

**In THIS issue:**

President's Message p. 1

Provincial News p. 2

Health & Wellness pp. 3 - 4

Out in the Community pp.  
5 - 6

Upcoming Events p. 6

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*The opinions expressed in the newsletter are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views/policies of OSSTF District 13 or District 16.*



**CHAPTER 13/16 NEWSLETTER**

**ARM**



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

*By Iain Beaton, President District, 13/16*

Greetings, and welcome to the Fall Newsletter of ARM Chapter 13/16. It's been over a year since our last newsletter; in the interim, we tried to keep you informed through "ARM in Action" emails. We will continue to get in touch through emails for time-sensitive items, but we are planning to get back to three issues of the newsletter per year.

We had a lovely Chapter lunch at Nest Restaurant at the Trail Hub, just outside of Uxbridge, on September 26. Fifteen were in attendance, the food was good, and the view was impressive. Unfortunately, new members who retired near the end of the school year were not invited to the lunch, since the new membership list came to us only a day or two before the event. I hope we will have an upcoming event you will want to be part of.

The new provincial cell phone policy for schools has not led to much controversy or conflict, it appears - but it did distract from very real problems in public education, as OSSTF/FEESO president Karen Littlewood stated in media interviews. Most pressing is the lack of staff, whether contract teachers, occasional teachers, E.A.s, or other education workers. Full-time positions remain vacant; supply teachers can't be found to fill absences.

And in Renfrew, both the Public and the Catholic school boards were without any busing at the start of the school year. This was in a school district where the majority of students require busing, with some trips taking 1½ hours each way. The bus company withdrew from providing service because the money provided by provincial funding was

It took a pressure campaign co-ordinated by a group of unions (including OSSTF/FEESO) along with students and parents to get the Ontario government to respond to the crisis.

Colleen Ireland, co-founder and former president of Chapter 13/16, has started a blog recounting her experiences as a caregiver. Now living in New Brunswick, her blog focuses on challenges she faced caring for her late husband while living in Ontario, particularly the inadequate, bureaucratically-frustrating system of home care supports provided by government funding. She continues to remain involved in the issue of home care for seniors, and remains a member of Chapter 13/16 even after leaving Ontario. We encourage you to check out her [blog!](#)

# PROVINCIAL NEWS

## THE THREAT TO PUBLIC HEALTH CARE

By Iain Beaton

Along with public education, health care in Ontario is constantly being threatened and diminished by the Ford government. The recently-announced \$200 for everyone in Ontario would be better spent being applied to public health care and education, which have been underspent even according to the Ford government's own budget. The \$3 billion pre-election bribe could address ongoing crises like understaffing of public hospitals and closures of ERs and operating rooms. But Ford wants everyone - including billionaires - to get the \$200, rather than investing public dollars where they are most needed.

The latest instalment in the campaign fighting Ford's efforts to privatize health care is the Trojan Horse tour, which has been covering the province in October and November. Co-sponsored by CUPE, the Ontario Health Coalition (OHC), and the 'Trojan Horse', a larger-than-life horse sculpture, has been appearing at press conferences being held in over 60 communities. (<https://ochu.on.ca/2024/10/02/trojan-horse-tour-schedule/>)

The OHC is continuing its own public information campaign against privatization. Nearly one million leaflets were distributed across the province in 2023-24, along with 5,000 lawn signs. The Coalition aims to distribute a further one million leaflets before summer 2025.

Chapter 13/16 has a few of the OHC's anti-privatization lawn signs available for members. If you would like one, contact us via our email at [chapter13and16@gmail.com](mailto:chapter13and16@gmail.com) to let us know where you are located and we will arrange to deliver it to you.



English lawn sign design



French lawn sign design



and to donate.

In addition, the Ontario Health Coalition has initiated a court challenge against the renewal - and expansion! - of the license to Orchard Villa, the long-term care facility in Whitby that had a devastating death toll during the COVID pandemic. The OHC also has launched a court procedure objecting to, and demanding action to prohibit, the extra-billing - or 'upselling' - that occurs at private clinics for eye surgeries, testing, and other procedures. The Health Coalition is in need of money to pay for these legal cases, and it has launched an appeal for donations. Go to their [website](#) to learn more

# HEALTH & WELLNESS

## CHALLENGED BY TAI CHI

By Cristal Diemer-Ewles

I have tackled many activities on my fitness journey. Walking, weightlifting, running, yoga, boot camp, Muay Tai and, recently, Tai Chi. I have to say that Tai Chi has proved one of the most challenging. In talking about successful aging with my friend we both had recently read about the benefits of Tai Chi. I found a local place to try [Fung Loy Kok Taoist Tai Chi](#) in Whitby. We went to check out a class in March.

We were impressed by what we saw. It was a group of approximately a dozen seniors. They all were sporting a variety of t-shirts from Taoist.org. As class began, they formed lines and began practicing the “foundational” moves. It looked simple enough to us and frankly a little too simple, even boring. After what turned out to be basically a warmup, they did a full “set”. We were mesmerized by the beauty of the sequence of moves in the full “set”. Every move showed control, balance, up right spines, bends, use of arms, bodies, and legs. And the full “set” was 108 moves done in sequence. At the end of the class the group gathered around us to talk about each of their experiences doing Taoist Tai Chi. Most had been practicing for over 20 years and have continued to practice well into their 80's. Every one of them talked about not only the physical benefits for their joints and mobility but also the value of the group and social component. We were sold!

We signed up for the 3-month intro package for \$50. The following week we came to class ready to learn. We were assigned an experienced practitioner and moved to the side of the room to start. We were shocked to find out how challenging it was to learn how to place our feet, shift weight, arm and hand movement, spine alignment, head positioning, etc. It was a heck of a lot more difficult than we anticipated. Fast forward several weeks and we were still only up to the first 4 moves! Besides learning the moves, we really had to think about being patient and managing frustration. The group members constantly reminded us that it takes time to learn the moves and they all believed that they continued to learn more about the moves every class. Part of every class is spent with the group leader demonstrating a component or specific move and breaking it down slowly and precisely. Group members also share thoughts about how a particular movement felt during that class: the energy of the group, or the Chi, the participants' collective engagement.

Now it is November and we have stuck with it! We are participating in the large group for both the “foundational” warmup moves and doing full “sets”. Every class we learn a little more, focus on the aspects of a particular move a little more. The senior practitioners are so encouraging, and so sweet. Most of them are more senior than we are. They have used the practice of Tai Chi to stay mobile and stay youthful. That's exactly what we have in mind.



## HOME CARE CHALLENGES

*By Colleen Ireland*

No one sets out to become a caregiver and certainly the pay would not attract anyone to the job. But it is a packaged deal and if you manage to survive 40 years or more together then it is a no-brainer, you look after your loved one no matter how difficult the circumstances. Like so many people in this great country, I had become lulled into thinking many supports would be available if and when a caregiver role become my day job.

In June of 2015 I retired. In November of 2015, our lives were changed forever. The journey my husband and I would take for the next 7 years would include moments of joy, moments of rage, moments of regret, and many moments of despair in the final 2 years. Plans made for retirement together suddenly vanished and while we worked hard at "living well with Parkinson's", COVID kicked us in the gut and both my spouse and myself had to dig for reserves we never knew we had.

As we fought our way through those final years, we were supported by incredible generous neighbours, amazing health care support workers, and dedicated family physicians. They were never the issue. The depleted and dysfunctional health care system, scabs removed through the pandemic, literally brought us to our knees some days from fatigue and strain. Getting to those supports was a battle in and of itself and once a team was in place we soon learned that there were no more hours to get and we would be forced to look to private health care agencies and systems that proved to be barriers not supports. At their lowest, those agencies tried to coerce us into paying for more hours. I disrespectfully declined. Don't mess with an exhausted caregiver!

It is my hope that this personal account of trying to live well in the face of adversity, will not only offer guidelines for your self-support, but also provide a realistic look at what having a neurodegenerative like Parkinson's can mean to a person and her/his / their family. If you believe there can be no humour in these dark days then read no further. Even at our lowest, we found laughter was our bond. It was dark laughter and reflected my husband's ability to look at the inanities of our world. There were other times when we wept and if you don't want to read of the toughest times, read no further.

For those who wish to read more below are links to Colleen's blogs:

[The Forgotten Caregiver - Context \[May 16, 2024\]](#)

[The Forgotten Caregiver - Sharpen Those Skates \[November 4, 2024\]](#)

[The Caregiver Learning Curve \[November 21, 2024\]](#)

# OUT IN THE COMMUNITY



Cyndie Jacobs presenting a cheque to North House on behalf of ARM. It provides a spectrum of housing supports for those who are at risk or in crisis within the communities of North Durham.

Karen Jagoe presenting a cheque to Markham Food Bank on behalf of ARM.



Cristal Diemer-Ewles presenting a cheque on behalf of ARM to Community Care Durham.

Iain Beaton, Chapter 13/16 President and ARM Council Chair (at right) with Manfred Netzel, Chapter 12 President, and Chapter 12 member Larry French, at the Toronto Labour Day Parade, September 2, 2024.



## UPCOMING EVENTS

### December 3

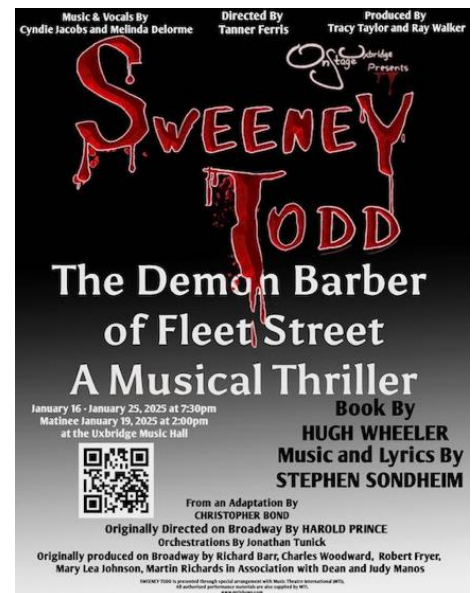
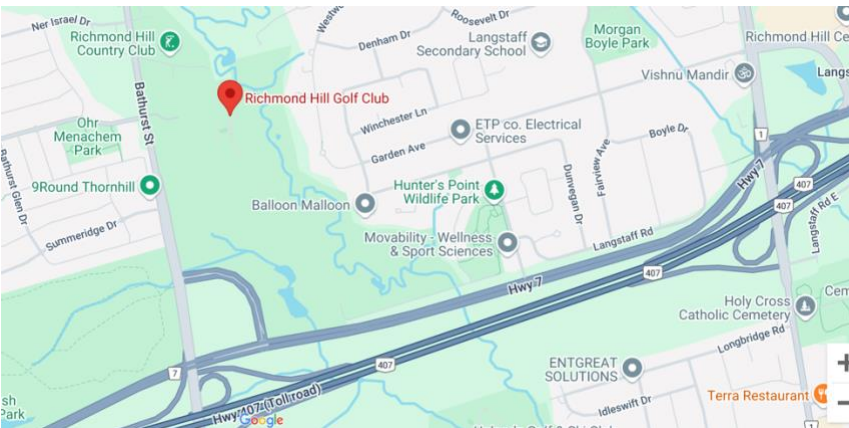
- Get together at [King Henry's Arms](#) located at 9301 Yonge Street in Richmond Hill
- 2:30 - 4:30PM

### January 16 - 25, 2025

- *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street* musical thriller at the Uxbridge Music Hall

### May 21, 2025 [more details to follow]

- A day of golf at [Richmond Hill Golf Club](#)



- Tee-times for foursomes start at 10AM

**ARTICLE AUTHORS FOR THIS ISSUE:**

Iain Beaton, ARM Chapter 13/16 President  
[President's Message; The Threat to Public Health  
Care]  
Cristal Diemer-Ewles, Chapter 13/16 Membership  
[Challenged by Thai Chi]  
Colleen Ireland [Home Care Challenges]

Newsletters will be published:  
**Fall/Winter/Spring**  
Copy Editor: Cyndie Jacobs  
Layout Editor: Karen Jagoe

*Contact Information:*

*If you have any questions regarding any of the material published in this issue, or if you have any suggestions for future articles, please do not hesitate to contact us via email at:*

***[chapter13and16@gmail.com](mailto:chapter13and16@gmail.com)***

