of the schools and student living quarters. The top priorities were: repairing the water piping system to all buildings, repairing and replacing 162 light bulbs and 50 sockets, restoring and replacing plugged and cracked sewer pipes, replacing 140 broken window panes, and repairing window catches. This was accomplished by hiring local tradespeople.

ICC members brought funds with them totalling \$17,200 which had been donated by generous supporters, to spend on repairs. The six travellers personally paid for all their flights, food, accommodations, and travel while in Zambia. The sisters were very accommodating hosts and the six travellers enjoyed their food and hospitality.

Inverness County Cares is very fortunate to have the support of many generous people. These six volunteers were the messengers bringing the donations of many Canadians to make life better at the two schools.

The ICC has many fundraisers to help the schools. The most consistent source of income is the sale of bottles and cans, and we thank our supporters who donate refundables to our drop-off sites in Mabou and Port Hood. A large potato garden has also generated much revenue, as well as, yard sales, garlic and vegetable sales, community dinners, and pizza sales.

Chalice supports the Kawambwa sites with funds which are budgeted for specific projects. Almost all the children at the sites have Chalice sponsors, and others are on the waiting list. The \$504 paid by the children's sponsors is equal to the yearly income earned by a rural farmer - approximately \$400 annually. Sponsorship helps not only the sponsored child but the whole family. The parents of sponsored children meet regularly and work together as a team on such things as budgeting and microfinancing.

The people we worked with and interacted with expressed sincere gratitude for the contributions of Canadians toward the support of their families. The school is a safe and happy place where the children are loved and fed nutritious food.

For more information on Inverness County Cares (ICC) visit our webpage (invernesscountycares.com) and the blog where we recorded the daily events of our trip to Zambia (icczambia.blogspot.com). On page 44 and page 45 of our blog, there is a summary of ways we have assisted the two schools. Contact us at invernesscountycares@gmail.com.

Note - John Gillies, Charlotte Rankin, Winnie Rankin, and Colleen Macleod are former teachers in the Strait Board. Betty Jane Cameron is a music teacher, a midwife and a nurse administrator. Dave Chapman is also a retired teacher and ICC member, however, he did not go on this trip.



*L-R Betty Jane, Sr Martha, Winnie, Sr Auxilia, Bishop, John G, Colleen, Charlotte, Sr Matilda, John MacInnis;
below, Sr Ruth*



Three Albino Students



Reading Blessings on Braille for Charlotte



Using Heavy-Duty 10-Frames Made by Carpenters



Bottle Cap Math



Children Sporting T-Shirts from Canada

Branch President's Meetings

The March 6 meeting of the Branch Presidents was held in the MacDonald-MacNab Room at the Hotel Halifax.

Introductions, agendas, minutes, and other routine business items were the first order of the day.

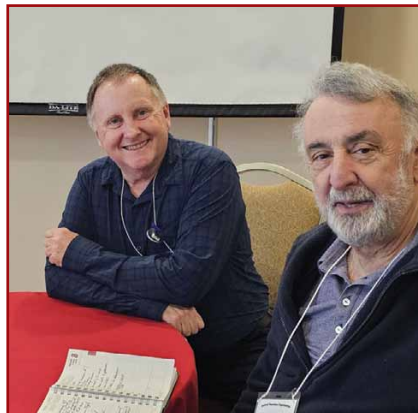
RTO President Alyson Hillier presented her report, which highlighted the Pension Panel update, Website update, BIP update, and Membership lists. Alyson also addressed Legacy Grants, the Symposium, the Travel Agreement, and the AGM. She concluded her report with a wonderful acknowledgement to Hilton Smith who recently retired from the NSTU after more than 30 years of service.

Helen Dawe-Webb next gave a presentation on the design of our Website. Branch Presidents were enthused and asked many pertinent questions. Everyone is looking forward to the completion of the new RTO Website.

Presidents then discussed round table questions - these were followed by regional meetings. Danny Almon concluded the morning with a Travel Presentation.

Standing Committee reports and affiliate reports took up the afternoon. The Presidents completed their evaluation forms and adjourned for the day.

—*Respectfully Submitted,*
Ambrose White - Vice President, RTO



RTO.NSTU.CA



Nova Scotia Teachers Union

Dr. Tom Parker Building, 3106 Joseph Howe Drive, Halifax, NS B3L 4L7 (902) 477-5621 Toll Free 1-800-565-6788 Fax: (902) 477-3517 nstu@nstu.ca www.nstu.ca

MEMORANDUM

TO: Teachers' Pension Plan Members

FROM: Staff

DATE: June 17, 2024

RE: *Teachers' Pension Act Regulations*

As you may recall, the Regulations under the *Teachers' Pension Act* were amended in 2019 to increase the number of days that a person in receipt of a Teachers' Pension could work as a substitute teacher (or auxiliary faculty member) to 99.5 days without affecting their pension.

The sponsors of the Teachers' Pension Plan have recently agreed to extend this amendment, **with a modification increasing the number of days a person in receipt of a Teachers' Pension can work as a substitute teacher or auxiliary faculty member**, for the 2024-2025 school year.

For the 2024-2025 school year, persons in receipt of a Teachers' Pension can:

1. Work for less than 70 days (up to 69.5 days) in a term position;
2. Work for less than **120 days (up to 119.5)** days as a substitute teacher or auxiliary faculty member; and
3. Days in item 1 count towards the days in item 2.

If you have any questions regarding this amendment, please feel free to contact us at pension@nstu.ca.

IMPORTANT MESSAGE

To help reduce the carbon footprint of the RTO, *The Retired Teacher* newsletter will be sent digitally to new retirees via email. If a new retiree wishes to receive a paper copy, they must request this when they fill out the RTO Membership Authorization Form.

Existing members can change over to a digital copy by sending our RTO administrative assistant an email with their request to rtoadmin@staff.nstu.ca

As always, please remember to update your contact information with our admin assistant if anything has changed.

An Encounter with Frau Schulte

Excerpt from *Failing Forward in Saarland*, by Claudette E. Bouman

As a foreigner, you'd better know your German before applying for a German residence card in Saarland unless you have a cellphone with built-in GPS. Even my German husband, who was experienced with bureaucratic entanglements, found the trip to the Ausländeramt—located at the very end of a cul-de-sac, tucked away on the outskirts of town with no signage—adventurous.

Old German cities, like many in Europe, are not necessarily organized on a grid pattern from north to south and east to west, like, say, Vancouver or Saskatoon. Saarbrücken, not a large city, has a spider-web structure that, even six months later, Leandra and I found challenging to navigate. It was with a misplaced sense of complacency that Thomas, Leandra, and I set out on our mission to find Frau Schulte, furnished with an inadequate, tiny city map.

Our destination was located on Lebacher Straße. In order to reach it, we covered a distance of six kilometres in unfamiliar territory. We took a ten-minute bus ride from our guesthouse to downtown. We passed attractive, spacious homes in an upscale residential area and got off at the



Downtown Saarbrücken, Saarland, with a most convenient public transit system

busiest tram station in the city, near the St. Johann market, the Johanneskirche, and the Rathaus.

Saarbrücken was heavily bombed during the Second World War. Over one thousand people were killed in raids, and over eleven thousand homes destroyed, along with 75 percent of the city. Apart from the striking historic church and City Hall, which had survived the bombardment, much had been rebuilt. On foot, we passed plain, unadorned business fronts with dim overhangs, restaurants, and apartment buildings in white plastered style, rebuilt in the post-war era. Large department stores like Karstadt and structures like Kongresshalle, built in the 1990s, were of clean lines and plenty of glistening glass.



Thomas and Claudette overlooking Königssee Lake, in Bavaria Land (state) in southern Germany - one of the most picturesque lakes in the Berchtesgadener Alps

It took us a good hour to locate the Ausländeramt. We entered the building, scrambled up a flight of stairs, and stared into a small waiting room where an electronic monitor, an automatic photo machine, and several patient people stared back, all with a pensive expression as if painted by the same wistful artist.

Sitting there catching my cool, I wanted my palpitations to cease before Frau Schulte summoned me in. In my imagination, she'd turned into a formidable figure at the centre of Saarland's bureaucratic web. Although the waiting room possessed a window, only the merest hint of a hot, thick brew blew in.

Leandra looked as if prickly heat consumed her from the top of her curly mop to her hot feet. She was angry at everyone and no one that afternoon. Thomas stayed buoyant, taking on every hitch with his usual upbeat enthusiasm. He was, however, beginning to grow a bright red mask, the effect of too much summer sun.

We sat watching people come and go—a Romanian family here, a Russian family there, and a Chinese couple—all in a fascinating mosaic. Whoever claimed present-day Germany wasn't multiethnic? When a Ghanaian woman fell short of change for the automatic photo machine, Thomas leaped up, producing the needed amount. For her photo, she posed with a braid standing straight up in the middle of a beautifully coiffured head.



Saarland University embedded in beech forest, ten minutes from downtown

When our number chimed on the electronic display, we stepped into Frau Schulte's office. Nervous about my lack of German but hopeful, I faced her. She represented my first up-close encounter with German bureaucracy, and she held the power to make me instantly glad, sad, or mad.

Claudette E. Bouman is a member of the Halifax County Branch, RTO. She lives in Dartmouth and worked for the HRSB, teaching at junior and senior high schools in Dartmouth, from 1998 until 2018. She finished her career at Cole Harbour District High School.

Failing Forward in Saarland is an honest examination of Bouman's time spent living abroad in Saarland, Germany and does not shy away from topics such as language barriers, cultural differences, or family dynamics. It is available on the FriesenPress online bookstore: <https://books.friesenpress.com/store/title/119734000398425456>. A book launch is planned for this fall.

Derailed

by Betty Anne McGinnis, West Hants Branch, RTO

I took this picture several years ago - after trains had become redundant but before the last visible reminders of those railway cars had disappeared. It made me sad to think that few children today would ever experience the excitement of boarding a train at the station to go to some destination, near or far.

I have been fortunate to have lived at a time when train travel was common. I've travelled with elementary students from Windsor to Wolfville and back, just for the fun of it. I've gone to Quebec with high school students, which is a life experience in itself. I've spent restless nights on a train full of Ottawa-bound junior high students, then zipped on a high-speed rail from Ottawa to Toronto to take those students to see *Phantom of the Opera*, a once-in-a-lifetime thrill for most.

I've spent many an hour in the train station in Halifax, waiting in the departure and the arrival sections. Many times, I sent my parents off to visit my brother in Saskatchewan and then in Ontario. My dad was afraid to fly so train it was, but my mom insisted on a bedroom - a luxury trip. I picked them up after one trip to discover they had brought my three-year-old nephew home with them. That would have been an experience!



This photograph is just a single frame - a memory of wonderful experiences my family and I had many years ago. But more than my personal connection, this is a memory of what once was a vital source of transportation in Nova Scotia and beyond. Last week I drove by this same spot and paused to look. The lupins are no longer a brilliant border for steel rails - and the steel rails are no longer visible in the landscape. Gone but not forgotten by those of us who were so fortunate to have experienced the joy of train travel in Nova Scotia and beyond.

Report AGM 2024

AGM

The Annual General Meeting was held at the NSTU Building on Thursday, May 16, 2024. President Alyson Hillier chaired the meeting.

“O Canada” was video-streamed for the members. It was followed by a YouTube video entitled Relationships 101 which featured interviews with Past Presidents of the NSTU on their time in leadership of the NSTU.

At the beginning of the meeting, the names of the deceased members were read by Dorothy Smith along with their respective Branches.

Eighty attendees were present and there was representation from all Branches across the province. A registration table was set up on the second floor where AGM packages were available. Attendees received the reports from the President, as well as the Committee and Affiliate Reports. Fourteen resolutions were debated and discussion was focused on how the various issues can impact the operations of our Branches and members.

Nutritious food was available for the morning break. Lunch consisted of various foods (salads, wraps, and sandwiches) supplied by Julianne’s Catering Service, along with sweets from local stores. Hot and cold beverages were available throughout the day. Once again, Dorothy Smith is to be commended for her organization of the food and the logistics of both the meeting and the dinner.

An Evaluation Form was available for members to complete. The information on the form helps provide feedback for future AGMs.

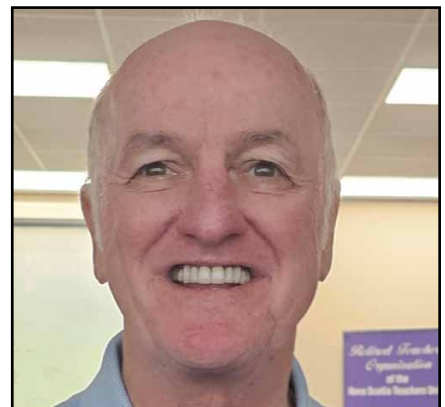
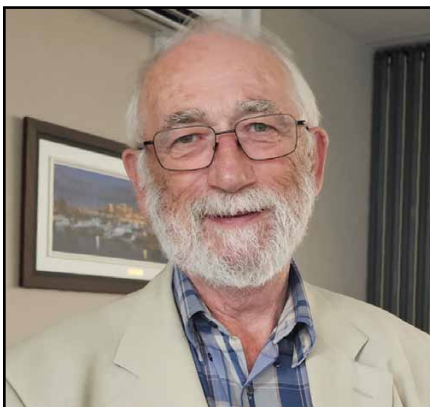
AGM Dinner

The AGM Dinner was held at the Hotel Halifax the evening before the meeting. President Alyson Hillier hosted the dinner, and we were pleased to have 79 members and their guests in attendance. Todd Blackwood from Johnson Inc. joined us for the annual event. Since the first ballot of the NSTU Presidential Election was held that day, none of the NSTU Executive Staff were able to attend.

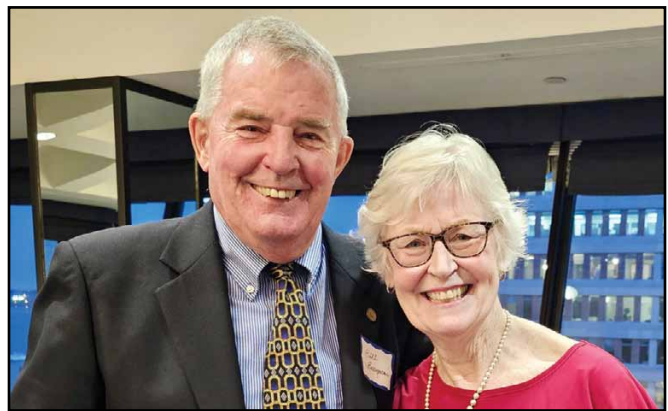
Dorothy Smith led the group in grace. A delicious meal was served consisting of roasted buttermilk squash soup, seared chicken with feta, spinach and lemon thyme cream, and roasted potatoes. Toasted coconut Pavlova, fresh fruit, and fruit coulis were served for dessert, along with tea and coffee.

Three members of the Executive were recognized as they completed their terms: Bill Berryman has completed his term as Past President, Alyson Hillier as President, and Margie MacNeil as Member-at-Large for Cape Breton-Victoria.

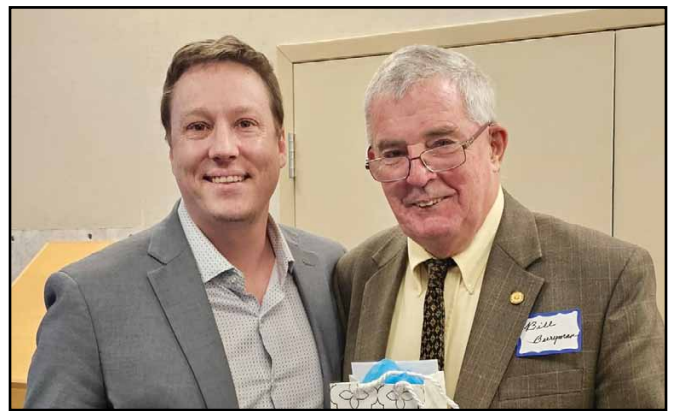
A \$50 Sobey’s door prize was provided by the RTO as well as a Hospitality Suite after the dinner, and hosted by Bill Berryman.



AGM Banquet



AGM Banquet



Dispensation of Resolutions from RTO AGM 2024

The following resolutions were presented to the Annual General Meeting and the resulting actions are recorded below each resolution.

2023-1 BE IT RESOLVED that the Branch Grants be increased by one thousand dollars (\$1,000) per Branch, regardless of size, starting with the 2023 fiscal year.

Lunenburg County Branch - **Withdrawn**

2023-2 BE IT RESOLVED that all Finance and Executive meetings be held by ZOOM or a similar platform, except when held in conjunction with the Presidents' Meeting or the AGM.

Lunenburg County Branch - **Defeated**

2023-6 BE IT RESOLVED that the RTO provide forms on its website that can be filled out and submitted digitally without using special apps.

Kings Branch - **Withdrawn**

2023-7 BE IT RESOLVED that wherever possible, the expenses for Committee members be paid by e-transfer.

Kings Branch - **Approved**

2024-1 BE IT RESOLVED that the Provincial RTO Executive provide an explanation to all RTO members, for the amounts of monies that have been put into GIC's and/or term deposits.

Lunenburg County Branch - **Withdrawn**

2024-2 BE IT RESOLVED that the editor of the Provincial Newsletter be given the authority to look at ways to shorten the newsletter and thus reduce the printing costs for newsletters that are mailed to members.

Lunenburg County Branch - **Withdrawn**

2024-3 BE IT RESOLVED that the RTO, through its affiliation with the Seniors' Advisory Council of Nova Scotia, request the Nova Scotia Department of Health and Wellness to provide, free of charge, to seniors over the age of 60, the vaccine to protect them against RSV (respiratory syncytial virus).

Cumberland Branch - **Approved**

2024-4 BE IT RESOLVED that the Retired Teachers Organization modify its Branch funding formula for 2025 onward to better address the increased costs borne by Branches with larger memberships.

Kings Branch - **Approved with Amendments to the Formula**

2024-5 BE IT RESOLVED that the Retired Teachers Organization approach the Nova Scotia Teachers Union to investigate the seamless transfer of NSTU membership to RTO membership – with teacher consent – upon retirement.

Kings Branch - **Approved**

2024-6 BE IT RESOLVED that the Finance Committee of the Retired Teachers Organization include at least one non-Executive member.

Kings Branch - **Withdrawn**

2024-7 BE IT RESOLVED that the Retired Teachers Organization – by way of letters, meetings, or a press release – make it known to the Province and the Pension Board that we are in full support of ALL retired Nova Scotia teachers having indexed teacher pensions.

Kings Branch - Approved

2024-8 BE IT RESOLVED that the RTO renew its commitment, through the Seniors Advisory Council to have Nova Scotia Health provide, at no cost, the “shingles vaccination” to all Nova Scotians who are 60 years old and older.

Richmond Branch - Approved as Amended

2024-9 BE IT RESOLVED that the RTO make representation to the Seniors Advisory Council to request that Nova Scotia Health lower the age of eligibility for the free high-dosage influenza vaccination.

Richmond Branch - Approved as Amended

2024-10 BE IT RESOLVED that the RTO make representation to the NSTU and the Insurance Trustees to affect and increase in the amounts allotted to members for Eye Care.

Richmond Branch - Approved

2024-11 BE IT RESOLVED that the age limit of 75 be expanded to 90 years so that more elderly members will have access to benefits.

Sydney and Area Branch - Tabled until AGM 2025

2024-12 BE IT RESOLVED that the N.S. Retired Teachers Organization (NSRTO) provide an honorarium to the provincial President of the organization on a yearly basis, in recognition of services provided which go above and beyond regular meetings with members and the Executive. This is an honorarium amount to be determined, not a salary.

Dartmouth Branch - Withdrawn



Low Tide at Weymouth Mill Pond - Sharon Theriault, Digby Branch



DON'T LET FUEL PRICES FILL YOU UP WITH ANGER.

Are you one of many who revised your vacation plans due to rising gas prices? Goodbye epic road trip, hello picnic in the park!

But maybe leaving the car in the garage this summer isn't an option. If that's the case, we suggest you fill up on plenty of advice that will keep rising gas prices from ruining your summer. As a bonus, we'll give you some simple and eco-friendly options when looking for an alternative to taking the car.

1. GasBuddy

Meet a driver's best friend when you want to get from point A to point B without burning through your gas budget. This app offers the most efficient routes for using as little gas as possible.

You can also use the new Google Maps feature, Eco Route, to find the most fuel-efficient route. Not only can you see your fuel savings, you can also see the differences between the most fuel-efficient and fastest routes, so you can decide which option is best for you.

2. Travel light

Avoid carrying unnecessary weight by removing salt, sand, and sports equipment from your vehicle when they aren't needed. The same applies for your bike rack or cargo carrier.

3. The belairdirect app

It compares your estimated fuel efficiency over the last 30 days with the average fuel efficiency of your vehicle's make and model, providing feedback on how your driving habits affect your fuel efficiency. The app also offers you driving tips to better control your fuel consumption as well as tools to make it more efficient. The result? Up to 15% more fuel savings compared to the average drivers! It's a simple way to be more fuel efficient, save money, and reduce your CO2 emissions.

4. Good driving habits

Did you know you can reduce your car's gas consumption by taking a few simple steps? Here are some examples that can make a big difference.

- **Accelerate slowly:** The more you accelerate, the more fuel you consume. In town, you can use less fuel by easing up on the accelerator. For example, after a stop, take 5 full seconds to reach a speed of 20 km/h.
- **Keep your speed consistent:** When your speed fluctuates, you spend more gas (and money) than necessary. On long trips, use the cruise control and road terrain to your advantage. For example, when going down a hill, take advantage of gravity to let the car roll without stepping on the accelerator.
- **Anticipate traffic:** Looking far ahead while driving allows you to see what you are approaching on the road. By paying attention to the actions of other motorists and pedestrians, you'll have a better idea of

what will come next. This allows you to maintain a more consistent speed and drive more safely.

- **Avoid high speeds:** Maintain the speed limit... and your budget! Most vehicles are more fuel efficient when travelling between 50 km/hr and 80 km/hr. Beyond this limit, they use considerably more fuel. The faster you go, the more fuel you consume!

5. Early risers and night owls should visit the pump

By refuelling early in the morning or in the evening, you get more for your money. Why? Since gas tends to expand with heat, you have less of it when you fill up during the day. The cooler it is, the more compact the gasoline, so more fits into your tank!

6. Give your AC the cold shoulder

Air conditioning increases fuel consumption. It is much more economical to open the windows and enjoy the summer breeze.

7. Cut it out!

Car not moving? Then shut off the engine, even for a few seconds!

8. Take it easy on the transmission

If you drive a car with a manual transmission, pay attention to the tachometer, which indicates engine speed. The higher the RPM, the more gas you consume. Make sure to change gears smoothly and quickly and accelerate using higher gears.

9. Make a plan

Plan your trips, especially long ones, by following a specific route. Listen to traffic reports to steer clear of traffic jams, accidents, and roadwork. Avoid going through major city centres since these often have traffic lights, intersections, and pedestrian crossings.

10. Kill two birds with one stone

Combine your errands by doing them all at once, rather than spacing them out over several days. Make one trip and plan your route to avoid retracing your steps or finding yourself stuck in traffic during peak hours.

11. Public transport

Stop worrying about traffic and your parallel parking skills! Take public transit instead—an easy way to travel safe and spend less as compared to taking the car. Whether you're crisscrossing the city or going a little bit farther than around the block, try the bus. You can also take advantage of the journey to finally start that book you got for Christmas back in 2019.

12. The subway

Taking the subway is a quick, easy, and very economical way to get around town. Buy a day or weekend pass or save even more with the monthly pass that gives you unlimited access. Students, seniors, and other groups enjoy reduced fares, and children accompanied by an adult can travel for free. There are so many reasons to make the subway your new favourite means of transportation around town!

13. By bike

We're not saying you shouldn't put the pedal to the metal, but a change of pedal is what's needed! Grab your bike (and your helmet, of course!) and give your calves a workout. It's good for your health and the planet's, too. No bike? No problem! BIXI is a great way to get around Montreal without burning a hole in your pocket. The same goes for Bike Share Toronto in Toronto. Plus ebike sharing is now an excellent way to get around in Calgary, which recently granted permits to two companies—Neuron and Bird—to allow access to dependable, sustainable alternate transport.

14. Less is more

Ultimately, the best way to save gas and reduce your footprint is to drive less. Take a walk to buy milk, or bike to meet friends at a restaurant. Your wallet and the planet will thank you!

With these simple tips, you'll enjoy the summer sunshine instead of burning through your gas budget. You're on your way for a season of fun!

CURLING BONSPIEL 2024 • HURRAY HARD TO THE VALLEY

The Kings Branch of the Retired Teachers Organization hosted the Provincial RTO Bonspiel on March 8 and 9, 2024 at the Glooscap Curling Club in Kentville. We were pleased to welcome teams from Dartmouth, Wolfville (two teams), Liverpool, and Chester to our Bonspiel. Rounding out this year's field of eight teams were three teams from the host Glooscap Club.

Over the two-day event, each team curled a total of five games. On Friday, within two divisions, three round-robin games of 4-ends each determined team ranking for playdowns to be held on Saturday.

Social activities also played a large part in the activities over the two-day event. Throughout the event snacks and treats were served by members of the Glooscap Club, led by Ellen Clark (RTO Kings Branch).

Between the second and third round games on Friday, participants were treated to an excellent dinner prepared in the banquet kitchen at Glooscap by Chef Bert Layton (RTO Kings Branch). Seatings of eight players had one member of each team dine with a member from each other team. The meal and social interaction was great.



Our meals concluded on Saturday with a delicious pizza lunch. Between games, we also had a Trivia Contest organized and presented by Keith Moores. In addition, all participants had a chance to win door prizes of two gift cards and a special curling mug donated by RTO President Alyson Hillier. Two 50/50 ticket draws were held, with each winner walking away with over \$100 in cash.

On Saturday morning all eight teams were again back on the ice for the first of two six-end games. These games were crossover games between the two divisions from Friday which would lead into the Medal and Consolation Rounds to be played on Saturday afternoon. When all the points were tabulated at the closing, the Glooscap Team of John Ferguson, Richard Christie, JP Boudreau, and John MacDonald were victorious and declared winners of the Bonspiel. We were very pleased to welcome Provincial RTO President Alyson Hillier who presented the trophy to the winning team.

Our thanks go out to Manulife Financial, NS Provincial RTO, and the Kings Branch of the RTO for their generous financial support of the Bonspiel. Also to the RTO and Glooscap members, a thank you for your support. From all reports, a good time was had by all.

Co-Chairs: Ed Getson and Keith Moores



The belairdirect Scholarship Program Opens May 15th, 2024

Building on our History of Supporting Customers and Communities

For many Canadian students, the jump from high school to post-secondary education is a thrilling transition into adulthood, but one that comes with new financial responsibilities.

At belairdirect we understand the challenges faced by students during their pursuit of higher education, and we are proud to offer scholarships to help them achieve their dreams.

This year, Belair Insurance Company Inc. (“belairdirect”) is pleased to offer 50 scholarships worth \$1000 each to students who fall into at least one of the following categories:

- Be a member or employee of a belairdirect recognized group* who has a home or car insurance policy with belairdirect;
- Be a member or employee of a belairdirect recognized group* (policy not required);
- Have a parent/guardian or grandparent who is a member or employee of a belairdirect recognized group* who has a home or car insurance policy with belairdirect; OR
- Have a parent/guardian or grandparent who is a member or employee of a belairdirect recognized group* (no policy required).

**A “recognized group” means an employer group, professional association, alumni association, union or other group that has an insurance program agreement currently in force with belairdirect.*

Students must complete high school in 2024 and must be beginning post-secondary education in Canada in the fall of 2024 or CEGEP (if living in the province of Québec).

Applications for the Scholarship Program will be open starting May 15th, 2024. Completed application forms must be submitted by July 31st, 2024 and must include a transcript for the period of September 2022 to April 2024.

For more information on applying, please see the online application form and Scholarship Program Guidelines to obtain full requirements and submission instructions, or please visit scholarshipfund@belairdirect.com.

What is the purpose of the RTO Legacy Foundation?

The Retired Teachers Organization Legacy Foundation was established in 1994 by the RTO Executive. It was created to provide the organization with a vital role in supporting children and youth (younger than 21) by providing grants to address a need in a society or organization founded for an educational, medical, social, or similar purpose. The foundation is a significant aspect of our work as a non-profit and provides the RTO with an avenue to honour the lives and work of former Nova Scotia teachers.

For a number of years, the Legacy Foundation has provided funding to several charitable groups and organizations. Every year, the RTO receives applications and disburses grants to various organizations across Nova Scotia. Each year we also collect funds for the Foundation through various means: donations from RTO Branches, NSTU Locals, school staffs, fundraisers, grants, legacy gifts, bequests, and 50/50 ticket sales at different meetings and events. Many of our RTO Branches donate money each year.

This year we approved 12 grants totaling \$11,480. The recipients were: the After the School Bell Food Security Program; Barrington Leisure Park Association; L'Arche Cape Breton; Learning Centre Halifax; Big Brothers Big Sisters of Greater Halifax; Maggie's Place Family Resource Centre; Brooklyn and District Elementary School; Ellershose Community Hall; PACT (Parents and Children Together); Cumberland Imagination Library/Dollywood Foundation of Canada; the Centre for Local Prosperity; and the Antigonish Kids First Association Family Resource Centre.

The letters and thank you cards we receive when grants are awarded inform us of the extensive spectrum of needs being fulfilled. A few examples include the After the School Bell Food Program (<https://www.facebook.com/Aftertheschoolbellfoodprogram/>) which supports seven schools and provides 101 food bags to children dealing with food insecurity every week.

Maggie's Place Family Resource Centre supports families in Cumberland and Colchester Counties. The centre strives to strengthen and enhance the health and social development of children and families within their communities (<https://www.maggiesplace.ca/>).

The Ellershose Community Hall received a grant to give free guitar lessons to children from the community this summer.

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, Cumberland County, is a book gifting program that mails free, high-quality books to children from birth to age five, no matter their family's income (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/dpilcumberlandcounty>).

The links below provide an example of how a donation was used by the Centre for Local Prosperity: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Brh-q4R-NUI> or Youth High School Retreat for Climate Action - Centre For Local Prosperity.

These links provide more information regarding the Foundation: <http://rto.nstu.ca/legacy.html>,

- <http://rto.nstu.ca/documents/Legacy-Remittance-Form.pdf>
- <http://rto.nstu.ca/Documents/donatetotheLegacyFoundation2021.pdf>, and
- <http://rto.nstu.ca/Documents/RTOFoundationGrantApplicationrev2021.pdf>.

Should you wish to donate to the Legacy Foundation please visit the RTO website for more information. E-transfers are now accepted as a form of payment for donations.



Pat Hillier, Chignecto-Central MAL, presents a donation to Doris Walton from the After the School Bell Food Program in Amherst.



Chuck McLellan, South Shore MAL, presents a donation to Evelyn Brannen, Chairperson of the Barrington Leisure Park Association.



Hugh Fraser, Halifax Metro MAL, presents a donation to Shelda Cochrane, Executive Director of the Big Brothers Big Sisters of Greater Halifax.



Shelley Morse, Valley MAL, presents principal, Brenda Mullins, with a donation for the Brooklyn District Elementary School breakfast program.



Hugh Fraser, Halifax Metro MAL, presents a donation to Robert Cervelli, Executive Director of the Centre for Local Prosperity.



Pat Hillier, Chignecto-Central MAL, presents a donation to Natalie Bova from the Dolly Parton Imagination Library, Cumberland County.



Shelley Morse, Valley MAL, presents Barbara Wilson with a donation for the Ellershouse Community Hall. Pictured (L-R) Shelley Morse, Barbara Wilson (Hants West Branch Executive), Bill Berryman (RTO Past President), and Mike Knowles (Hants West Branch President).



Tammy Landry, Strait MAL, presents a donation for the L'Arche Cape Breton organization at the Dalbræ Academy in Mabou. Pictured (L-R) Thom Oommen, Josh Dunham, Jacob Dunham, Abby van Zutphen, Tammy Landry, Theanna Gillis, and Haley Orga.



Hugh Fraser, Halifax Metro MAL, presents a donation to Thelma Gregan for the Learning Centre Halifax.



Pat Hillier, Chignecto-Central MAL, presents a donation to Karen LeBlanc from Maggie's Place Family Resource Centre.



Hugh Fraser, Halifax Metro MAL, presents a donation to Deanna Coleman for the Parents and Children Together (PACT) organization.



Tammy Landry, Strait MAL, presents a donation to Paula MacIssac for the Kids First Association in Antigonish. Pictured (L-R) Tammy Landry, Paula MacIssac, and Phil Doucette (Antigonish/Guysborough Branch VP).



Are you experiencing problems enlisting in the recently released Canadian Dental Care Plan?

Canadian retirees were grateful when the Canadian Dental Care Plan was expanded to include seniors, but too many were disappointed when they attempted to register. Access rules are causing unfortunate confusion and consequences for those with the lowest incomes.

- While most retired educators have access to dental plans, some retired teachers with small pensions have declined coverage because their low retirement income makes enrolment in the dental plans unaffordable.
- Some retired teachers have experienced different treatment even if their financial circumstances are similar.
- Individuals who opted out of a dental plan before Dec. 11, 2023, may be eligible while equally needy individuals that didn't know about this arbitrarily and retroactively imposed date are not eligible.

Additional challenges are surfacing:

- Some dentists are refusing to participate in the program.
- Alberta and Quebec governments have already announced they will opt out of the program.
- It is risky to cancel your current insurance hoping to qualify for the government plan; if you find you do not qualify or you are dissatisfied with the government plan coverage, your current plan may not allow you to rejoin.

President Bill Berryman, on behalf of the ACER-CART membership, is requesting that these access rules be reviewed.

ACER-CART is recommending a more appropriate, transparent, and defensible criteria for enrolment would be acceptance into the dental plan based only on income and wealth. The current criteria do not do that fairly.

The letter has been forwarded to the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Health, Minister of Labour & Seniors, and leaders of the other three political parties.

Share your concerns with a meeting, a letter, or a phone call to your MP.

- Prepared by the ACER-CART Executive

Have you joined ACER-CART's letter-writing campaign in support of National Pharmacare?

A National Pharmacare Program has repeatedly been an ACER-CART priority since 2016. One in ten Canadians cannot afford their prescriptions, and this is especially true for Seniors on a fixed income.

The introduction of Bill C-64: An Act of Respecting Pharmacare on February 29, 2024, brought a glimmer of hope. The Bill is based on the five principles in the Canada Health Act – public administration, comprehensiveness, universality, portability, and accessibility, plus it follows the recommendation from The Implementation of National Pharmacare as presented by Dr. Eric Hoskin's Advisory Council.

The Act sets out to guide efforts to improve the accessibility and affordability of prescription drugs and related products for all Canadians.

Bill C-64 currently provides first dollar coverage of contraception and diabetes products but also proposes that in the future, additional medications will be similarly covered. This legislation provides the groundwork for the development of a national formulary of essential prescription drugs and the development of a national bulk purchasing strategy.

A sincere thank you to those who have participated in the ACER-CART "Share your Voice" campaign. But in the words of ACER-CART president Bill Berryman, "Now is not the time to be complacent!" Members are encouraged to continue voicing their concerns. The letter-writing tool New Mode allows us to submit more than once.

- Prepared by the ACER-CART Executive

Deals and Discounts

rto.nstu.ca

Next submission deadline is October 15

SCAVENGER HUNT AND WEBQUEST

Submit your answers for the Scavenger Hunt and/or WebQuest to the editor by email (rtoeditor@gmail.com) or by post to Glynda Wimmer, 807 Highway 329, Fox Point, NS B0J 1T0. All submissions must be received by **August 15, 2024**.

Two prizes sponsored by the RTO will be awarded. A random draw amongst entries with all answers correct will determine the winner. Remember to include your name, mailing address, phone number, and RTO Branch.

Congratulations to the winners from the last issue - Lloyd Daye (Halifax City Branch) and Donald Beaton (Inverness Branch).

Scavenger Hunt Questions

1. Who spent time in Saarland?
2. Which Branch meets for coffee at the Snow Queen Restaurant?
3. Who recently retired from the NSTU Building?
4. Carmel Rooney is the new President of which Branch?
5. Where was the AGM Dinner held?
6. What was the date of the Wellness Symposium?
7. What is the phone number for AlmonTravel?
8. Where was the egret bird sighted?
9. Which Branch presented a cheque to the Ellerhouse Hall to help fund a summer music camp?
10. What weight paper is this issue printed on?

WebQuest Questions

1. What two annual provincial sporting events are sponsored by the NS Retired Teachers Organization?
2. Which fillable application for membership form should be completed by a retired teacher in receipt of a pension from outside Nova Scotia?
3. Who do I call if I have a question regarding a medical or dental claim?
4. Which RTO Provincial Committee organizes/coordinates programs and workshops for our members, as determined by the RTO Executive?
5. At the May 2024 AGM who was acclaimed President for 2024-2026?
6. What is the 2023 performance percent funded status of our Pension Plan as mentioned in the Spring 2024 Teachers Pension Plan (TPP) new report to members?
7. What is the maximum amount that can be awarded for a Branch Initiative Grant?
8. The RTO Website provides a link allowing one-stop shopping access to the many healthcare services available to Nova Scotia residents. What is the name of this link?
9. Your Credit Union is a full-service institution. What is its full Name?
10. What is the latest update to your NSTU Group insurance and Pension Plan Profile Booklet?



Retired Teachers Organization

of the Nova Scotia Teachers Union

3106 Joseph Howe Drive, Halifax, Nova Scotia B3L 4L7 rto.nstu.ca

Request to Host

RTO Golf Tournament

The Retired Teachers Organization (RTO) has held a September Golf Tournament, on an annual basis, since 1998. If your Branch would like to organize a September Golf Tournament for members from across the province, please complete the application below. *Please be advised that the RTO will provide your Branch with \$500 seed money for hosting the event. Surplus funds will remain with the hosting Branch.*

1. Branch hosting tournament: _____

2. Contact person in the Branch: _____

Phone number: _____ Cell number: _____

3. Location of the Tournament: _____

4. Proposed Date of September Tournament: _____

5. Proposed fee per person, if a meal is to be provided: _____

6. Proposed fee per person if there is not a meal provided: _____

7. Does the fee proposed in 5 or 6 include a power cart: Yes _____ No _____

8. If not, how much extra? _____

Format/Division: _____

9. Accommodations for the participants:

Cost: _____ Phone/email address: _____

10. How will your Branch promote the event across the province?

The Teachers Plus Credit Union has been the major sponsor for the past number of years. Johnson Inc. has also been very supportive. Local sponsors are also a great source of additional support/prizes. Sponsors must be thanked at the end of the tournament, acknowledged in *The Retired Teacher* and in writing, after the event.

The host Branch will be required to complete a financial statement and have the form sent to RTO Treasurer Jim Kavanaugh (jkavanaugh@ns.sympatico.ca) no later than October 31 of the year of the Golf Tournament.

We also request that you submit a report and several pictures that will be considered for inclusion in the RTO newsletter. This report should be sent to the RTO Newsletter Editor, Glynda Wimmer (rtoeditor@gmail.com).

Branch President's Signature

Date

The Retired Teachers Organization thanks you in advance for submitting this application to host the RTO Golf Tournament.

Application forms must be completed no later than October 31

Applications should be submitted to Ambrose White.

either by email or regular mail.

Email address whiteambrose7@gmail.com

3153 Sunset Avenue, New Waterford, NS B1H 1L1



Retired Teachers Organization

of the Nova Scotia Teachers Union

3106 Joseph Howe Drive, Halifax, Nova Scotia B3L 4L7

rto.nstu.ca

Request to Host

RTO Curling Bonspiel

The Retired Teachers Organization (RTO) holds an annual Curling Bonspiel during the winter season. If your Branch would like to organize the Bonspiel for members from across the province, please complete the application below. *Please be advised that the RTO will provide your Branch with \$500 seed money for hosting the event. Surplus funds will remain with the hosting Branch.*

1. Branch hosting the Bonspiel: _____

2. Contact person in the Branch: _____

Phone number: _____ Cell number: _____

3. Location of the Bonspiel: _____

4. Proposed Date of the Bonspiel: _____

5. Proposed fee per team: _____

All teams must have at least two (2) RTO, NSTU, or active substitutes on their team.

6. Accommodations for the participants:

Cost: _____ Phone/email address: _____

7. How will your Branch promote the event across the province?

In addition to the RTO funds, Manulife Financial has been a sponsor for the past number of years. Local sponsors are also a great source of additional support/prizes. Sponsors must be thanked at the end of the Bonspiel, acknowledged in *The Retired Teacher* and in writing, after the event.

The host Branch will be required to complete a financial statement and have the form sent to RTO Treasurer Jim Kavanaugh (jkavanaugh@ns.sympatico.ca) by June 30 of the year of the Bonspiel.

We also request that you submit a report and several pictures that will be considered for inclusion in the RTO newsletter. This report should be sent to the RTO Newsletter Editor, Glynda Wimmer (rtoeditor@gmail.com).

Branch President's Signature

Date

The Retired Teachers Organization thanks you, in advance, for submitting this application to host the RTO Bonspiel.

Application forms must be completed not later than October 31.

***Applications should be submitted to Ambrose White,
either by email or regular mail.***

Email address whiteambrose7@gmail.com

3153 Sunset Avenue, New Waterford, NS B1H 1L1



RTO Membership Information Update

Please use this form if there is a change in any of the information the RTO has on file for you.

Member Information (Please Print)

Name _____ Current Branch _____

Professional # (NSTU) _____ Employment # (NSCC) _____

CHANGE FROM

CHANGE TO

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

TOWN/CITY: _____

POSTAL CODE: _____

PHONE(h) _____

PHONE(c) _____

E-MAIL ADDRESS _____

BRANCH: _____

How would you like to receive your newsletter? Digital/email copy _____ or Paper copy? _____

NOTE: The Retired Teachers Organization (RTO) is committed to respecting privacy and protecting personal information. All personal information collected is managed and maintained according to principles outlined in the RTO Privacy Principles.

Authorization Given:

Signature _____

Date _____

Please return this form to:

Retired Teachers Organization

3106 Joseph Howe Drive

Halifax NS B3L 4L7

902-477-5621/1-800-565-6788. rtoadmin@staff.nstu.ca

It is strongly suggested that you inform your RTO Branch President as well as:

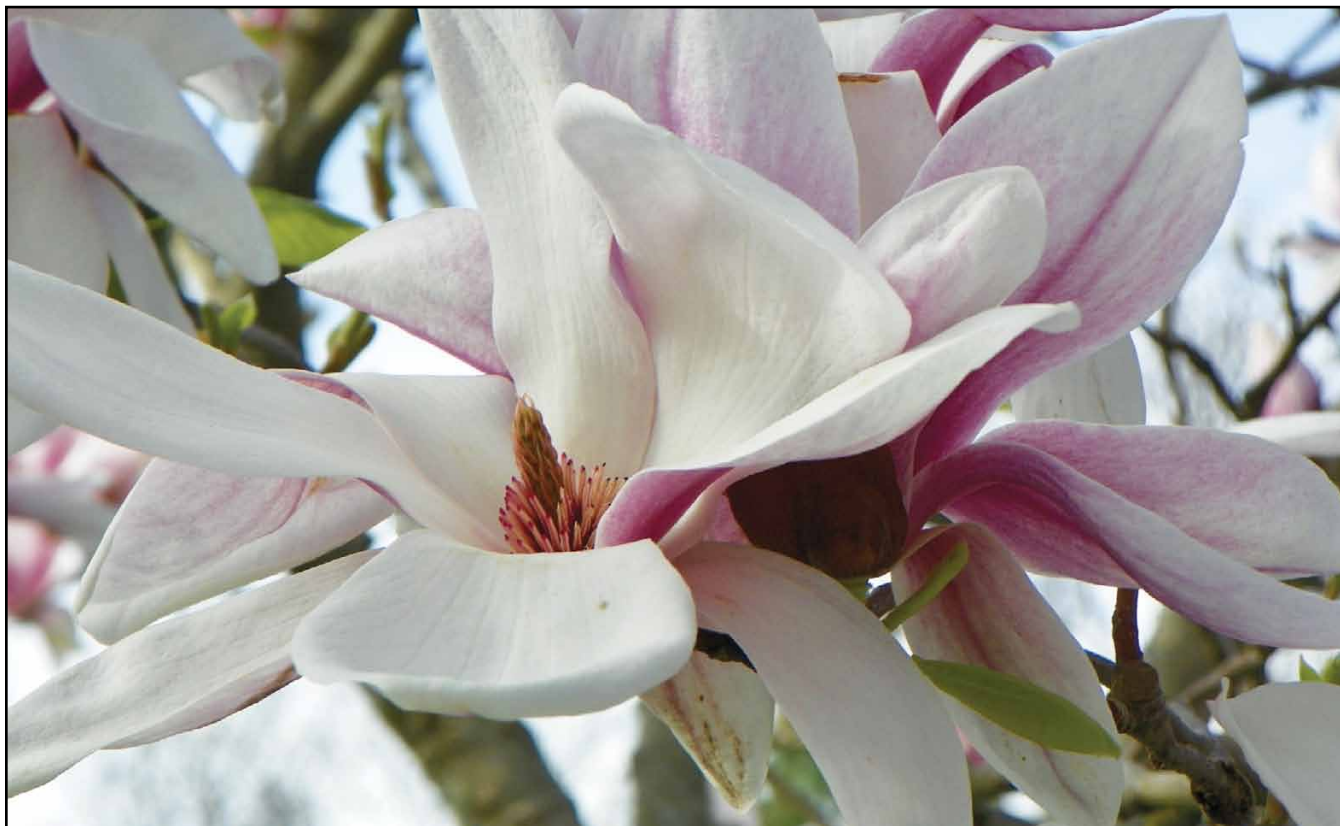
Johnson Inc: 902-453-9543/1-800-453-9543

AND: Nova Scotia Pension Services Corp 902-424-5070/1-800-774-5070

Rev. February 24th, 2022

Beautiful Nova Scotia

Send your original pictures of NS to rtoeditor@gmail.com or via post to Glynda Wimmer, 807 Hwy 329, Fox Point, NS B0J 1T0. Include your name, Branch, and location of the photo. Photos sent by mail will not be returned.



Magnolia Blossom - Martha Wheaton, West Hants Branch



*Wisteria in Shelburne - John MacKay,
Shelburne County Branch*



Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to:
3106 Joseph Howe Drive, Halifax, NS B3L 4L7

RTO Pins are available through
your Branch
Presidents.
Price is \$5.00 each!

