

HISTORY OF THE NOVA SCOTIA GOVERNMENT RETIRED EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION

JULY 26, 2023

INTRODUCTION

The following is a brief history of the NOVA SCOTIA GOVERNMENT RETIRED EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION, (N.S.G.R.E.A.). The content of this history was obtained by researching various documents such as hand written and typed documents, convention minutes etc., to the extent that they were available at the office. Some of the information was obtained from undated documents and unsigned documents.

The author wishes to acknowledge and recognize former executive members Stephen MacDonald and Norman Matheson for their invaluable input in preparing this document.

I also want to thank Sharon Braine, Membership Secretary, for proof reading this document.

It was hoped that it would be available for the 35th Anniversary 2020 convention. Due to the Covid guidelines, we were unable to have a convention that year.

Prepared by: B. K. Conrad
President N.S.G.R.E.A.

The first planning for the creation of the Nova Scotia Government Retired Employees Association began in 1983. The purpose for forming an association was to ensure retirees had a voice in matters concerning their pension, such as investments or changes to the pension plan.

Those on the steering committee were Redvers Cainey, Thomas MacNamara, Jim Coleman, Olive Bremner, and Mary Smith. The planning continued until 1985 when the N.S.G.E.U., at their May 1, 1985 annual convention held at the Nova Scotian Hotel, gave their blessing to the formation of the Nova Scotia Government Retired Employees Association (N.S.G.R.E.A.). The N.S.G.E.U provided seed money to N.S.G.R.E.A. and provided financial support for a number of years afterwards. In recent years the N.S.G.E.U. has been paying for the first year membership into the N.S.G.R.E.A. by way of a coupon for N.S.G.E.U. retirees.

There were not many provincial government retirees associations at the time. British Columbia, Prince Edward Island and Alberta had constitutions. They were of assistance in creating our own constitution. Membership was originally restricted to retired N.S.G.E.U. members. Membership was later expanded to also include any one receiving a Public Service Superannuation Pension.

The aims and purposes were:

- To bring together Retired Members or their delegates to discuss the particular problems faced by retired members:
- To advance the common interests of Retired Members and the N.S.G.E.U.:
- To assist the N.S.G.E.U. with its retirement preparation program:

The first executive for 1985 – 1986 was President Redvers Cainey, Vice-President Thomas MacNamara, Secretary Mary H. MacDonald, Treasurer Mary Smith, Membership Secretary Alelia Pelley, Pensions Stewart Vair and Benefits Representative Fred Whitehouse. They were appointed by the N.S.G.E.U. The first meeting of the new executive was held at the N.S.G.E.U. head office on November 13, 1985.

The first office was at Redvers Caine's home. Office space was later rented at the Downsview Mall in Lower Sackville and subsequently was moved to its present location at 477 Cobequid Rd., Lower Sackville.

It was not until the 1990s that the Association was divided into 10 regions as follows:

Region 1	Cumberland County
Region 2	Lunenburg and Queens Counties
Region 3	Halifax Regional Municipality and Hants East **
Region 4	Out of Province members
Region 5	Inverness, Richmond and Victoria Counties
Region 6	Digby East to & including Hants West
Region 7	Antigonish, Guysborough and Pictou Counties
Region 8	Cape Breton County
Region 9	Colchester County
Region 10	Shelburne, Yarmouth, District of Clare, Digby West

** Originally Region 3 was Halifax and Halifax County West and Region 4 was Dartmouth and Halifax County East. In the mid 1990s Region 3 was changed to consist of all HRM and Hants East. Region 4 was then renamed for Out of Province Members.

The first annual convention was held at the Hotel Nova Scotian on September 17, 1986 with over 60 participants. There were approximately 150 members.

During 1988 – 1989 the Provincial Executive met with government and were able to have Survivors' Benefits increased from 50 percent to 60 percent for those employees that retired on or after January 1, 1988. In 1992 – 1993 legislation was passed to increase Survivors' Benefits from 50% to 60% for all surviving spouses. As a result of the pension holidays in the 1990s the provincial executive lobbied government and the Survivor's Benefits were increased to 66 2/3 percent. The Financial Measures Act of 2010 reduced Survivors' Benefits for employees who commenced employment on or after April 6, 2010 to 60%.

Prior to 1987 there were no Extended Health Care Benefits for retirees. It was through the efforts of President Redvers Cainey that the government agreed to provide these Benefits to retirees.

In 1989 – 1990 a Lapel Pin was designed and was available for sale. Membership at this time was 1,100. The following year membership had grown to 1,335 members.

The first meeting of Region 6 was held on October 21, 1993. The chairman, Doug Penny welcomed the thirty-nine members in attendance.

At the 1994 Convention the newly elected president, Dave Campbell, stated that there were three important goals the new executive will have to achieve. They were:

1. To have representation on the Pension Investment Advisory Committee.
2. Dental Coverage for Retirees.
3. Increase membership – we must continue to grow.

Through the years and efforts of subsequent Executives all three have been accomplished.

N.S.G.R.E.A. was instrumental in the formation of the Group of IX, an advisory council to the Senior Secretariat. It had originally started out as the Group of VII, then the Group of VIII, and then the Group of IX. It is now referred to as the Seniors Advisory Council to the Department of Seniors and Long Term Care. This group meets regularly with the representatives of the Department of Seniors and Long Term Care, as well as other department representatives including ministers, to advocate on behalf of seniors. Our representatives on this Committee have taken a very active part on the issues brought before the Group. Earlier in 2016, when the provincial government was proposing significant increases to the Seniors Pharmacare Program, N.S.G.R.E.A. representatives on the Seniors Advisory Council assumed a very active role opposing those increases which ultimately led government to put off the planned increases.

The 1997/98 and 1998/99 pension holidays were of benefit to the Government and employees. The Government and Employees would not be paying any premiums. The N.S.G.R.E.A was not part of the decision making. They were left out. The government had to be reminded that it was the retirees money that was also in the Superannuation Fund at the time. The pension holiday did not provide any benefit to retirees. Subsequent to the March 25, 1998 election the Provincial Executive lobbied all government parties for changes to pension Benefits. After many meetings with Government and contributing employees, pension benefits were changed in three areas:

1. Cost of Living adjustments were made to pensions in pay prior to January 1984.
2. Full pensions were guaranteed for five years subsequent to retiring. Payments to be made to the surviving spouse or estate upon the death of the retiree.
3. Survivor Benefits increased from 60% to 66 2/3%.

The provincial executive also lobbied to have the pension bridging reduced from 0.7% to 0.2%. This would have resulted in a lifelong pension of 1.8% instead of the 1.3% we currently have. As a result of the integration of our pension with the CPP our pension is reduced to 1.3% upon reaching age 65 years.

In 1999 N.S.G.R.E.A. was granted a seat on the Pensions Investment Advisory Board. Cameron MacKinnon was the first representative on that board representing NSGRE.A.

The Department of Finance created a Pension Forum in 2004. It consisted of a variety of players, all of whom made contributions to the pension fund. There were representatives from the Department of Finance, N.S.G.E.U., CUPE, Hospital Organizations and N.S.G.R.E.A. This Forum was to meet twice a year and was chaired by the Minister of Finance.

During 2005, discussions began between the unions, (N.S.G.E.U. and CUPE) and the Department of Finance about trusteeship. A Working Committee was established to draw up some guidelines. N.S.G.R.E.A. was not permitted to sit on this committee as they did not meet the definition of stakeholder at that time.

This committee did however report to the Pensions Forum of which N.S.G.R.E.A. was a member.

In January 2006 the Working Committee had completed its task. It was recommended that there would be no further need for the Pension Forum. In addition there was to be a new Pension Investment Committee and N.S.G.R.E.A. would not be a participant.

The Nova Scotia Government Retired Employees Association received approval from government to present an Older Drivers Safe Driving course. The course material was prepared by N.S.G.R.E.A. member C. Ernest Pass. The first course was held on October 28, 2002 in Halifax. There were 24 participants.

When government employees retired, the dental plan coverage included in the Health Benefits expired 30 days after retirement regardless of age. This was of concern to retirees. The government was not willing to share in the costs of a dental plan for retirees. Through the efforts of the Provincial Executive a dental plan was negotiated with Group Medical Services (GMS). A dental plan became available to N.S.G.R.E.A. members in 2008.

When our Association was first registered under the Societies Act in May 2008 it was registered incorrectly as the Government Retired Association of Nova Scotia. In July 2015 the then provincial executive was successful in having the registered name changed to Nova Scotia Government Retired Employees Association (N.S.G.R.E.A.).

When the Nova Scotia Superannuation Plan Trustee Inc. was established in 2010 there was no provision for N.S.G.R.E.A. to be guaranteed membership on the Board of Directors. The new Act also provided for the Government to have a block of 6 votes regardless of the number of government directors present.

As a result of meetings with the Premier indicating our displeasure with these two provisions, the Act was changed in 2013 to guarantee N.S.G.R.E.A. a member on the Board of Directors, and was subsequently changed in 2016 to eliminate the block voting for Government Directors on the Board of Trustees. Government Directors now have one vote per Director present. The first N.S.G.R.E.A. representative on the Board of Trustees was David Peters, from Region 6. This

appointment was for 5 years. Dave Peters' appointment was renewed for an additional 5 years effective April 1, 2018

The Pensions Representative on the Provincial Executive had not been very active for several years. With the creation of the Nova Scotia Superannuation Plan Trustee Inc. there was little or no requirement for this position as we now had a representative on the Nova Scotia Superannuation Plan Trustee Inc., (Trustee Board). At the annual convention in 2015 the Constitution and By-Laws were amended to combine the Pension and Benefits positions on the Provincial Executive.

Due to the increasing workload at the Provincial Executive Office approval was given at the 2016 Annual Convention to hire a second paid staff member. Interviews were held and the new staff was hired in November, 2016.

The Provincial office has for some time provided financial support to active regions in the form of an annual allotment. The allotment was \$100 and was paid to those regions that requested it. The annual allotment was increased in 2017 to \$150 annually and is automatically paid in April of each year.

Although meetings arranged by the Provincial Executive for Region 2, Lunenburg and Queens Counties, were always well attended they did not have their own executive. In 2013 Region 2 took on the challenge and formed their first executive. They have been meeting regularly ever since.

Over the years, the Association has participated in, or has made several presentations to government officials which have had an influence on the lives of retirees and their spouses. Obviously, the most recent event which affected all retirees was the 2010 Financial Measures Act that made significant changes to the Public Service Superannuation Plan. The Association did everything it could to restore the cost of living as part of this legislation. In 2010 some 150-175 members gathered at the legislature to protest the changes to the pension legislation including indexing. Only those directly involved in this effort are able to fully understand and appreciate the situation they faced.

The Association has, over the years, made presentations to bodies such as the Law Amendments Committee of the House of Assembly. We have made submissions to Boards and Agencies dealing with power rate increases, telephone rate increases, The Canada Pension Plan (CPP), income security programs, health care and Pharmacare.

Over the years, N.S.G.R.E.A. has been successful in achieving Benefits for its members. Each of these were obtained as a result of hard bargaining with various provincial government departments. As mentioned above, getting the health plan for our members was a significant achievement.

N.S.G.R.E.A. was extremely fortunate to have Region 3 members Glane Gorveatt and Doug Gough, who worked to create our own web site - www.nsgrea.ca.

As of the first few months of 2023, we are extremely proud that we are now an organization of more than 3,400 dues paying members.

Early in 2020 the coronavirus, (Covid-19), became very prevalent in Europe. By March it had progressed from an epidemic to a pandemic. The province had declared a state of emergency in March 2020. As a result of the requirements put in place regarding social distancing, restrictions on group gatherings for non-essential services etc., access to the office was restricted.

Given the uncertainty of the situation and the lead time required to prepare for our 2020 convention, it was decided to cancel the 2020 convention. The incumbents whose positions were up for election all agreed, and with the Provincial Executive's approval, will continue until the next convention.

The 2020 convention would have been the 35th anniversary of N.S.G.R.E.A. Regions were encouraged to plan events to mark this milestone. Although some events were planned they had to be cancelled due to Covid-19. The 2020, 2021 and 2022 conventions had to be cancelled due to Covid-19. We hope to have a convention in the fall of 2023.

PROVINCIAL EXECUTIVE MEMBERS
1985 – 1986; 1986 – 1987; 1987 - 1988

President	Redvers Cainey
Vice-President	Thomas MacNamara
Secretary	Mary H. MacDonald
Treasurer	Mary Smith
Membership Secretary	Alelia Pelley
Pensions	Stewart Vair

PROVINCIAL EXECUTIVE MEMBERS

1988 – 1989

President	Redvers Cainey
Vice-President	Thomas MacNamara
Secretary	Edith Nelson
Treasurer	Leo Le Fort
Membership Secretary	Alelia Pelley
Pensions	Noel Johnston
Benefits Representative	Stan L. Curtis

PROVINCIAL EXECUTIVE MEMBERS

1989 – 1990

President	Redvers Cainey
Vice-President	Thomas MacNamara
Secretary	Edyth Nelson
Treasurer	Leo LeFort
Membership Secretary	Alelia Pelley
Pensions	Noel Johnston
Benefits Representative	James Hughes

PROVINCIAL EXECUTIVE MEMBERS

1990 – 1991

President	Redvers Cainey
Vice-President	James Hughes
Secretary	Leo Porier
Treasurer	Leo Le Fort
Membership Secretary	Edythe Nelson
Pensions	Noel Johnston
Benefits Representative	Norm Matheson

PROVINCIAL EXECUTIVE MEMBERS
1991 – 1992

President	Redvers Cainey
Vice-President	Bernie LaRusic
Secretary	Mary Meisner
Treasurer	Doug Fraser
Membership Secretary	Leo Porier
Pensions	James Hughes
Benefits Representative	Norm Matheson

PROVINCIAL EXECUTIVE MEMBERS
1992 – 1993; 1993 - 1994

President	Redvers Cainey
Vice-President	James Hughes
Secretary	Doug Fraser
Treasurer	Frank MacGrath
Membership Secretary	Leo Porier
Pensions	Joan Churchill
Benefits Representative	Norm Matheson

PROVINCIAL EXECUTIVE MEMBERS
1994 – 1995

President	David Campbell
Vice-President	James Hughes
Secretary	Brenda MacAdam
Treasurer	Cameron MacKinnon
Membership Secretary	Sharon Braine
Pensions	Joan Churchill
Benefits Representative	Norm Matheson

PROVINCIAL EXECUTIVE MEMBERS
1995 – 1996; 1996 – 1997; 1997 – 1998; 1998 - 1999

President	David Campbell
Vice-President	Steve MacDonald
Secretary	Brenda MacAdam
Treasurer	Cameron MacKinnon
Membership Secretary	Sharon Braine
Pensions	Joan Churchill
Benefits Representative	Norm Matheson

PROVINCIAL EXECUTIVE MEMBERS
1999 – 2000

President	David Campbell
Vice-President	Steve MacDonald
Secretary	Hazel Smith
Treasurer	Cameron MacKinnon
Membership Secretary	Sharon Braine
Pensions	Joan Churchill
Benefits Representative	Leo Wall

PROVINCIAL EXECUTIVE MEMBERS
2000-2001

President	Bernie LaRusic
Vice-President	Steve MacDonald
Secretary	Hazel Smith
Treasurer	Cameron MacKinnon
Membership Secretary	Sharon Braine
Pensions	Joan Churchill
Benefits Representative	Leo Wall

PROVINCIAL EXECUTIVE MEMBERS
2001-2002

President	Bernie LaRusic
Vice-President	Steve MacDonald
Secretary	Phyllis Furlong
Treasurer	Cameron MacKinnon
Membership Secretary	Sharon Braine
Pensions	Joan Churchill
Benefits Representative	Leo Wall

PROVINCIAL EXECUTIVE MEMBERS
2002-2003; 2003 – 2004; 2004 – 2005; 2005 - 2006

President	Bernie LaRusic
Vice-President	Steve MacDonald
Secretary	Phyllis Furlong
Treasurer	Cameron MacKinnon
Membership Secretary	Sharon Braine
Pensions	Joan Churchill
Benefits Representative	Millard MacKenzie

PROVINCIAL EXECUTIVE MEMBERS
2006-2007; 2007 - 2008

President	Bernie LaRusic
Vice-President	Steve MacDonald
Secretary	Doug Gough
Treasurer	Cameron MacKinnon
Membership Secretary	Sharon Braine
Pensions	Joan Churchill
Benefits Representative	Jim Bacich

PROVINCIAL EXECUTIVE MEMBERS
2008-2009; 2009 - 2010

President	Bernie LaRusic
Vice-President	Steve MacDonald
Secretary	Doug Gough
Treasurer	James Bacich
Membership Secretary	Sharon Braine
Pensions	Joan Churchill
Benefits Representative	Ernestine Gouthro

PROVINCIAL EXECUTIVE MEMBERS
2010-2011

President	Jim Bacich (October, 2010-April, 2011)
Vice-President	Steve MacDonald
Secretary	Doug Gough
Treasurer	Gary Meisner
Membership Secretary	Sharon Braine
Pensions	Joan Churchill
Benefits Representative	Ernestine Gouthro

PROVINCIAL EXECUTIVE MEMBERS
2011-2012

President	Steve MacDonald
Vice-President	Bernard Conrad
Secretary	Doug Gough
Treasurer	Gary Meisner
Membership Secretary	Sharon Braine
Pensions	Joan Churchill
Benefits Representative	Ernestine Gouthro

PENSION REPRESENTATIVE

Dave Peters

PROVINCIAL EXECUTIVE MEMBERS
2012-2013; 2013-2014; 2014-2015

President	Bernard Conrad
Vice-President	Dave Hebert
Secretary	Doug Gough
Treasurer	Gary Meisner
Membership Secretary	Sharon Braine
Pensions	Joan Churchill
Benefits Representative	Ernestine Gouthro

PENSION REPRESENTATIVE

Dave Peters

PROVINCIAL EXECUTIVE MEMBERS
2015 – 2016; 2016 – 2017; 2017 – 2018; 2018 - 2019

President	Bernard Conrad
Vice-President	Dave Hebert
Secretary	Doug Gough
Treasurer	Gary Meisner
Membership Secretary	Sharon Braine
Pension/Benefits Representative	Ernestine Gouthro

PENSION REPRESENTATIVE

Dave Peters

PROVINCIAL EXECUTIVE MEMBERS
2019 - 2023

President	Bernard Conrad
Vice-President	Bernie LaRusic
Secretary	Doug Gough*
Treasurer	Gary Meisner
Membership Secretary	Sharon Braine
Pension/Benefits Representative	Ernestine Gouthro
*Resigned January 2023	

PENSION REPRESENTATIVE

Dave Peters (until January 15, 2019)
Bernard Conrad (January 15, 2019 - 2024)

