

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

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*Superannuated Teachers
of Saskatchewan*

PRESIDENT'S REPORT FOR AGM 2023

Welcome to the first in person Annual General Meeting since May 2019, coinciding this year with the 50th Anniversary of the STS. We know that many of you are excited to return to a familiar format reminiscent of those days prior to March 2020 when protocols were put in place to protect public health.

Last summer we welcomed our 12,000th member, and our numbers continue to grow both in membership as well the 8,800 who participate in one or both of the Health Plans. The STS has members across this country as well as outside Canada. Two of our 41 Chapters are located in British Columbia while two straddle the Saskatchewan-Alberta border.

The 50th Anniversary

In addition to marking the 50th Anniversary at this AGM, Chapters are engaging in celebrations at the local level. As I visit with members throughout the province, I am struck by the depth of engagement among local superannuates and within the communities in which they live. The anniversary seed money made available starting in January is meant to support local activities, and there is a significant level of celebratory activity taking place locally and at this AGM. At the time of writing, more than a half dozen Chapters have been approved for funding with one of the applications being from two Chapters teaming up together for anniversary activity.

In addition to the anniversary logo and pins, an update is being made to the organizational history last revised in 2013 when we marked the 40th anniversary. Once this project is completed, information will be provided to Chapters about how to access.

Membership Survey

Last winter we engaged Praxis Analytics to undertake a significant survey of our membership on a wide range of topics with over 1,200 members taking part. Cam Cooper, Principal at Praxis, shared results of the survey with attendees at the October 26 Chapter President's Meeting. The presentation reported on why people join the STS, member engagement, and feedback on governance as well as programs and services. This is important information which will continue to impact our work as an organization.

A key highlight stands out regarding why new superannuates consider joining our organization. The two highest responses were: to access health and dental benefits, as well as supporting advocacy for retired teachers. These were the only two responses receiving a score of four or higher out of a possible five.

Additional information about the survey results is included in this booklet.

STS Chapter Presidents' Meeting

As noted above, the Chapter Presidents' Meeting took place in October at the Travelodge. Other than the September and October Provincial Executive meetings, this was the first in person gathering since 2019. Of the 41 Chapters, 35 were represented, including Fraser Valley and Okanagan Valley Chapters. This was an opportunity for Chapter Presidents (or their designates) and the Provincial Executive to collaborate on a number of topics related to the strengthening of the relationship between the provincial organization and local Chapters.

Group Benefits

The Health and Dental plans continue to perform well. The level of usage and claims is bouncing back from pandemic levels. Along with increased usage, significant inflation is impacting the health services sector and this also has impacts on our Plans. As an Executive, we meet regularly with Saskatchewan Blue Cross and our Agent of Record and consultant, Elev8 Financial.

The potential impacts of federally-funded Pharmacare along with the Canada Dental Benefit, and the recent shift in Saskatchewan on April 30 from biologic drugs to biosimilars, are recent policy shifts that we continue to monitor for impacts on our Group Benefits program. As the January issue of *Outreach* noted, Blue Cross is now offering an option to purchase various top up products for those travelling outside Saskatchewan. And, as we move into 2023-24, work will begin on preparing for another round of negotiations with Blue Cross on a new contract which will take effect on July 1, 2024.

The two-year window on the Health Spending Account will close at the end of June. There is still a significant amount of money left unclaimed so please touch base with your Chapter colleagues to ensure plan members access the \$250 HSA amount. Members are encouraged to contact the office if they have questions, and in this regard, I want to express our appreciation to our staff who have fielded many requests for information and support on this one program alone.

Governance and Executive Operations

At last year's AGM Delegates approved significant changes to financial bylaws. This took place after significant work done by the Governance and Handbook Review (GAHR) Committee. Pre-AGM regional meetings were also held around the province where Executive Secretary Murray Wall provided information to Delegates.

The work of the GAHR Committee continues. A number of proposed Bylaw changes will be discussed at this AGM.

Related to how the Executive organizes its meetings, a significant decision made at our Executive Orientation last September was to have the Group Benefits and Budget, Finance and Audit Committees become Committees of the Whole where each Executive member serves on those two Committees. Participation on other Committees is determined by each individual member, but on these two key Committees, the consensus was that it makes sense for each member to participate.

Financial Affairs

Murray Wall will have more to report on our finances in one of the Interest Sessions as well as on Thursday when we discuss STS finances and the 2023-24 Budget. Our financial well-being is important as it enables things like the AGM, Chapter rebates, *Outreach*, administrative services and many other programs and activities of importance to Chapters and members.

The Budget, Finance and Audit Committee monitors budget performance throughout the year and works to develop the operating budget for the next year, supported by our Executive Secretary whose responsibilities include overall supervision of the financial affairs of the organization.

A significant development this year was the Investment Manager search with the process beginning in September, culminating with a decision on a Manager being made in January. How our funds are managed going forward has a significant impact on our capacity as an organization. This is also referenced in the Executive Secretary's Report.

Subsequent to the adoption of Bylaw 4 (Financial Affairs) at last year's AGM, significant changes were made to STS Guidelines regarding Organizational Funds and Funding (Guideline 9) and Investment Objectives and Policy Statement (Guideline 10).

Advocacy

As the membership survey revealed, advocacy is an important priority among our members. With the survey we have a much better understanding of member priorities.

STS members are older adults and have an interest in health, pensions, aging in place, ageism, long-term care and a myriad of issues that affect our well-being as valuable members of the community.

Traditionally, our advocacy work has been directed by policy and AGM resolutions which are then communicated to appropriate government Ministries. By and large, responses to resolutions are acknowledged, but that is often the extent of the dialogue. A key challenge has been how to expand our impact as an organization, to expand our sphere of influence on behalf of members.

Last September Murray Wall and I met with Ministers Everett Hindley (Seniors) and Dustin Duncan (Education), to begin what we hope will be an ongoing process of meeting directly with provincial decision-makers. We provided background on the STS, discussed items outside the K-12 education system such as Early Childhood Learning (consistent with the resolution passed at the 2022 AGM), older adults, Age-Friendly, our connections provincially to the Saskatchewan Seniors Mechanism and nationally, to ACER-CART. We will continue to engage in the future.

At the January Provincial Executive meeting, we agreed to support phase two of SSM's Home Supports Program awareness campaign. As one of eighteen members of SSM, we have significant interest in this initiative as it has the potential to dramatically reshape how older adults are supported in the current gap between independence and institutional care. Some 90% of older adults maintain an independent lifestyle in their own homes, and the current system does not address how to support aging in place which is shown to be less costly, with better outcomes, offering positive alternatives to what exists now.

Similar to the first phase, we authorized a contribution of \$100,000 from the Contingency Fund. In March 2020 before the first contribution was provided, the Fund stood at \$1,272,241; in January when the second commitment was made, the Fund balance was \$1,450,632.

A Year of Activity

The various Committee Chairs and Co-chairs have provided detailed reports which are found in this booklet. The common themes are that the organization is active, energetic and forward-looking. Whether it is Chapters once again hosting recreation events, the development of a rubric to assist with nominations for Honorary Life Members, the refresh of our website (sts.sk.ca), a significant pending change to *Outreach*, or any of the activities and projects noted earlier in this report, your Executive has once again worked effectively this year to provide leadership.

Specifically with regard to *Outreach*, later this year there will be a dramatically different look and focus. While it is not related to the revised STF Bulletin, *Outreach* will follow a magazine format, broadening the scope of information with a presentation that is more contemporary. A key change is that the issues we currently have which follow each of five Provincial Executive meetings will give way to a quarterly schedule. We are also looking at separate ways of providing information to Chapters following each Executive meeting as Chapters find such updates informative. The STS website, the ongoing Facebook page and the *Outreach* refresh are significant tools in how the STS communicates.

Relationship With the STF

As one of 28 (and the largest) Locals of the Federation, we maintain a close relationship with the STF. Vice-President Sue Amundrud and I attended STF Presidents Day in September and February. Eight of our sixteen Executive members are STF Councillors, and we participated in STF Council events in October and most recently, at the end of April in Regina at the Annual Meeting of Council. Federation leadership and staff engage with us including participation by the STF President, Samantha Becotte, at this AGM, and now similar to other locals, a relationship with a Senior Administrative Staff person, in our case Mark Eggleston.

In some jurisdictions like Manitoba, the association representing superannuates is not part of the professional teacher organization. Recently, the Retired Teachers of Manitoba (RTAM) and the Manitoba Teachers Society signed a Memorandum of Understanding setting out a working relationship which will

see the two organizations plan joint meetings to discuss matters of mutual interest. This is very different from the relationship in this province between superannuates and the professional organization.

Appreciation

In September 2022 the Executive had the opportunity to thank recent former Provincial Members Lyle Markowski, Maxine Stinka and Marie LeBlanc-Warick as well as our first Executive Secretary, Fred Herron, who retired in June 2020. At last year's AGM, Fred and Maxine also became the latest in a long list of notables who have been recognized for their service with an Honorary Life Membership.

On your behalf I want to express our appreciation to Gary Boechler, Diane Marchand and Adeline Wuschenny, current Executive members who have decided not to seek re-election for another term. We appreciate the many contributions you made to the STS through service on the Provincial Executive.

A provincial organization like the STS could not function without a strong administrative team. As the recent member survey shows, there is a high level of satisfaction with the service and support received from our team comprised of four staff members:

- Murray Wall, Executive Secretary
- Colleen Bailey, Office Manager
- Heather Hase, Assistant Office Manager
- MJ Krips, Administrative Assistant

The significant work done by our administrative team, much of it behind the scenes, is an excellent complement to the leadership on the governance and policy side provided by the Executive.

Thank you to members of the Provincial Executive, a good number of whom also serve in additional capacities as Committee Chairs or Co-chairs, and representatives to organizations like the STF, ACER-CART, the McDowell Foundation and SSM. We appreciate the leadership they and their Committee members provide as they work to meet their mandates and provide STS input.

An AGM would not be successful without the participation of Delegates serving as representatives from the 41 Chapters, the backbone of this organization. Thank you for being at AGM 2023 serving both your local Chapter and the provincial organization, and for providing leadership during the past several years when we could meet only virtually. COVID-19 has taught us many things including the realization that this organization is resilient at the local and provincial levels.

We hope you enjoy this AGM and have the opportunity to network in person. Again, on behalf of the Provincial Executive and our administrative team, welcome to AGM 2023.

Respectfully submitted,
Doug Still, Provincial President