

BEYOND THE BELL

District #46 Muskoka Retired Teachers

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Political Action *by Jennifer Jilks*

MPAC Assessments

Many of you have received your property assessments from MPAC. The assessments were completed in January of 2008, well before the markets declined. House prices are dropping, which may or may not affect lakefront homes that are in demand.

In the current economic crisis it would be wise to ensure that your assessment is fair. Appealing your assessment must be done soon, as the deadline is March 2009. Include your Roll Number. They will respond with current information on file. You may want to check that the information is accurate and up to date.

Please visit their web site at www.mpac.ca or contact their toll free Customer Service line at 1 866 296-MPAC (6722) for more information.

PSA Testing

The Prostate-Specific Antigen (PSA) test is a blood test that measures the amount of PSA in the blood. PSA is produced by the prostate and is normally in a man's blood in small amounts. An elevated PSA level may indicate prostate cancer, but elevated PSA levels does not necessarily mean a man has cancer. Other factors - infection of the prostate gland, for example - can also cause PSA levels to rise. Men older than 50 are at the highest risk of developing the disease. In 2008, about 8,900 Ontario men were diagnosed with prostate cancer and 1,650 died from it.

This test was supposed to be free for Ontarians. Visit Ontario Seniors Blog [ontarioseniors.blogspot.com] for more information. The guidelines limit the test to diagnosis, not screening. The intent, it seems, is to screen out asymptomatic men for prostate cancer. Instead, we are back to square one where those who can least afford it must pay \$30 for this test. We know how much can be saved by screening and preventing costly treatments.

In order to ensure that OHIP pays for the test it must be for diagnosis, and not screening purposes. Lobby your family physician to state your case. Also, please write your MPPs to request that this test be free to all men whether it be for screening, diagnosis or ongoing testing.

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Congratulations to Marg Couture on her election to the position of First Vice-President of RTO/ERO. It is a great honour to be her home district and we can all be proud of the time and effort that Marg dedicates to serving in this position on the provincial executive. Her expertise is an important factor in the success of our organization RTO/ERO.

I am pleased to inform you that Muskoka District is currently tied for second place in the provincial membership recruitment competition. You may recall that I wrote in our last newsletter about all the potential candidates for either full or associate membership. In regards to qualifying to become a member, it's hard to think of a more inclusive organization. Virtually anyone who has worked in any capacity in the field of education may become an RTO/ERO member.

This in no way diminishes the value of membership. Size enhances the work of the organization and makes it possible to both obtain significant achievements and take advantage of economies of scale. Whether in the realm of lobbying, advocating for seniors or maintaining our excellent insurance plans, there is strength in unity and numbers.

Many individuals join the organization in order to avail themselves of the RTO/ERO Health Plan. This is a worthwhile strategy, because even those former employers who allow retirees to continue with the board plan, terminate this consideration when the individual is sixty-five. It is important to note that in order to take advantage of enrolling in the RTO/ERO Health Plan, without a medical examination, the individual must do so within sixty days of retirement or transfer from an-

other group plan. RTIP Health Plan members do not qualify for this direct transfer as it is an individual plan. Enrolment at any other time requires a medical examination; with age, it is not always possible to meet the criteria.

Invite your colleagues to join us for one of our coffee breaks or to attend one of our meetings. On April 21, 2009 we are hosting a Retirement Planning Workshop. Employees within five years of retirement would benefit from attending this workshop. Unfortunately, I am addressing the converted because our newsletter is distributed only to our members. However, you can help by sharing this information with anyone to whom it might be applicable. If a person has further questions, please refer them to one of the members of the executive. Let's continue our progress in the recruitment competition. It's in everyone's best interest.

Telephone Tree

Our telephone tree is headed up by Mary Tannahill. Her helpers are:

Susan Robertson	Helen Forman
Grace Walker	Jo Bamford
Al Bangay	Anne Glazier
Sigrid Purdon	Phyllis Wardman
Norma Carrick	Ken Everest
Lyla Peterkin	Eric/Marie Maya

For members who do not have access to the Internet, a telephone tree has been set up. However, we need another person in Bracebridge and one in Utterson to make the tree complete. The job involves making a few phone calls a couple of times a year to inform RTO members of upcoming events.

Health Insurance

In December, blue vinyl passport covers were sent to all participants of the RTO/ERO Extended Health Plan (two per family). The vinyl covers not only protect your passport but provide the phone numbers to call if you have a health issue when you are Out of Province/Out of Country.

If you need medical treatment and you have seen a doctor, been to emergency or a clinic, you **must** notify Mondial within 48 hours of getting medical attention; otherwise only costs up to \$2000 will be covered. In order for the call to connect, you must call from a hotel lobby or a pay phone. Calling from a hotel room will not work. For your convenience, the phone numbers are listed on the passport cover. Choose the appropriate 800 number, dial it and then dial the 519 number that is listed.

President Bob Harris with representative from Merit Travel at General Meeting, November 2008





Your Executive hard at work!

District #46 Executive

President	Bob Harris	705-687-5478	rsharris@sympatico.ca
First Vice President	Lorna Walkling	705-385-2948	lorna.walkling@sympatico.ca
Second Vice President	Mary Patterson	705-762-5270	marykp99@yahoo.com
Secretary	Shirley Harris	705-687-5478	rsharris@sympatico.ca
Treasurer	Leo Couture	705-762-1144	balacooch@aol.com
Travel & Social	Lee Shea	705-645-8677	mlshea@sympatico.ca
Health Insurance	Rod Mundy	705-789-5777	rodmundy@vianet.ca
Political Action	Jennifer Jilks		jennifer.jilks@sympatico.ca
Newsletter	Mary Storey	705-684-9560	mstorey@cogeco.ca
Webmaster	Laurie Fountain	705-645-9754	laurie@muskoka.com

Note from the Editor

We seem to be in “Changing Times”.

The economic climate, the weather and the political scene seem to be out of the ordinary. As retired teachers we feel so lucky to have an indexed pension. We just complain about the weather but can justifiably do so if the electricity has been off for days. As for the political upheaval in Ottawa, I challenge you to become informed and exercise your voice to our members of parliament.

Locally, your RTO executive has been hard at work arranging for several functions over the next year. It is a pleasure to serve on this committee. Meetings are well attended and always



organized so that decisions are made effectively and efficiently.

If you have a grandchild or acquaintance who attends one of the four secondary schools in Muskoka, and they are off to post secondary education next fall, encourage them to apply for the RTO Muskoka bursary. Guidance teachers in the schools will have the information early in February.

Mary

Email Addresses

If you change your email address, please inform our local RTO by sending a message to rtomuskoka@yahoo.com



Scottish Country Dancers from Gravenhurst, performing at the Fall General Meeting.



Upcoming Events

Morning Recess Coffee Parties



Join your RTO Muskoka executive for coffee.
No reservations required.
9:30 am at each location

February 10 Bracebridge—Marj’s Restaurant
February 16—Gravenhurst—Oliver’s Coffee Shop
February 17—Bala—Hook and Ladder pub

April 14 — Bracebridge—Marj’s Restaurant
April 6 —Gravenhurst—Oliver’s Coffee Shop
April 20 —Bala—Hook and Ladder pub

Theatre Trip

Lerner & Loewe’s Brigadoon

Drayton Festival Theatre

Thursday, October 8, 2009

Further details to follow in the next newsletter.

Mark your calendar now!



Meetings

Tuesday, June 2
RTO Muskoka Annual Meeting
Turner Centre, Bracebridge

Tuesday, September 15
Hell With the Bell Breakfast
Riverside Inn, Bracebridge

Thursday, November 5
Fall General Meeting
Turner Centre, Bracebridge



Retirement Workshop

Please encourage any of your friends or former colleagues to attend the workshop for those planning retirement within the next 5 years. This presentation and dinner is open to not only teachers but secretaries, custodians, educational assistants or others who work in the educational field.

When: April 21, 2009

Time: 4:30 pm—8:30 pm

Where: Trinity United Church, Gravenhurst, Muskoka Street North (across from Stedmans)

What: presentations on: pension plan, health plan, financial advice, lifestyle in retirement

Cost: \$10:00 including dinner

Information regarding registration has been sent to all schools in the area.