



Government of
Saskatchewan

Saskatchewan Teachers' Superannuation Commission

COMMUNICATION PLAN

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Section 1. Background

The Saskatchewan Teachers' Superannuation Commission (STSC) is responsible for the administration of the Teachers' Superannuation Plan, Teachers' Disability Benefit Plan, Teachers' Dental Plan and Teachers' Group Life Insurance Plan. The superannuation and disability plans pertain to teacher hires prior to July 1980; the group life insurance plan includes all eligible active teachers and superannuates who elected to maintain their insurance after retirement until coverage ceases at age 85. The Teachers' Dental Plan covers all eligible active teachers, their families and teachers in receipt of disability benefits.

In accordance with *The Teachers' Superannuation and Disability Benefits Regulations*, meetings of the Commission are not open to the public. No Commissioner shall communicate any statement of the business of the Commission except to another Commissioner or unless authorized by the Commission.

The Commission recognizes its significant responsibility to ensure effective communication with the members of the respective benefit plans and between the Commission and its stakeholder groups. This responsibility flows from statutory requirements, commitment to good governance, the importance of providing high quality service to plan members and the need for good relationships with stakeholders.

The Commission acknowledges the communication channels the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation (STF) and the Superannuated Teachers' of Saskatchewan (STS) employ with their members and the support they provide to the Commission in communicating with members of the superannuation and benefit plans.

Section 2. Purpose

The purpose of this document is to plan to effectively and use communications as a tool for the Commission to deliver its key messages to target audiences. The plan considers utilizing communication vehicles regularly employed by the Commission as well as identifies major initiatives for the short and long term. This Communication Plan is aligned with the overall Strategic Plan of the STSC and with its Governance Manual.

The Commission is subject to *The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (FOIP) and strives to meet the dual objectives of transparency through access to information and the protection of members' personal information.

Section 3. Goals

1. To ensure that teachers and superannuates receive the information they need regarding their pensions and other benefits administered at the STSC.
2. To ensure effective and timely communication between the Commission and its stakeholder groups.
3. Information to plan members is in a form that is easy to understand so members can make informed decisions when necessary.

Section 4. Key Messages

- The staff at the STSC are available to teachers and superannuates to address any inquiries regarding the teacher pension and benefit plans under administration at the Commission in a timely way and in a professional and courteous manner.
- Superannuates and active teachers who belong to the Saskatchewan Teachers' Superannuation Plan can have every confidence that their current and future pensions are secure.
- Information regarding the teacher benefit plans is accurate and accessible to the teachers.
- The STSC has a responsibility to provide information to teachers that will support effective and efficient use of benefit plans.

Section 5. Issues

5.01 Positive Aspects:

- Past feedback received with respect to the Commission's services and communication through emails, telephone and in person is quite positive. Compliments have been given to the staff at the Commission by the STF and STS on the promptness of the STSC staff to answer questions and the quality of service for all plans under administration.
- Information regarding the pension and benefits under administration at the Commission is readily available to teachers and superannuates.
- The STSC Administration continues to consider new initiatives to enhance communication with teachers and to collaborate with stakeholders.

5.02 Challenges:

- Not all pension and benefit plans available to teachers are administered by the STSC. The STSC administers a closed defined benefit plan and disability plan for teachers hired prior to July 1980, the Teachers' Group Life Insurance Plan and Teachers' Dental Plan. The STF administers all other pension and benefit plans available to teachers (Saskatchewan Teachers' Retirement Plan (STRP), Income Continuance Plan (ICP), Portaplan optional life insurance and the STF Extended Health Plan).
- Since the STRP is the pension plan for the majority of active teachers, the STSC does not have a database for the active teachers for direct mail outs to be used for the teachers' group life insurance and dental plans.
- Reaching teachers at their schools with a communication method that clearly defines which organization administers which pension or benefit program is difficult.
- The benefit plans administered by the STSC and the STF have different insurance carriers.
- As the numbers of teachers participating in the Saskatchewan Teachers' Superannuation Plan (STSP) diminishes, the visibility of the STSC as an administrator of the group life insurance and dental plans also diminishes.
- Superannuates and former teachers have spread around the world.

Section 6. Target Audience(s)

- Teachers contributing to the STSP
- STSP superannuated teachers
- Members of the teachers' dental and group life insurance plans
- Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation (STF)
- Superannuated Teachers of Saskatchewan (STS)
- Ministry of Education
- School Divisions
- Families and beneficiaries

Section 7. Communication Vehicle

Appendix A is a current scan of the communication vehicles used by the Commission, the source of the direction for the communication and the distribution of the information. These will be reviewed annually and updated as appropriate.

The STSC management meets with the STF staff to discuss communication strategies and partners with the STF to improve communication of teacher pension and benefit plans that each organization administers.

Section 8. Communication Plan(s)

8.01 Face-to-Face Meetings:

Studies on communication have always found that face-to-face communication is more valuable than any other form of communication, such as advertising or newsletters. Meeting directly with teachers provides many benefits, the most important of which is immediate evaluation of comprehensive documentation. It's far simpler to judge whether someone is receiving your message if you are speaking with them directly. STSC staff provides one on one benefit counseling with teachers to discuss the pension plan provisions and assist in completing pension application forms.

The STF conducts pre-retirement seminars for teachers; the STSC produces retirement information packages. These packages include pension estimates that contain various pre-requested retirement scenarios (i.e., multiple retirement dates, assuming purchases of prior service) that are indicated on the seminar registration form. Upon request and availability, staff from the STSC will also attend these sessions to answer specific questions from teachers regarding the retirement estimates produced for them.

There may be a need to revisit this arrangement if the STF is not providing these sessions in the future. With the STRP providing this service for its own members, the responsibility of conducting pre-retirement counseling for STSP members will fall to the STSC Administration.

8.02 Direct Mail:

Since teachers work throughout the province and superannuates may relocate after retirement, the most traditional way of ensuring that messages reach membership is direct mail sent to their homes. Given that spouses or other family members are also affected by pension/benefit information, this is the venue whereby the information is most likely to be shared. The following are types of direct mails with applicable times when provided:

a) Personal Pension Information (Ad-hoc requests):

Teachers can receive an "Estimate of Pension Benefit" that specifies a retirement date, a "Statement of Service" that specifies years of reported service, salary and contributions, as well as, "Purchase Options Statement" that reflects the cost of service that may be purchased.

b) Calculation of Pension Benefit (At retirement):

When teachers commence their pension, they receive a copy of the calculation of their pension benefit along with a covering letter that outlines when the pension is direct deposited. Teachers also are advised of the reduction due to Canada Pension Plan (CPP) integration at age 65 plus the upward adjustment if applicable.

c) Notification of Allowance Reduction (At age 65):

A letter is mailed to superannuates at the beginning of the month when their pension will decrease due to integration with CPP benefits and the upward adjustment if that option was chosen at retirement. The STSC is proactive by including Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) TD1 forms with the pension reduction letter so the superannuate has the option to adjust their income tax deduction due to the reduction of their pension payment.

d) Spousal/Executor letters (Upon Notification of Death):

When the Commission is notified of a superannuates death, a letter is sent to the surviving spouse advising the last monthly allowance payable to the deceased superannuate, the amount of the survivor's benefit and required documentation to commence the benefit. If there is no surviving spouse or the death is a spouse in receipt of a benefit, a letter is sent to the Executor advising of the last payment applicable with a request to provide a death certificate to close the file. The letter also contains information for group life insurance benefits if applicable.

e) Group Life Insurance Options (Upon leaving teaching or on approved leaves):

On a monthly basis, letters are mailed to members that discontinue teaching. The letter advises options for group life insurance benefits when a teacher commences an approved leave of absence (i.e., maternity leave), terminates or retires. These letters explain to members the options to continue paying for group life insurance benefits or converting to an individual plan.

f) Disability Benefit Applications (Following Commission adjudication):

New applicants for a disability benefit are advised of the outcome of their disability application within days following the Commission meeting.

g) Disability Reviews (Monthly):

Medical update Physician's Statement requests and/or Claimants' Statement requests are sent out with a covering letter six weeks prior to the date the review is taken to the Commission for approval. This advance notice to disability recipients minimizes the possibility of a gap in receiving disability payments.

h) Deposit notifications/Superannuate Newsletters (January):

An annual newsletter is included with the January deposit notifications and mailed to superannuates/spouses and disability claimants in receipt of benefits. The annual superannuate newsletter will include items such as the cost of living adjustment (COLA) for the upcoming year, factors that are used to determine the COLA amount, information on CPP, STS contact information regarding benefits administered by the STS, and planned mailing dates for CRA T4As. Superannuates will receive a deposit notification at any time during the year in which their deposit changes. Types of deposit changes that can occur are reductions at age 65, deductions for group life insurance

premiums, deductions for STS benefits, and Federal or Provincial tax tables used for income tax deductions.

i) Canada Revenue Agency T4As/NR4s (February):

The Commission is responsible for the tax reporting for pension and disability benefits, pension refunds, prior service purchases as well as the taxable group life insurance for the matching group life premiums for active teachers. The T4As for superannuates/spousal recipients and disability benefits are produced with the data from the Retirement Member System (RMS). Tax reporting information for refunds is pulled from the Voucher system that produces the payment. NR4s is the tax reporting slip for pensioners that are non-residents. Information for the taxable group life insurance T4As is taken from the group life insurance premiums received throughout the calendar year from school divisions. The addresses for the active teachers are pulled from the STF contact system. Pursuant to the *Income Tax Act*, all tax reporting slips must be mailed on or before February 28th.

j) Notification to Teachers' Voluntary Fund Members Approaching Age 71 (April):

Pursuant to the *Income Tax Act*, since the Teachers' Voluntary Fund does not provide scheduled payments, members of the Fund must remove their monies from the voluntary fund by the end of the calendar year in which the member attains the age of 71. In April, a letter is sent to all members that are attaining 71 in that calendar year advising that they are required to either transfer their monies out of the Teachers' Voluntary Fund to a RRSP/RRIF or receive a cash refund before December 31st of that year. The letter advises if the refund application is received and processed before June 30th, the investment gains (or losses) for the current year are not applied to members' accounts. Applications received after June 30th will be processed following the crediting of the investment gains (or losses) for the fiscal year and the completion of the annual audit which is typically in October/November.

k) Confirmation of Overage Dependents to Maintain Dental Coverage (July):

A listing of overage dependants is requested and provided by the insurance carrier which is currently Sun Life. This data includes the names of teachers with overage dependants (ages over 21 and under 26 years) along with their addresses. The insurance carrier also end-dates each overage dependant record as at August 31st. A letter is sent to all teachers with overage dependents requesting confirmation that their child or children are attending a post-secondary educational institution full-time. Once confirmation of full-time enrolment is received from the teacher, the overage dependant dental coverage is reinstated in the insurance carrier dental admin system expiring August 31st of the following year.

l) Reduction of Group Life Insurance at Age 65 or Discontinues at age 85 (July):

When a member's group life insurance coverage reduces at age 65, a letter is sent describing insurance conversion options with a request to advise the Commission if they wish to discontinue their life insurance coverage since coverage has ceased. If a member reaches the age of 85, they are advised that their insurance is now discontinued. Retired Secretary Treasurers who are not in receipt of a pension receive a letter to advise of the annual group life insurance premiums with a request for payment for continuation of life insurance benefits.

m) Voluntary Contribution Fund Annual Statement (November):

Following the annual audit, a statement is sent to the member advising of the year's investment return for the Fund plus their total voluntary contributions balance as at June 30th. The statement also advises the maximum annual voluntary contribution a member is eligible to contribute for the year as well that they must remove their monies from the Fund by December 31st in the year they attain the age of 71. Once a teacher retires, they are no longer eligible to make voluntary contributions.

n) Annual Member Statements/Newsletters (December):

An annual newsletter is included with the active/inactive teachers' Annual Member Statement which outlines their pension benefits accrued in the superannuation plan. The annual newsletter includes comments such as explaining how the annual interest rate is allocated to teachers' credit, information on how to apply for your superannuation allowance and options to consider for retirement planning. Annual Member Statements are not required by legislation; however it is considered a "best practice" to provide annual benefit statements to membership. The member statements include names and phone numbers of STSC staff for follow-up questions.

o) Notification to STSP Members Approaching Age 71 (December):

Pursuant to the *Income Tax Act*, pension plan members must either commence their pension benefit or remove their monies (if permitted) from the pension plan by the end of the calendar year in which the member attains the age of 71. In December, a letter is sent to all members that are attaining 71 in the upcoming calendar year advising that they are required to either start their pension or if applicable transfer their monies out of the Teachers' Superannuation Plan before December 31st of the upcoming year.

8.03 Internal Communication for Teachers:

Communicating with teachers at their workplace is complicated by the fact that they are spread throughout the province. As well, the vast majority of active teachers are not members of the STSP and the STSC does not maintain personal mailing information for the teachers with respect to the dental and group life insurance plans.

Some methods used to communicate with teachers internally are:

- STSC Website
- Information posters in school staff rooms
- Mail outs to school divisions
- The *Saskatchewan Bulletin* published by the STF
- Information from the insurance carrier (Sun Life) to teachers
- Annual Reports

Each teacher does have an email account provided by their school division and by the STF. It would be advantageous to investigate methods to gain the ability to send out emails directly to teachers regarding their benefit plans.

8.04 STSC Website:

The form of communication that has evolved the most in recent years is access to information through the Internet. The STSC has a website at www.stsc.gov.sk.ca. This site has information regarding all pension and benefit plans under administration, dental forms, past annual reports, governance documents, past annual letters plus some interesting STSC facts. The website has multiple links to other pension plans, government agencies and to Sun Life for on-line member access relating to the dental plan.

The STSC website has moderate traffic. Visitors access the site and browse through various documents and download information regarding the STSP and the benefit plans. The website is regularly reviewed by the STSC Administration to ensure current and accurate information.

8.05 Related Expenses:

The cost of mailing the annual letters to the active membership and superannuates is minimal as they accompany the Annual Member Statements and the January deposit notifications. The expenses for mailing the members' statements and deposit notifications are borne by the Government of Saskatchewan and are not a chargeable expense to the teacher pension and benefit plans.

Section 9. Communication Initiatives

It is important to regularly evaluate communication methods and vehicles so that communication strategies can be modified to reflect the real information needs of teachers and superannuates. It's also valuable to learn what teachers and superannuates know about their pensions and benefits, what they need to know, and what they want to know. Major communication initiatives and priorities for the current year are identified in the Strategic Plan, reviewed and updated annually.

The Commission approved a project charter for the initiative to develop and implement a system where superannuates and spouses in receipt of a pension payment from the STSP are

contacted by mail with a request to provide the STSC written confirmation that they are receiving their pension benefit. A letter will be mailed out to each pension recipient which will be barcoded, scanned and filed electronically when returned. The system will generate reports to identify non-responses for follow-up letters. This procedure is considered an industry best practice and commonly referred to as “proof of existence”.

The pensioner verification project is in progress and currently in the development stage. The timing of when in the calendar year the letters will be mailed has not been finalized. It’s projected that superannuates/spouses will be requested to provide confirmation of receipt of their pension benefit during 2017-18, contingent on available financial resources.

APPENDIX A

Communication Vehicle	Directive	Distribution
STSC Website <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forms • Legislation • Organizational documentation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Annual Reports ➢ Contribution tables ➢ Information manual ➢ Governance manual • Contact information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commission • Administration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publicly accessible website
Information booklets/tracts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Superannuation and Disability Benefit Plans • STF member information • STS member information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commission • Administration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directly or by request • Links to STF/STS from STSC website • STF Senior Administrative Staff provide to teachers when meeting in person or mail out as appropriate • STS
Forms <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enrolment/Changes • Dental • Group Life Insurance • School Board contributions • Disability • Reciprocal Transfers • Pension & Benefit Application Forms • Refunds • Marital Breakdown • Commuted Value/refunds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commission 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • STSC website • Information booklet • Directly by phone or in person • STF • Direct mail by request
Annual Member Statements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Superannuation • Voluntary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commission (The STSC is not legislatively required to produce statements (i.e., not subject to <i>The Pension Benefits Act</i>) but the STSC does as a matter of “best practice”). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct mail • Generic version of STSP statement on website

Communication Vehicle	Directive	Distribution
Income Tax Related <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • T4s/ T4As/ NR4s • TD1s • PAs/PARs • Remittances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Canada Revenue Agency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct mail • Email (password protected PDFs)
Monies received from teachers – Information about or confirmation of receipt: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voluntary • Purchases • Repayments • Reciprocal transfers in 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commission practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • STSC website • Information booklet • Directly by phone or in person • Direct mail • Email
Long Term Disability <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review documents (medical, pensioner) • Earnings • School Division • CPP status • Application for Age & Service • Ad-hoc general correspondence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legislative • Commission • Administration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directly by phone or in person • Direct mail • STF and Income Continuance Plan • Email
Pension related <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Estimates • Application for Age & Service • Application for Refund • Application for Commuted Value/Refunds • Ad-hoc general correspondence • Purchase/Repayment calculations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commission practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directly by phone or in person • STF retirement seminars (as invited) • Direct mail • Email

Communication Vehicle	Directive	Distribution
Payroll <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change of address • Member data and bank status changes • Statement of earnings/deposit notifications • Ad-hoc general correspondence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commission 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • STSC website • Information booklet • Directly by phone or in person • Email • Direct mail
Dental <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summary Sheet for the Dental Coverage • Enrolment forms • Change forms • Claim forms • Maximum reimbursement levels • Ad-hoc general correspondence • Confirmation of overage dependents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commission • Insurance carrier 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • STSC website • School Division • Directly by phone, email or in person • Sun Life by phone or website • Direct mail • Information on dental claim reimbursement slip
Group Life <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beneficiary updates • School Division remittance reports • Benefit information • Ad-hoc general correspondence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commission 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • STSC website • School Divisions • Information booklet • Directly by phone, email or in person • Direct mail on request
Privacy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy • Privacy Officer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legislative (FOIP) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Queen's Printer website
STSC Organizational Information <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Reports • Contribution tables • Annual Statement Letter (generic) • Annual Pensioner Letter (generic) • Information manual • Governance manual • Contact information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commission 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legislative Assembly (Annual Reports) • STSC website