

OUTREACH



To The Superannuated Teachers
of Saskatchewan

President's Report

Sunil Pandila

Welcome to 2021! To all members, best wishes for the upcoming year. I hope this newsletter finds everyone in, as they say in computer language, "safe mode." While the pandemic has had an impact on every aspect of our lives, we continue to make progress and find ways to carry on business as usual, in different ways. I know that "online" has taken on a new meaning for all of us as we zoomed our way throughout the past year. It was not easy, but it allowed us to stay in contact with each other and come to understand the importance and value of human contact and interaction. With perseverance and commitment, we will put all of this behind us but the way we do things going forward will be different, as we have learned from the pandemic events over the past year.

As we head into the second half of our year, the day-to-day operations of the STS continue. Our office has opened with safety guidelines and by appointment only and your Executive does what it needs to do via meetings online. We just completed our January 2021 Committee and Executive meetings. Your Chapter liaisons will provide you with greater details about the content and results. This edition of *Outreach* will also give you an insight into

some of the work of the Committees. As you may be aware, not all the Committees are meeting due to our current pandemic situation.

The Executive has begun work on a "Governance and Policy Handbook" review. This will take some time and any changes to Bylaws will be brought forward for membership approval. It has been some time since a review was completed so Committee members are looking forward to revising policies to ensure they continue to be relevant and up to date. Terri Mitchell from the Yorkton Chapter is chairing the Committee. Thanks for her leadership for this review.

Typically at this time of year, we also begin to focus our attention on getting ready for our traditional AGM in May. Plans this year will be different as we need to conduct our business in a virtual format. I know many Chapters have not had much activity to date, but we need you to start thinking about participation in our AGM in this new format. The Committee has taken into account a host of issues some will face in this virtual format but with support and assistance from our service provider, it should go smoothly. We are still in the planning phase but undoubtedly,

we will proceed with our AGM utilizing a Zoom format.

We currently enjoy a membership of 11,841 members. While many activities are at a standstill, some Chapters have become creative and have held virtual meetings or virtual gatherings for socializing and continuing to keep in contact with one another. Even in retirement and facing obstacles this year, retired teachers continue to put their talents and skill to use for the benefit of our members!

Since many of our Chapter and Provincial activities have been on hold, it has been a relatively quiet year. It just does not feel the same and my tenure as President has definitely been different to say the least. I miss travelling and visiting with Chapters, welcoming new members to our organization, and personal contact which I really enjoyed throughout the year. I virtually presented the Retirement Lifestyles session to teachers in Regina Catholic in December. I want to thank them for their time and the invitation to be part of their own personal planning for retirement. During these times, I welcome any calls or concerns you may have and will make sure that they are brought to the Executive table.

Lastly, who knows how long we will be facing the current crisis. Whatever the timeframe, on behalf of the Executive, I would like to wish you and your families a safe winter season. I know many Chapters do not typically meet in person during the winter months, but this might be

a time for Chapter Executives to connect digitally with your membership if you find yourself short of things to do!

For more information about any of our programs, initiatives, or how we can support you in your Chapters,

please do not hesitate to call the Office at 306-373-3879 or visit our website at www.sts.sk.ca. You can also contact me at sunil.pandila@sasktel.net or 306-692-2420.

Group Benefits

Maxine Stinka

The Committee reviewed the Health and Dental Experience Report and the Integrated Health Management Analysis Report for the first five months of the third year of the STS contract with Saskatchewan Blue Cross (July 1, 2020 - November 30, 2020). Total health revenue was approximately \$4.4M and expenses approximately \$3.6M. Revenue for the Dental Plan was approximately \$2.7M and expenses about \$2.5M for an overall surplus for the five months of approximately \$980,000. Drug costs were still approximately half the total paid claims for health. Although some expense lines are increasing, they are generally still below their 2018-19 utilization levels. The overall results of the Extended Health Fund continue to be better than usual during the third year of a contract. As previously reported, this enabled us to extend the three-year contract with Saskatchewan Blue

Cross to four years without an increase in premiums and with some increased benefits.

Based on a recommendation by Saskatchewan Blue Cross, it was decided to add Dietitians and Audiologists to the paramedical services covered by our Plan and to expand the category of Registered Psychologists to include Social Workers and Counsellors. This expansion is in order to meet the new industry standards and is effective retroactive to January 1, 2021.

After considerable discussion regarding the level of surpluses in our Extended Health Plan, it was decided to investigate further the options that may be available to enhance benefits to members. Executive Secretary Murray Wall and Saskatchewan Blue Cross representative Bob Wilhelms will study this in more detail and bring

recommendations to the Provincial Executive in March.

The Committee will continue to monitor the Plan to ensure it is sustainable, affordable, and provides a safety net for our members.

The *STS Group Benefits Handbook* will be discontinued as the material included in it is now available in the new *STS Information Booklet* and/or on the website. A hardcopy of the *STS Information Booklet* is available upon request from the STS Office.

Total membership in one or both of the Health and Dental Plans as of December 2020 was 8,500, an increase of 49 over September 2020 and an increase of 232 over December 2019.

Budget, Finance and Audit

Don Gabel

The Budget, Finance and Audit Committee met on January 11, 2021, and reviewed the current financial position of the STS Operating and the STS Extended Health Funds. The financial statements as of November 30, 2020, show our organization to be in a strong financial position. As of November 30, 2020, Operating Fund expenditures are below budget by approximately \$97,000 largely due to no Chapter Presidents' meeting,

as well as reduced Executive meeting expenses and travel. Each individual budget line within expected levels. The Committee will continue to provide close oversight for the financial operations of the STS. As of January 11, 2021, our membership was 11,841, a decrease of 14 members from November.

The Committee continued work on a proposed budget for 2021-22. The

final draft budget will be presented to the Executive in March and subsequently printed in *Outreach*.

The Committee also recommended approval of a \$100 expense per Executive member in this current budget year to offset virtual meeting expenses such as costs of home document printing and ink. The Executive approved this recommendation related to STS work.

Annual General Meeting

Jane Isinger and Doug Still

At the November Provincial Executive meeting, direction was given to Executive Secretary Murray Wall to bring information and recommendations for a virtual Annual General Meeting to the January 2021 STS Executive Meeting. Given the COVID-19 pandemic, the Annual General Meeting was unable to be held in May 2020 and it appears that the continued public health guidelines will not allow for an in-person AGM this upcoming May.

Legal counsel was consulted regarding the impact of COVID-19 on the postponement of the 2020 AGM, and what would need to be accomplished in the 2020 AGM and 2021 AGM, which will both be held on May 13 and 14 this year. Certain legal requirements must be met, so the challenge is how to manage two AGMs in the same time frame when we cannot meet in person.

Three motions based on recommendations from the AGM Planning

Committee were passed at the January Executive Meeting:

1. To approve in principle the plan as described for a virtual 2020 AGM and 2021 AGM, including contracts with the necessary service providers.
2. To keep the current AGM Formula for Delegates that is in place. (Two Delegates for the first sixty-five paid members or portion thereof and one Delegate for each additional sixty-five paid members or portion thereof).
3. To communicate this information as soon as possible to Chapter Presidents.

The 2020 AGM will be brief in nature, attend to the necessary governance and legal requirements and held immediately prior to the 2021 AGM. The 2021 AGM will be more similar to a regular AGM, minus social events, entertainment, small group sessions, interest sessions and banquet.

Moving to a virtual format presents a number of challenges including the comfort level of our Delegates with the new technologies. These issues will be addressed with opportunities such as practice sessions using the Zoom meeting format. Organizations like the STF and Saskatchewan Seniors Mechanism have been using a virtual platform for large meetings, and with pre-planning, those have run quite smoothly. Costs have been determined for contracting technical support and they will remain well within budget.

Chapter Presidents are being contacted and are encouraged to begin the process of preparing a Delegate list as soon as possible.

Although a virtual AGM will definitely be different, we will do our best to assist Delegates to have the best experience possible.

ACER-CART

Marie LeBlanc-Warick

In preparation for the possibility of an upcoming federal election, a Vision for Canada, the brochure created for the 2015 election, is being reviewed and updated. In addition, a redesigned ACER-CART website went live in October 2020 (acer-cart.org). If you have any difficulty accessing the new page, try deleting any cookies and temporary files and then trying again.

The ACER-CART newsletter, *Options*, will no longer be published in print form, however, news, information and updates will be placed on the new website.

The Pension and Retirement Income Committee continues to monitor any indicators that federal Bill C-27 may be occurring regarding defined benefit pension plans, especially in view of the growing federal debt. The Committee is also compiling a survey to collect Member information on current Cost of Living Adjustments being experienced, and concerns regarding pension security. ACER-CART President Gerry Tiede sent a letter supporting the federal proposal to increase the OAS amount at 75 years of age.

The Health Services Committee has compiled and sent a survey to provincial affiliates requesting information regarding which vaccines are available in Saskatchewan through Medicare and STS Benefit Plans, examples of possible contraventions of the Canada Health Act in Saskatchewan, and any legislation regarding kickbacks by pharmaceutical companies.

Lastly, the ACER-CART Annual General Meeting normally held at the beginning of June will likely be held virtually.

Nominations

Maxine Stinka

The length of the term for all positions on the Provincial STS Executive is one year. Nominations will be accepted at any time prior to 4:00 p.m. on May 13, 2021, but must be received by the STS Office by March 1, 2021, in order to be included in the March/April edition of *Outreach*. Nominations must be signed by the nominee and indicate the position to which

he/she wishes to be elected. They may be forwarded to the STS Office by email, postal service, or fax. All positions are elected at the AGM. Nominees are asked to submit a short biography and a headshot (JPEG format) to be printed in the AGM booklet. **Due to the virtual nature of the AGM, there will be no addresses from the candidates to the Delegates this year.** For

more information about the duties, nomination and election of members to the STS Executive, please refer to pages 4-6 in the *STS Policy Handbook* dated July 1, 2019, available online, or contact the STS Office. If you would like to become involved at the provincial level of the STS, please consider running for a position on the Provincial Executive.

Spotlight on Superannuates

Submitted by Lois Marsh, Tisdale Chapter Member

Lillian Abrahamson, Tisdale Chapter

Lillian was born in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, on April 29, 1926. She will be celebrating her 95th birthday this spring. She attended elementary school in McKague, Saskatchewan, and high school in Tisdale and in 1944 she went to Normal School in Saskatoon.

Lillian started her teaching career in 1944 in the Napoleon School. When she was hired, a bachelor in the area, Gordon Abrahamson, was told not to bother the new teacher. He didn't listen and in 1948 they married. From there, Lillian taught in Archerwill, Sylvania, McKague and Franklin. Both her parents had previously taught at Franklin. She returned to teach at Napoleon in 1956 and was there until the school closed in 1965. In 1965 she went to the Kinistin First Nations School and while there she introduced the Kindergarten program. Lillian retired from there in 1981. Over her nearly 35 years of teaching, she raised and taught her four children and helped her husband on the

farm by hauling grain. She also taught piano lessons and played the organ at the McKague church. Lillian is part of three generations of provincial educators.

Lillian was a charter member of the Tisdale STS Chapter when it was formed in 1983. She was Vice-President from 1991 to 1993 and then President from 1993 to 1994. She hosted several of the meetings. For many years she has donated food and time for the birthday parties the Chapter hosts at the nursing homes. She has remained a dedicated member of her Chapter.

She is still an active member on the McKague Cemetery Committee and a devoted member of her church.

Gordon and Lillian moved off the farm to Tisdale in 2003. In retirement, they drove many seniors to appointments and visited shut-ins. Their door was always open to friends and coffee was



served with homemade baking. In 2009 they lost their house and contents in a fire. It was devastating, but with her attitude and spirit she rallied back and was determined to remain in her own home so they rebuilt.

Gordon passed away in 2018. Lillian continues to live in her home and still puts others ahead of herself.

2020 Honorary Life Membership Recipients

Doris McDougall – Wakaw Chapter

For some remarkable members of our profession, the good life is associated with opportunities to serve. One such person is Doris McDougall who has dedicated her life to her schools, her community, her profession, and the Métis nation of which she is a proud member.

Doris was born in Levine Flats and went to school in St. Louis, where she learned to speak both French and English since her first language was Michif. She went on to Normal School in Saskatoon and had a 33-year teaching career, mostly in Métis settlements and on First Nations reserves. After retirement, she became one of the driving forces to create a Wakaw Chapter of the STS and rarely missed a meeting. Doris served

28 years on the Chapter Executive and was a constant support in all its activities. She also represented the Wakaw Chapter at several STS AGMs and helped the Chapter host several provincial kaiser tournaments and a fishing derby. For her hard work and dedication, she received the Chapter Award in 2018.

Within the community of St. Louis, Doris has served a variety of organizations, including the Catholic church, the Lions club, the organization supporting French culture, the Historical Society, and the 2005 Celebrate Saskatchewan Committee. She has been a member of St. Louis Métis Local #28 since the 1950s, faithfully attending and supporting its meetings and events. She was part

of the ground-breaking committee work that put the Michif language into written form. The Michif Language Learning Resource was published in 2018 along with a deck of playing cards with words in Michif, French and English.

Doris's many contributions have not gone unnoticed. In 2004 she received the Inaugural Volunteerism Award from the St. Louis Business Association, followed by the Canada 150 Award for Volunteerism in 2017. Now her colleagues in the teaching profession are proud to honour her extraordinary life of service by awarding her Honorary Life Membership in the STS.

Albert Waldbauer – Yorkton Chapter

Albert Waldbauer began teaching late in life after working for many years as an automotive mechanic and aircraft engineer. His varied work experience and prolific inventiveness were assets in his career as a teacher at Yorkton Regional High School, and since he retired in 2000, he has used these assets to benefit the STS, his church and his community.

Albert has served as Vice-President, President and Past-President of the Yorkton Chapter. As technical editor of the newsletter, he is also a contributor and organizes its delivery. When electoral campaigns are in progress, it is Albert who questions candidates on behalf of the STS. For many years he has represented the Chapter at the

provincial AGM, but is also known across the province for taking pictures at the curling bonspiel, showing a PowerPoint presentation at the bowling banquet and spending many hours preparing a 40th anniversary presentation. He is somewhat famous for a trademark curling rock push stick that was unveiled at the Saltcoats Fun Bonspiel. His many positive contributions earned him the STS Yorkton Chapter Award in 2014.

Albert shows the same dedication in his other involvements. As a church member, he has served as deacon, reader, trustee, treasurer, Sunday and Bible school teacher, council member, and choir member. He also helped rewrite the constitution, ordered and

installed software, set up a web page, modified the sound system and supplied pictures for the directory. He can carry out repairs, drive for materials, or obtain a grant, depending on the problem to be solved. In food-related projects, he helps with supplies, preparation and clean-up. He has done maintenance work at the Willowbrook Covenant Cemetery, helped at Soup Haven, and manned the Salvation Army Kettle – whatever it takes to make life better for everyone.

It is for his many contributions, endless ingenuity and willingness to help that the STS is proud to award Honorary Life Membership to Albert Waldbauer.

COVID-19 – The Vaccine: What you should know

Article by the Saskatchewan Health Authority

COVID-19 has radically changed daily life. Although there have been other pandemics, the world has not seen a global pandemic on this scale since the Spanish Flu of 1918-19. Our social response bears some similarity to 100 years ago in terms of mandatory masking, self-isolation and physical distancing, but the most notable difference is the development of a COVID-19 vaccine, made possible through significant technological and scientific advances that have contributed to our understanding of viruses and vaccine development.

The COVID-19 vaccine offers us the ability to develop immunity to the virus, but not without many questions being raised.

- How can a vaccine have been developed so quickly?
- How does the vaccine work?
- How can I be assured that it's safe?
- What kind of reaction might I have to the vaccine?
- What kind of follow-up will there be on the effect of the vaccine?

The answer lays in a collaborative international effort to share information, building on new technologies and comparing research, while adhering to

rigorous testing requirements and approval standards.

The Making of a Vaccine

We often equate medical advances with years of research and regulatory approvals, so how can a COVID-19 vaccine have been developed in the space of a year?

There are three stages to developing a vaccine:

1) Exploratory

- Research and development
- On January 11, 2020, the genetic code of COVID-19 was released to advance further studies.

2) Pre-clinical trials

- Non-human trial vaccines test whether there is an immune response, which is when the body recognizes and defends itself from the virus.
- The focus is on whether the vaccine works and is safe.

3) Clinical trials

- Trials are conducted on humans in three phases:
- Phase 1: Several volunteers receive vaccines with the goal of determining whether it is safe.



- Phase 2: Hundreds of volunteers receive vaccines to reconfirm that it is safe and to determine the ideal dosage.
- Phase 3: Thousands or tens of thousands receive vaccines to study how well the vaccine works.
- Human trials began on March 1, 2020.

Vaccines can often take years to develop and gain the necessary approvals. Two factors that contributed to the rapid development of a COVID-19 vaccine were global collaboration between different countries and organizations, and a regulatory review process that allowed trial information to be submitted as it happened rather than waiting for all studies to be completed.

For more information on COVID-19, please visit www.Saskatchewan.ca/COVID19

Cost of Living Adjustment

The January 2021 Cost of Living increase (COLA) for retirees and beneficiaries receiving a monthly pension from the Teachers' Superannuation Commission (TSC) will be 0.8%. For those receiving a monthly pension from the Saskatchewan Teachers' Retirement Plan (STRP) the January 2021 Cost of Living increase will be: For benefits earned to June 30, 2015 – 0.8%. For benefits earned after June 30, 2015 - no further indexing has been approved at this time.

Honorary Life Membership

This is a reminder that the deadline for 2021 Honorary Life Membership nominations is March 1, 2021.

Resolutions

Alan Laughlin

The Resolutions Committee met on January 11 to review nine resolutions in preparation for the upcoming Annual General Meeting. Additionally, the Committee reviewed a further six resolutions on January 12. Those 15 resolutions will be added to the resolutions that were previously accepted. The deadline for resolutions is March 1 and newly received resolutions will be reviewed at the next Committee meeting on March 10

at which time the total package will be created. Thank you to those Chapters and individuals who have taken the time to craft resolutions. I encourage others to also do likewise. The debate of resolutions and their disposition is the driving force of decision making in our organization.

Please forward resolutions to the STS Office prior to March 1, 2021, in order to have them printed in *Outreach*.

STS Office Reminders

- STS Group Benefit Planholders who are eligible for the Saskatchewan Seniors' Drug Plan may be eligible for a reduced premium by providing the STS Office with a copy of the Seniors' Drug Plan confirmation letter.
For information on the Saskatchewan Seniors' Drug Plan, please speak with your pharmacist or contact the Seniors' Drug Plan office at 1-800-667-7581. If you live in Regina please call 306-787-3317.
- For any changes to your address and/or Group Benefits coverage, please contact the STS Office directly at 306-373-3879 or sts@sts.sk.ca.
- If you are on a temporary contract and wish to suspend your STS Group Benefits, please contact the STS Office via email prior to the 15th of the month to be effective the 1st of the following month.
- Please make sure that you are using the correct email address for the STS: **sts@sts.sk.ca**.

Congratulations to Moose Jaw Chapter member, Ronald Campbell and his wife Donna who celebrated their 60th anniversary on December 23, 2020.

Did you know

The STS spends nearly \$50,000 per year on printing and mailing costs for the *Outreach*! You can help us reduce this cost by requesting the *Outreach* in an electronic format. You would receive an email when a new issue is being posted on the STS website and you can then access it at your leisure. This is a great way to help us save money, reduce paper usage and be more environmentally friendly. Please clip and send this back to us by email to sts@sts.sk.ca (you can just take a photo and email) or send by regular post.

Yes, I'd like to start receiving *Outreach* electronically!

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

From The Editor's Desk

Joyce Hoffman

When COVID-19 moved into our lives and activities, little did we think it would be a pandemic lasting many months. I, like many others, am waiting for vaccines to be administered to everyone. In order to stay safe, I encourage all to take precautions by staying at home if possible and following public guidelines.

As you can tell by this issue of *Outreach*, your STS Executive is still meeting virtually and looking after STS business. Please read the reports to stay informed about what we have worked on and discussed on your behalf.

To save paper and mailing costs, please consider receiving your *Outreach* online. You will have it significantly earlier than a paper copy and you won't have to leave your home to get it. The form is on page seven.

I want everyone to be aware that the STS Annual General Meeting will be held in a virtual format this year. It will undoubtedly feel different, but we will still be able to attend to the business of our organization.

Stay safe everyone!

STS Executive 2020-21

President/Councillor: Sunil Pandila,
Moose Jaw Chapter

Past-President/Councillor: Maxine Stinka,
Assiniboine Chapter

Vice-President/Councillor: Don Gabel,
Wakaw Chapter

ACER-CART Representative: Marie LeBlanc-Warick,
Wakaw Chapter

Executive Secretary: Murray Wall,
Saskatoon Chapter

Outreach Editor: Joyce Hoffman, Regina Chapter

Councillors:
Sue Amundrud Carrot River Valley
(Melfort & District) Chapter
Regina Chapter
Saskatoon Chapter
The Battlefords and District Chapter
Regina Chapter

Joyce Hoffman
Jane Isinger
Alan Laughlin
Doug Still

Members-at-Large:
Diane Marchand South Central Chapter
Lyle Markowski Saskatoon Chapter
Terri Mitchell Yorkton Chapter
Devona Putland Moosomin Chapter
Helen Sukovieff Regina Chapter
Anna Wehrkamp Carrot River Valley
(Melfort & District) Chapter
Regina Chapter
Adeline Wuschenny Regina Chapter



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