

ARFL NEWSLETTER

Association of Retired Faculty and Librarians of York University

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ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

DATE: Friday, November 13th, 2009
TIME; Noon to 3 p.m.
VENUE: Harry Crowe Room, Atkinson College

A light lunch will be served.

1.0 FINANCIAL SERVICES TRIBUNAL HEARING

Al Stauffer

The Superintendent of Financial Services has previously issued a decision which upheld the university's practice of basing pension increments on a 'shadow pension' rather than the actual pension being paid to retirees. This 'shadow pension' includes negative annual pension adjustments even though pensions paid to retirees do not decrease in such cases.

YUFA has appealed this decision and on May 15 there was a preliminary hearing of the Financial Services Tribunal, which will hear this appeal, to set a date for the first "working" meeting. YUFA, York's administration and the Superintendent all

Had legal counsel at the hearing. As well, CUPE3903 sought and obtained party status at the hearings. ARFL had originally intended to seek party status but after consulting with YUFA's lawyers, we were assured that our interests would be well served by the case being put forward by the YUFA legal team. Al Stauffer and Peter Harries-Jones attended the hearing as observers. The purpose of this hearing was to set a schedule of further meetings and a timetable for the exchange of documents among the parties. The next hearings will take place in late January/early February of 2010. In the meantime we have been providing YUFA's lawyers with various documentation sent to pension plan members during their years of employment and immediately prior to retirement to help them prepare for the upcoming hearings.

We will continue to monitor the proceedings and keep you informed of any developments.



2.0 TRAVEL INSURANCE AT REDUCED RATES

Al Stauffer

If you subscribe to the benefit package available to retirees through the University then you have a lifetime amount of \$10,000 for out-of-province medical coverage (now \$20,000, see 4.0 below). While this is not sufficient coverage in many instances, e.g. for travel to the US, it can be used to reduce the cost of adequate travel insurance you will normally purchase when you travel.

Some insurance providers offer travel packages with the option of a deductible amount on their coverage. For instance, if you click on the Insurance link on the Alterna Savings website, you get to a Manulife Financial webpage which offers emergency medical travel insurance with various deductible amounts up

to \$100,000. Assuming that you haven't used up your lifetime medical coverage through York, you can choose the \$10,000 deductible and get unlimited coverage at a much reduced cost over what you would pay for coverage with no deductible. There are limitations on this insurance for pre-existing conditions but this is true of most travel insurance coverage.

ARFL is attempting to increase our travel insurance coverage in several ways through the upcoming YUFA negotiations. In the meantime, you can take advantage of the coverage we have to reduce your travel costs. (Editor's note: Al Stauffer's experience was with Manulife. Not all insurers will accept York's lifetime maximum as a deductible.)



3.0 HIGHLIGHTS OF THE ANNUAL MEMBERS' MEETING OF MAY 14, 2009

Chester Sadowski

The President, Alex Murray, reported on the launch of the ARFL/YURA project entitled, "Reflections, Recollections and Reminiscences", which was held on May 7, 2009 in the Map Room of the Main Library. The many submissions from retirees were displayed and handed over to the Archives.

The organization is in a strong financial condition, but membership is slowly declining. Few new retirees appear to be joining ARFL whilst some existing members are not renewing their memberships. There are several possible reasons for this. Our recruitment flyer may not be sufficiently attractive and may not even be reaching new retirees. Confusion may exist over the differences between YURA and ARFL and in the current status of existing members. New recruitment strategies are required and a number were discussed. Certainly the Newsletter can play a leading role here, but it has been without an editor for some time now.

The continuing decline in the value of the Pension Fund is having an adverse effect on our pensions,

since the Employer continues to base pension increases on a "shadow pension", which follows the financial markets. Existing pensioners may never again see an increase in their York pensions. On the plus side, the York Pension Fund invests in a conservative mixture of assets and has not been affected to the same degree as financial markets in general. It was suggested that our financial managers are driven to make riskier investments by York's use of a standard actuarial growth factor of 6% and that a lower value might stabilize our pension incomes. Turning over the management of the York Pension Fund to OMERS or OSSTF may reduce management costs and take advantage of their high performance levels, but doing so would mean some loss of influence in plan management.

A progress report was presented on the actions being taken on behalf of the so-called "2006 Cohort". (This issue has now been resolved as reported in Article 5.0 below.) Joy Cohnstaedt reported that issues on compensation for graduate and undergraduate supervision were being pursued through JCOAA. (see Article 6.0 below) The ARFL executive is attempting to secure the eligibility of retirees to be issued the new York identity cards, which are now required for access to certain York facilities, such as gyms, swimming pools, photocopiers, computers, etc.

A vexing issue is that Senior Scholars now may seek reimbursement of conference fees via RET only if they either contribute a paper to a conference or assist in organizing it. A letter sent by Barry Miller claims that the new policy conforms to the Income Tax Act of Canada, but without specifically quoting the relevant regulation. A motion moved by Lee Lorch and seconded by Tony Wallis directs the ARFL President Alex Murray to write a letter to York President Shoukri on the matter and was passed unanimously. Further suggestions were made to request YUFA to include a piece on the impact of Barry Miller's policy on retirees who are still active in scholarly pursuits and to raise the matter with the York President at a future meeting. (see Article 6.0)

ARFL and YURA will co-host the 2010 Annual Convention of the College and University Retiree Associations of Canada (CURAC) on the York campus. Preliminary meeting dates are May 19-20, 2010. Alex Murray, Gene Denzel, Roger Heeler, Joy Cohnstaedt and Chester Sadowski are on the organizing committee.



4.0 COLLECTIVE BARGAINING GAINS FOR ARFL RETIREES

Chester Sadowski

ARFL contributed several items pertaining to Article 14 of the CA to YUFA for consideration in the recently completed negotiations. Chief among these were: parity with active faculty and librarians in health benefits coverage where relevant; continuation of the health benefits plan for surviving spouses provided that premiums are maintained; increase in compensation for courses taught by retirees to \$20,000 and the number of such courses to 8 independently of when retirement begins; and the same benefits for retirees travelling on York business as for active faculty and librarians.

A gist of YUFA gains in Article 14 is as follows: the health benefits plan remains unchanged apart from an increase in the lifetime maximum for out-of-province claims from \$10,000 to \$20,000; the teaching entitlement for retirees has been increased from 5 to 8 courses on retirement at 65 with the number decreasing with age of retirement to 3 at age 70; compensation will be \$16,238 for the first 5 courses and the prevailing CUPE 3903 rate for the remaining 3. An analogous change was negotiated for retired librarians with regard to professional librarian responsibilities. The above changes in compensation rates and course entitlements are also reflected in compensation for principal graduate student supervision by retirees.

A full description of changes in the negotiated CA may be seen on the YUFA website.



5.0 THE 2006 COHORT

Brigitte Kitchen

The grievance against the forced retirement of the 2006 age cohort came to a satisfactory conclusion in the early hours of Tuesday, September 15th after two days of mediation. It was a long, and at times discouraging, haul for the 27 grievors who initially had to overcome a negative legal opinion that we did not have a case. But with a majority vote at a crucial YUFA General Meeting in favour of our cause, the eloquence of Chief Steward John Bell and the agreement of the members of the YUFA Executive to take up our cause because we had been treated unfairly, our case eventually wound its way through the arbitration process. Persuasive and imaginative argumentation by the YUFA lawyers gained us access to mediation. The steadfast approach of our legal team together with the helpful insights of Chief Steward Suzie Young and YUFA staff member Monica Mulvihill successfully guided our small group of actively participating grievors through the, at times trying, mediation process. Unfortunately details of the settlement may not be disclosed



6.0 JCOAA's DECISION ON PER AND GRADUATE COMPENSATION

Joy Cohnstaedt

Alex Murray, President, and two members of the ARFL Executive met with JCOAA on Friday, June 5, 2009 to discuss 1) recent policy changes to the application of PER that limit the use of these funds to pay for professional membership in learned societies and to attend conferences in their fields of scholarly activity; and 2) equitable compensation for graduate supervision including a) reading compensation for Major Research Papers (MRP) supervision into the current agreement and b) the addition of compensation for similar supervisory committee work to that provided non-retirees.

Unfortunately JCOAA supported neither of the changes requested by ARFL. ARFL will continue to advocate changes to PER policy and expanded terms

for compensation for graduate services provided by eligible retirees.



7.0 YORK UNIVERSITY RETIREES ASSOCIATION (YURA)

Sandra Pyke

The York University Retirees Association (YURA) is a voluntary group which represents retired employees from all the employee groups at York – faculty, staff and managers – who wish to maintain contact with the University and with each other. Now in its twenty-second year with a membership of more than 450, YURA’s mandate includes four major responsibilities: to provide a forum for York retirees to discuss common interests; to represent the interests of all York retirees to the University, particularly concerning pensions and benefits; to offer opportunities for networking among members; to foster social, recreational, and learning activities for members. The Association communicates with its members through email and postal messages, a Newsletter and a website (www.yorku.ca/yura). In partnership with ARFL, the Association recently hosted a major event in celebration of York’s 50th anniversary – Reflections, Recollections & Reminiscences. A presentation of more than 60 submissions from York retirees was made to the York University Archives. Another joint project with ARFL, currently in the planning stages, is the annual conference of the College and University Retiree Associations of Canada (CURAC), to be held in May 2010 at York.



8.0 ASSOCIATION OF RETIRED FACULTY AND LIBRARIANS (ARFL)

Chester Sadowski

ARFL came into existence in 1994/95 in response to cuts made by the Employer to the Supplementary Medical and Dental Benefits Plan for retired faculty and librarians but no other group of retirees from York. The protection of health and pension benefits has been ARFL’s predominant, though not exclusive, objective ever since. ARFL achieves this objective by working closely with YUFA, putting forward negotiations positions pertinent to retirees and participating directly or indirectly in processes to resolve disputes with the Employer over retiree benefits and rights. The current President of ARFL sits on the YUFA executive and ARFL members are associate members of YUFA.

ARFL started as an independent organization and remains autonomous today apart from its affiliation with YUFA. The price that it pays for this is that it is not recognized as an official York University body by the Employer. In contrast, YURA has such recognition. This state of affairs does not mean that the Employer will not cooperate with ARFL, nor that it does not take ARFL’s concerns seriously. Indeed, ARFL does have access to the Administration, including the President of York University. ARFL’s role as an advocate for retired faculty and librarians is thus one of marked credibility.

ARFL’s interventions, mainly via YUFA, on behalf of retired faculty and librarians have seen several successes. Among these are compensation for graduate supervision, increased medical and dental benefits, continuation of such benefits for surviving spouses of deceased retirees and a satisfactory resolution of a dispute concerning the 2006 Cohort. Ongoing endeavours include ARFL’s opposition to the use of a “shadow pension” by the Employer to limit annual increments in pension amounts, the resolution of outstanding issues in graduate supervision, extension of new versions of York I.D. cards to retirees, and opposition to new policies

pertaining to Professional Expense Reimbursements.

ARFL communicates with its members in two ways. - through its newsletter published two or three times a year electronically and in hard copy, and through its website, www.yuarfl.org, and e-mail account, yuarfl@web.net. An active discussion group is maintained by this means.

ARFL and YURA are complementary to each other and work cooperatively on behalf of York retirees. Two joint ventures have been mentioned in the previous article (Article 7.0) on YURA.



9.0 REMEMBERING JIM CAMERON

Ron Bordessa

In 1969 Jim Cameron arrived at York as a young faculty member of the Department of Geography at Atkinson College. He became a fixture there until his retirement 30 years later. It would be hard to imagine colleagues who felt so comfortable and fitted in so well with their surroundings at work, or colleagues who were so appreciative and positive about what life brought them. Jim was a larger than life figure who animated those around him and was never happier than when he was organizing – and always those being organized seemed not to mind at all. In those things that are treasured in memory, long after teaching, research and service are filed in proper places, Jim is omnipresent. The second floor of Atkinson where Geography, Psychology and Political Science resided was Jim's domain. It is true the Dean's Office was also there and that was their good luck too. Over the years, along that stretch of floor, colleagues congregated at annual events to participate in the latest version of surprises Jim had up his sleeve to energize "the hallway Olympics", the Christmas party or the sardine festival. While these events were occasions everyone enjoyed, the man behind them took real pleasure in seeing his colleagues come together.

Jim loved Atkinson, and more than anyone else, in his own way, played a remarkable role in building an institutional culture in the College that was distinctive, cohesive and resilient. Jim's remarkable leadership qualities were very quickly identified when he joined the College and he was soon conscripted into service by the Dean's Office. On and off over the years he served as Associate Dean for three different Deans and played an important part in creating the Atkinson that served its students so well. In those days telephones and memos ruled – this suited Jim just fine, as they continued to do even after personal computers arrived. The telephone and Jim were constant companions and he must have suffered separation anxiety when they were not together.

As an inveterate organizer, Jim picked his time to be Associate Dean perfectly. During his terms of office the Atkinson Summer School attracted substantial enrolment not only from Atkinson students but from other Faculties as well. It was a paper based registration system, completed by students in person. The registration period was often chaotic, with students lined up through the entire length of the building and out the doors. It was a yearly nightmare for many – but not for Jim. The summer registration process saw Jim at his best – a booming voice and a large presence only added to the sense that here was a man who could make things work in the most trying of circumstances. Those who knew Jim well will know that making things work and doing the right thing was how he worked – and for the most part out of the limelight.

Wanting to do the right thing was what took Jim into politics and kept him there, as a Councilor in Vaughan for almost 15 years – never losing an election. In that arena Jim's integrity, principled approach and competence shone like a beacon. As Councilor Jim developed an academic interest in urban development and made many important contributions to the literature. It added to his earlier work on Scottish immigration in Canada, a topic that took him to Glasgow University for a doctorate and which he continued to love to the end. Jim's

venture into politics also rebounded to the great benefit of his students. For years, well known and important figures associated with the development process would clamor for the privilege of delivering guest lectures in his classes. Students got more from those classes than they could have anticipated. Jim's taste for public discourse and a populist approach were mixed together and stirred with his academic bent to produce an erudite and amusing coffee table book, much admired by its readers, on the Canadian beaver.

Jim had an extraordinarily wide and eclectic range of friends – and he made keeping in touch an art. Friends from his undergraduate years at UWO became lifelong friends. Colleagues from around York and sometimes elsewhere would be gathered up twice a year for a weekend retreat. These “Jim and the boys” retreats continued for more than 30 years. They often occurred at his much loved cottage in Kincardine and brought him great pleasure, as they did to the numerous others who participated in them over the years.

It was to Kincardine that he retired with his wife, Kaye, enjoying their house and keeping a watchful eye on their cottage. In early 2008 Jim was diagnosed with brain cancer, which he fought with great calmness until it got the better of him in September, 2008. In those months this remarkable man continued to be a source of joy for all around him. In his adversity, his thankfulness for a life well lived was his focus and inspiration for those who loved him. During that time Kaye was helped by Jim, Cathy, Andrew and David, whose admiration for their father is shared by all who knew him.

Jim Cameron was loved and admired by all who knew him at Atkinson and elsewhere at York, as well. We will remember him not only because there is so much that we learned from him, but also because he was such an important part of our own lives.



2009 EXECUTIVE MEMBERS

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Past President: Mort Abrahamson

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Vice President: Al Stauffer stauffer@yorku.ca

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THE END

MEMBERSHIP DUES NOTICE

ENCLOSED for those who have not yet renewed/joined for 2009/10. New this year, option to renew for two years.