

# **Report of the President**

**to the**

## **Annual General Meeting**

### **SASKATCHEWAN RETIREES ASSOCIATION**

**June 13, 2008**

**SGEU HALL, 1440 Broadway Avenue, Regina**

This is the 33<sup>rd</sup> Annual Meeting of our Association. It is my pleasure to present this my 5<sup>th</sup> Presidential Report to the membership.

Prior to proceeding with my report, I invite you to stand and join me in a moment of silence to remember and reflect on the lives and contributions of members that have passed away since our last Annual General Meeting.

#### ***Moment of Silence***

I would also at this time wish to recognize those members of your Board that have worked on your behalf over the course of this last year. Along with myself your current Board membership includes –

- Frank May
- Ron Reavley
- Chris Pasloske
- Jack Peterson
- Joe Flynn
- Ron Bachelu
- Graham Tuer
- Bob Larson
- Adam Dreher
- Jack Kloczko
- Martin Wrubleski
- Mike lipka
- Jerry Schropp

Our Association was formed some 33 years ago, back in 1975. Its mandate was to pursue a variety of issues on behalf of all Retirees. Of particular concern to members were –

- opportunities to get specific information on topics, programs and subjects of interest to Retirees,
- opportunities for Retirees to gather with former work colleagues to continue their friendship and discuss shared interests,
- to pursue obtaining fair and equitable pensions and benefits for Retirees as Retirees were promised and what Retirees paid for,
- to speak as a united voice for Retirees.

Over the years one of the memberships main interest has been insurance for health and dental concerns. As many of you are aware, the Associations Extended Health and Dental Programs have been well received and it's benefits have been regularly updated. Premiums have been kept relatively level without significant changes from year to year. This program continues to have a high level of support from our membership. I would like to thank the Group Benefits Committee for their time and diligence in maintaining this program for the benefit of all members.

I expect that the Chair of the Group Benefits Committee, when he makes his report, will have more to say on this program and what may be in store for the year ahead.

Our main focus over recent years has been Pensions and Benefits. Two courses of action have been pursued, namely –

- political, and
- legal

On the political side, you are aware of our many efforts to try and meet with our former NDP Government Politicians. While we were marginally successful in that we are now receiving legislated pension indexing at 70% of CPI, we were never afforded the opportunity to discuss our total “basket of concerns”. The SRA has never suggested or inferred to Government that we sought pensions or benefits beyond what we were promised or better than we had paid for. This has been the SRA stand for many years and it is still our stand today.

Over the past few years when the Saskatchewan Party was the official opposition in the Legislature, they offered support to Retirees and their quest for fair and equitable Pensions and Benefits. As a result of their support and action, many Retirees in return provided their support and assistance at the time of the last Provincial Election. The result of this was the elevation of the Saskatchewan Party to now form the Government of Saskatchewan.

The SRA realizes that the new government has a variety of priorities on its plate and definite time constraints for various action items. However as time moves on and no visible signs are apparent at bringing forward the Saskatchewan Party's pre-election support for Retirees, Retirees are left with an uneasy feeling of abandonment. It is disconcerting to think that such aggressive pre-election support may have so quickly evolved into one of complacency. We trust that this is not the case.

Your President has written a number of letters to the Premier, Cabinet Ministers and members of the Government Caucus. The Premier has not responded . The Cabinet Ministers that have responded side stepped our issues entirely. One Caucus member responded by phone and tried to provide some assurance that our cause has not been forgotten. He suggested that Department of Finance officials were in the process of

costing out our requests and that we can expect to receive some contact prior to the end of the month (April).

Your SRA has maintained the position that Retirees were promised certain Pensions and Benefits, and regardless of the costing results, the members paid for the pension and benefit improvements and deserve to receive them. The SRA continues to point out that the problem confronting the Government and Retirees is the direct result of the Government's decision to not establish a "Pension Fund". If the Government had lived up to its promise to set up a fund, if the Government lived up to the pension legislation it enacted for the rest of the Province, there would be no pension problem today. The pension problems are the result of Government decision making and action and have nothing to do with Retirees. However Retirees are the recipients of those unfortunate and callous Government decisions.

Having said this, the SRA is still optimistic that the Saskatchewan Government may come through and address the issues and concerns that have confronted Retiree's for far too long.

On the legal front, our lawyer Mr. Gordon Kuski QC, has finished with the "Discovery" phase and the Government Designate (Brian Smith of PEBA). Unfortunately for Retiree timing, the Government lawyer (Don McKillop) has elected to take retirement and his replacement (Darryl Brown) has indicated he may wish to "Discover" the three Plaintiffs (Frank May, Ron Reavley and Alf Zimmerman) in order to familiarize himself with the case. While this is a minor setback respecting timing, it is anticipated that if he requires this "Discovery", it should be concluded before the end of April.

Once "Discovery" is finished, the next step is for the Government and the Plaintiff to each provide the judge a report setting out their respective positions on the law suit. With these reports and all the other documents related to the case including the transcripts of the "Discovery" exercise, the judge then –

- 1) tries to get the two party's to negotiate a settlement, but failing this
- 2) sets a date for trial.

It has always been our position of preference to negotiate a settlement. If this is not possible, Mr. Kuski estimates that the duration of a trial will approximate three weeks.

While the wheels of the law appear to turn very slowly, we believe we are approaching the end. The future time required appears short, so please hang in here with us and see this through to completion and success.

Your Executive firmly believes we are approaching the end of our time consuming quest for fair and equitable pensions and benefits. The Association will, in the next year or so, have to address what type of organization it wishes to be in the future and

what services or role it wishes to play. While the Association has taken on other concerns in the past, which has led to our Group Benefits, our Dental and our Life Insurance Programs, once we have finished with our Pension and Benefit quest, then a new direction or quest will be required.

There are a number of factors that will have a major impact on what can or may be done in the years ahead. Over time the members of the old PSSP Plan will be replaced by more and more members of the PEPP Plan. These new members may have different issues respecting pensions and benefits, as they are younger and have different concerns and priorities.

Members should be aware of these considerations as well as other facts and should start thinking of what they want their future organization to look like. They should discuss these issues with their colleagues and advise the Board of their ideas and desires. Surely I expect the Board to reach out to the membership for their thoughts, however all members should feel free to advance their thoughts and views on what they feel is appropriate.

Other important concerns relate to the low percentage of paid up members and the fact that the “annual membership dues” have not changed since the inception of the Association back in 1975.

We all clearly understand costs have increased considerably over the last 30+ years and \$10 no longer goes very far in today’s economy. Your Board will be reviewing these concerns very carefully in the months ahead. We know that only one member in three pays membership fees. Slightly better than this can be said for contributions to the legal fund. It is unfair that only a small group of members are keeping the Association financially solvent. This can not go on indefinitely. You can be assured however, that the future role adopted for the SRA will have a large impact on its future financial requirements.

These are but a few of the issues that will occupy your Boards time in the foreseeable future. If you have any thoughts or ideas that help in addressing these or other association issues please don’t hold back. Pass your thoughts on to the Board. We all know that if the SRA is to continue as a viable and useful organization for Retirees your wants and needs must be known.

I thank you for your attendance here to day. On behalf of your Board I also want to sincerely thank you for all the attention and support you have given to the Saskatchewan Retirees Association and the Board over the years. It has been very much appreciated. Thank you again.

Alf Zimmerman  
President