

OUTREACH



To The Superannuated Teachers
of Saskatchewan

President's Report

Sunil Pandila

Welcome to 2022! Even though we're entering 2022 in a different way than we hoped for, it just reminds me that we need to be thankful for what we have and how closely we are connected on a global level. This is the third calendar year that the world has dealt with COVID-19. As we continue to grapple with the ongoing surge, we are all bracing for what may lie ahead in the upcoming year. I am one who likes to plan ahead and have a general idea of my calendar for the year, plans for travel, leisure, some work, time for volunteer contributions, STS commitments and the list goes on. That planning is so difficult at this point in time due to the uncertainty of our current situation. While it appears that there is a light at the end of the tunnel, it just seems like we have several roadblocks still to overcome.

In light of the ongoing health crisis, the STS Executive at our January meeting made the decision to modify our usual spring activities. We have decided to cancel the March 18 Chapter Presidents' meeting. Also, we will conduct our AGM in a virtual format once again. I know this will be disappointing for many of our members, but too many unknown factors make planning for our annual event very difficult. However, we have learned from last year's online event, and we will make improvements for this year.

It is understandable that many Chapters are not carrying out their regular routine of meetings and events for their members. We appreciate the efforts of current Chapter Executive members who continue to work diligently on behalf of all members to ensure that information is communicated, basic Chapter operations continue, and in general make sure that members are supported during this period of hibernation. Let's hope as the year unfolds, we have more opportunities to get back together again in person!

As our current Extended Health and Dental Benefits Plan expires on June 30, 2022, the Group Benefits Negotiating Committee has been working with our consultant, Elev8 Financial, to assist in reaching a new contract with Saskatchewan Blue Cross. Once again, with the ongoing pandemic and the impact to our Plan, it is difficult to forecast how Plan usage might look going into the future or when all areas of our Plan will be back to pre-pandemic levels. The Committee chose a two-year contract because of these uncertainties, and took into account improvements to the Plan while trying to keep premium rate increases reasonable. We have also incorporated some structural changes in the way funds are allocated for the Plan, so the STS has greater control and lower

administrative costs, resulting in overall Plan savings. I am pleased to announce that the Executive approved acceptance of the new contract with Blue Cross. Thank you to our STS team, Elev8 Financial, and Saskatchewan Blue Cross for working together to finalize this new contract. More detailed information will be forwarded shortly to all Plan members.

The work on the Governance and Handbook Review Committee continues. There will be some aspects that will require approval by Delegates at our AGM. However, the work is far from done, and we are ready to roll out a member survey as requested through a resolution at the 2021 AGM. The survey will be done online and should take about 20 minutes. The survey is now open at www.sts-survey.ca and we've asked Chapter Presidents to assist with information dispersal within their Chapter membership. It is important that as many of our members as possible complete the survey, as it will help guide the Executive to understand and work on important issues affecting our members.

We continue to support the ongoing SSM Home Supports Initiative. There has been much publicity since last October surrounding the campaign and we are encouraging members to sign up and support the initiative.

Hopefully, you have seen some of the campaign on the news networks. SSM created a 'Saskatchewan Positive Aging' Facebook Group to encourage members to engage with one another on topics relevant to positive aging. To join, search 'Saskatchewan Positive Aging' from your Facebook page and ask to join. SSM staff moderates the group and will approve your membership. Phase 1 is now complete and work has begun on Phase 2 of this initiative.

I want to thank the current members of the Executive for their ongoing commitment and dedication to serving on the Provincial Executive. We have a great team, and collectively, we are getting the necessary work done for our organization. Our group has a lot to be proud of in terms of the work we are accomplishing which I have briefly touched upon in this article.

On behalf of the Provincial Executive and STS Staff, I wish you and your families the best of the winter season. The challenges of the last three years have been difficult for everyone. Stay engaged and connected and 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 STS 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.

Annual General Meeting Planning

Doug Still and Anna Wehrkamp

Much discussion occurred regarding whether or not to continue with the planning of an in-person AGM. The Committee has tried to keep the options open for as long as possible, but felt that in order to facilitate planning, a decision should be made at the January Executive meeting. Given the current situation with the COVID-19 pandemic, it was decided that the 2022 Annual General Meeting should be in a virtual format.

A brief discussion took place regarding the possibility of interest sessions. It was felt that those sessions could be eliminated, but that small group sessions to discuss the resolutions would be very helpful. Those discussions will probably occur prior to the AGM in order to avoid a lengthy day in front of a computer.

The AGM will be scheduled over two approximately equal days. In addition, time limits will be communicated and monitored so as to prevent over-lengthy discussions and to respond to feedback received after the last AGM.

The Delegate Formula will remain the same:

"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."

Chapter Presidents will be contacted and are encouraged to begin the process of preparing a Delegate list.

Although a virtual AGM is definitely different and perhaps not ideal, we will endeavor to assist Delegates in having the best experience possible.

STS is
now on
Facebook!



STS is now on Facebook! Find and follow us by searching "Superannuated Teachers of Saskatchewan" and click on the STS logo!

Honorary Life Membership

Gary Boechler and Don Gabel

The Committee met on January 10, 2022, and continued work on an HLM selection rubric. We would also like to remind STS members that nominations for Honorary Life Membership are due March 1, 2022. Nomination information can be found in Guideline 4 of the STS Policy Handbook located on the STS website (www.sts.sk.ca).

Advocacy

Huguette Kitchen and Devona Putland

Discussions by the Committee focused on three issues:

- Ageism Policy Development
- SSM Home Supports Initiative
- Difference between advocacy and lobbying and the role of the STS

The proposed policy on Ageism was presented to the Executive and will be shared at the AGM in May 2022.

The Committee discussed the report submitted by Saskatchewan Seniors Mechanism (SSM) regarding the Home Supports Initiative. The Committee agreed to continue our support of the Home Supports Initiative and recommended to the Executive to proceed with the second and final financial instalment of \$50,000.

The Committee discussed the differences between advocacy and lobbying.

The STS Advocacy Committee is a group of volunteers who advocate for concerns of the membership of the STS. The goals of the Committee for 2022 were identified as:

1. To examine the guidelines in STS Policy and the role of this

Committee within the STS.

2. To monitor and identify ongoing issues that may affect our membership.
3. To create and foster better relationships with other seniors' organizations in Saskatchewan.
4. To collaborate with ACER-CART, SSM and STF to provide leadership for issues that could impact our membership.
5. To continue to foster good relationships with our educational partners.
6. To explore ways in which we can support members and Chapters in their advocacy work that is consistent with the goals and principles of STF and STS.
7. To explore ways in which we can include interest sessions related to advocacy at our AGM.

Although some use the words advocate and lobby interchangeably, there is a difference in the regulation of the two. Anyone can advocate for anything they

feel passionate about. However, lobbyists are regulated by the Saskatchewan Government's Lobbyists Act. To lobby means that the organization may need to be registered as a lobbyist organization. The regulations surrounding lobbying are found in the Lobbyists Act (<https://www.sasklobbyistregistry.ca/resource-library/learning-centre/127-01.pdf>).

Lobbyist groups often have paid staff dedicated to lobbying. The STS Office staff is small, and the actual Advocacy Committee is comprised of volunteers. As an Advocacy Committee, we ask that when submitting resolutions, please indicate advocacy vs. lobbying for a cause, as advocacy is the mandate of the Committee.

In the meantime, if you have thoughts about specific areas where you think the STS should be playing an advocacy role, we encourage you to email the STS Office at sts@sts.sk.ca with your suggestions.

Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA)

The January 2022 Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) for retirees and beneficiaries receiving a monthly pension from the Teachers' Superannuation Commission (TSC) will be 2.2%. For those receiving a monthly pension from the Saskatchewan Teachers' Retirement Plan (STRP) the January 2022 Cost of Living increase for benefits earned up to June 30, 2015, will be 2.2% and for benefits earned after June 30, 2015, no additional indexing has been approved at this time. The COLA is calculated using the average Canadian consumer price index increase for the 12 months ending on October 31.

Recreation

Don Gabel and Alan Laughlin



The Committee met on January 10, 2022 and would like to update you on the following recreational events.

Approved for 2022:

1. Golf – Parkland Chapter
2. Bowling – Regina Chapter (postponed until 2023)
3. Curling – Yorkton Chapter
4. Pickleball – Outlook Chapter

Dates and times have not been finalized. Stay tuned for updates.

The following events do not have hosts for 2022.

1. Art
2. Fishing
3. Bridge
4. Mah Jong

Tisdale was approved as the host for golf in 2023 subject to Parkland being able to proceed in 2022. If golf does not occur in 2022, Parkland will be given first opportunity to host for 2023 and Tisdale in 2024.

Saskatchewan Senior Fitness Association 55+ games will be hosted in Prince Albert from June 14 to 16, 2022. Please see additional information in this *Outreach* issue.

Resolutions

Alan Laughlin

The Resolutions Committee addressed three items at their Committee meeting on January 10, 2022.

1. Resolutions passed at the 2020 and 2021 Annual General Meetings continue to be addressed. The Disposition of Resolutions document on the STS website contains updates.
2. The Provincial Executive carried a motion that would see an addition to Guideline 1 in the *STS Policy Handbook* that allows the chair and/or members of the Resolutions Committee to chair the resolutions portion of the AGM.
3. Seven resolutions were received by the Resolutions Committee with four of those being approved for debate at the 2022 AGM and the remaining three to be returned to the writer for further clarification. They will be revisited at the March meeting.
4. Resolutions continue to be accepted with the deadline of March 1, 2022, for resolutions to be printed in the next edition of *Outreach*.

Budget, Finance and Audit

Sue Amundrud

STS membership currently stands at 11,934.

A review of our financial statement as of the end of November 2021, shows revenue for the month at \$89,168.02 (year-to-date \$448,322.76), and expenses for November at \$33,679.52 (year-to-date \$353,854.33). We remain in a solid financial position as an organization, although we must

keep in mind that expenditures continue to be impacted by COVID-19.

Feedback received from Chapters and individuals regarding the Contingency Fund and Operations Reserve Fund was reviewed. That, in conjunction with other initiatives underway, has encouraged us to begin work on an overall financial Bylaws,

Policies and Guidelines review. Further details will be made available on progress at our AGM in May 2022.

An initial draft budget for 2022-23 was reviewed, and revisions will be undertaken so that the budget can be finalized at our Executive meeting in March. The budget will be presented to the AGM Delegates for approval in May.

Group Benefits

Don Gabel

The Group Benefits Committee met with Mark Mireault, Head of Strategic Relationships with Saskatchewan Blue Cross and with Bob Wilhelms, Consultant with Elev8 Financial. The Experience reports were reviewed for the Health and Dental Plan.

After five months of the fourth year of the agreement, the Health Plan revenues were \$4,596,466.87; paid claims were \$3,785,683.21; and administration charges were \$189,284.16 resulting in an accumulated surplus of \$621,499.50.

After five months of the fourth year of the agreement, the Dental Plan revenues were \$2,746,088.07,

paid claims were \$2,535,190.49 and administration charges were \$120,421.55 resulting in a surplus of \$90,476.03.

Our combined surplus is currently \$711,975.53 and a year ago the surplus stood at \$980,054.49. To have a surplus in the fourth year of a contract is unusual and has largely been a result of COVID-19, with members not returning to pre-pandemic levels of usage in a number of areas.

Membership in the Plan is 8,579, down slightly from last month but representing an increase of 250 from a year ago.

After meeting for the last number of months, the Group Benefits Negotiating Committee has reached an agreement on a new contract with Blue Cross that was approved by the Group Benefits Committee and the Provincial Executive. The new agreement is for a two-year period and contains a number of enhancements combined with reasonable premium increases. Further information will be mailed directly to Plan members.

The Plan continues to perform well and is in a position to continue to be sustainable, affordable and predictable. The Committee will continue to provide oversight of the Plan.

Call for Nominations

Adeline Wuschenny

If you would like to become involved at the provincial level of the STS, please consider running for a position on the Provincial Executive. Please contact Adeline Wuschenny at ra.wuschenny@sasktel.net for a nomination form.

2022 SSFA 55+ Provincial Games

Saskatchewan adults age 55 and over will be competing in the Saskatchewan Senior Fitness Association (SSFA) 2022 Provincial 55+ Games in Prince Albert on June 14-16, 2022. The selected events will include golf, 5-pin bowling, contract bridge, cribbage, pickleball, Kaiser, poetry and short story writing, swimming, scrabble, whist, bank shuffleboard, 8-ball, slo-pitch, track and field, and tennis. Past Provincial Games have generally attracted over 600 participants and we look forward to a similar level of participation for the 2022 Games.

The first such games in our province were held in 1988 and

have continued every second year up to the present time (with only a recent postponement due to COVID-19). Many of the events in the Provincial Games are qualifiers for participants to compete in the Canada 55+ Games. These National Games, which are held in a different center in Canada every two years immediately following the provincial competitions, will take place in Kamloops, BC on August 23-26, 2022.

The eight Saskatchewan District Committees are in the process of organizing their District Games to determine qualifiers to represent their respective districts at the provincial games. To participate,

individuals must purchase a SSFA membership and be 55 years of age or older.

Although the Games are competitive in nature, they also provide an excellent opportunity for the attendees to socialize at the opening and closing ceremonies and dinner banquet. Countless friendships have been made and renewed at the Games over the years.

For information regarding registration, district contacts, schedules, and rules, visit the SSFA website (www.ssfa.ca) or contact the Provincial President, Margaret Gailing at 306-842-4807.

Governance and Handbook Review

Terri Mitchell

Responding to resolutions A.17, E.8 and A.10 from the 2021 AGM continues to be the focus of the work of the Governance and Handbook Review (GAHR) Committee. A sub-committee of Terri Mitchell, Sunil Pandila, Sue Amundrud and Murray Wall met in person on November 23 to review responses from the October 18, 2021, memo requesting feedback from Chapter Presidents. Feedback was received from twenty-five Chapters in addition to six individual members. All contributions by Chapter Presidents and members were much appreciated! The full Committee met December 7 via Zoom to discuss the feedback as prepared by the sub-committee and met on January 10 to prepare recommendations for the Executive meeting January 11, 2022.

Resolution A.17 – Contingency Fund

The feedback gathered regarding the Contingency Fund has helped to clarify that a larger review of the Bylaws, Policies and Guidelines regarding the financial affairs of the STS is warranted. As such, the responses from the October survey will be considered as part of a larger review process.

The GAHR Committee will begin this review with a Zoom meeting on February 15, 2022.

Resolution E.8 relating to Policy – STS Scholarships and Policy 10 – Dr. Stirling McDowell Foundation Grant

In response to the overall themes as found in the feedback, the GAHR Committee is making recommendations regarding revisions to Policy 9 and Policy 10 with reference to increasing amounts.

The proposed policy changes will be considered at the 2022 AGM.

Resolution A.10 – Extensive Survey of Members

Praxis Analytics, who was contracted to conduct this survey, has created a user-friendly electronic platform for gathering member input. The final draft of the member survey was approved by the GAHR Committee and approval for the distribution of the survey was granted by the Executive.

We are very pleased to share that the survey is now available for members to complete at www.sts-survey.ca with information also being distributed via Chapter Presidents, email, our renewed Facebook page, and within *Outreach*.

We encourage you to take a few moments of your time to share your thoughts via the Member Survey and to encourage and/or facilitate the participation of other members.

We look forward to your responses on the Member Survey and thank you in advance for your valuable input!

Saskatchewan Seniors' Drug Plan

The Saskatchewan Seniors' Drug Plan is a program that is offered by the Saskatchewan government to Saskatchewan residents who are 65 years of age or older and have not exceeded a net income of \$69,057 in 2020. The plan provides reduced prescription drug costs for eligible individuals. If an individual is also a member of the STS Extended Health Plan, a reduced premium rate is available from the STS Plan upon receipt at the STS office of the letter from the Ministry of Health confirming your eligibility.

Applying for the Saskatchewan Seniors' Drug Plan not only can save you money on your prescription drug costs, but it can also save the STS Extended Health Plan as many drug costs will be subsidized for those eligible. More information and applications for the Saskatchewan Seniors' Drug Plan can be found at <https://www.saskatchewan.ca/residents/health/accessing-health-care-services/seniors-drug-plan>

*Birthday greetings to
Amber
MacLeod
who celebrated
her 93rd
birthday.
Amber is a
member of
the Regina
Chapter.*



Health Spending Account

Just a reminder that a Health Spending Account (HSA) was implemented for members of the Extended Health and Dental Plan on July 1, 2021. The HSA provides an allocation of \$250 for primary plan holders to utilize these funds for a wide range of Canada Revenue Agency allowable health expenses. These funds are available until June 30, 2023 and must be used for health expenses incurred. Please see the STS website as well as Frequently Asked Questions for more information at www.sts.sk.ca.

STS Office Reminders

- For any changes to your address and/or Group Benefits coverage, please contact the STS Office directly at 306-373-3879 or email 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 the McDowell Foundation from your friends at the STS on **30 years of supporting teacher lead research in Saskatchewan.** The McDowell Foundation supports research, inquiry and sharing of information that focuses on teaching and learning within the publicly funded PreK-12 education system in Saskatchewan.



Did you know

The STS spends nearly \$50,000 per year on printing and mailing costs for *Outreach!* You can help us reduce this cost by requesting *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: _____

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Editor's Report

Joyce Hoffman

Little did we know that the COVID-19 virus would be mutating and causing us more shut downs and cancellations two years after it was discovered. Now the variant, Omicron, is causing additional concern. I am hoping all of you are staying safe and healthy in this unusual pandemic time.

As we know, *Outreach* is available online and this means you don't even have to go out to receive it! By completing and submitting the request form in this issue to the STS Office, you will be notified by email when *Outreach* is available on our website. This is usually much sooner than the paper copy.

Even though most Chapters are not as active with face-to-face meetings and gatherings at this time, there may still be a Chapter activity or special celebration of a person in your area you would like to share with superannuates throughout the province. A short report is all that is needed to let others know of these events. Please submit these to the STS Office. They will be printed in *Outreach*, when space is available. It is always wonderful to hear about happenings within Chapters throughout the province.

As an Executive, we continue to meet virtually, so please read what is happening on your behalf at the Provincial level, in this edition of *Outreach*.

STS Executive 2021-22

President/Councillor:

Sunil Pandila, Moose Jaw Chapter

Vice-President/Councillor:

Sue Amundrud, Carrot River Valley (Melfort & District) Chapter

ACER-CART Representative:

Helen Sukovieff, Regina Chapter

Executive Secretary:

Murray Wall, Saskatoon Chapter

Outreach Editor:

Joyce Hoffman, Regina Chapter

Councillors:

Don Gabel, Wakaw Chapter

Joyce Hoffman, Regina Chapter

Jane Isinger, Saskatoon Chapter

Alan Laughlin, The Battlefords and District Chapter

Terri Mitchell, Yorkton Chapter

Doug Still, Regina Chapter

Members-at-Large:

Gary Boechler, Okanagan Valley Chapter

Huguette Kitchen, Lloydminster Chapter

Diane Marchand, South Central Chapter

Devona Putland, Moosomin Chapter

Diane Selby, Saskatoon Chapter

Anna Wehrkamp, Carrot River Valley

(Melfort & District) Chapter

Adeline Wuschenny, Regina Chapter



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