

YURA Newsletter

No. 8, September 2005

A newsletter for members of the York University Retirees Association

A Word from the President

Retirement is about more than pensions and benefits, certainly, but without these we would have to live an insecure way of life, grounded at least as much in anxiety as in any conviction of security. The sessions that Karen Gray organizes so well for pre-retirees have indicated how apprehensive many feel – both staff and faculty – as they approach retirement. Their thoughts often flow around the central theme of whether or how their lives might change, with lesser incomes and different daily routines. For most of us, these issues soon become resolved as we adjust to new family responsibilities and new patterns of volunteer work. But our adjustment continues to be based in a secure income.

One of the central purposes of YURA is to provide support and some degree of advocacy for these concerns. During the past few months the university administration, in its very understandable attempts to forestall a serious financial problem over pension increments, has begun negotiations with YUFA, and the YURA Executive has asked to be kept informed wherever existing retirees are likely to be affected. Progress is also being made in our study of non-academic benefits, and in representation on collective bargaining units such as YUSA and CPM, though we recognize that CPM is not a formal bargaining unit. YURA can never have more than an association with these units, but it is important that our voice be heard, and that we be able to articulate some experience of retirement.

These associations provide also a means of contact with those who remain active members of the staff and faculty. We are professionals

and semi-professionals within an institution where our work and our lives have been able to achieve some degree of fulfillment, and we welcome continuing associations with the fraternity of academe. The membership of YURA consists almost 50% of faculty and 50% of staff. On this foundation, YURA maintains its connections with York, with facilities provided for us at the heart of the campus, and with hopes that, at some point in the near future, YURA will develop modest areas of intellectual and academic activity that might draw on the impressive resources among its membership.

In the meantime, on behalf of the Executive, I extend to all members a hearty welcome to our annual General Meeting on September 30.

Albert Tucker, President

Annual General Meeting to be held September 30

YURA members are reminded of the Annual General Meeting for 2005, to be held Friday, September 30, at 1:15 p.m. A buffet lunch will begin at 12:00 noon. Both the lunch and the AGM will be in the Underground Restaurant, located in the Student Centre at the west end of York Lanes.

A full agenda is planned, with reports on pensions, post-retirement benefits, activities for retirees, YURA support for bursaries and awards, and other items of business.

Parking will be free, with parking vouchers available at the registration desk in the luncheon area. These are special one-day vouchers for the AGM and luncheon only. The vouchers will not be usable in York Lanes because of the heavy usage of that lot, but parking will be available in the Arboretum Parking Garage (PS2).

Reservation forms for the luncheon, parking information, and a map have already been mailed to YURA members. Anyone with questions

is invited to telephone the YURA office, extension 70664, or the Retirement Planning Centre, extension 66228.

***Showcase* scheduled for November 9**

Showcase – the popular annual reunion, outreach, and fund-raising event organized each year by YURA volunteers – will be held this year on November 9. The day will feature an opportunity to meet fellow retirees over lunch, the annual "showcase" of individual crafts and hobbies, a bake sale, and a garage sale. All YURA members are invited to circle November 9 on their calendars and come to campus for this event.

Pension news

By Al Stauffer

The All University Committee on Pensions (AUCP) had its first meeting of the academic year on May 16. The practice has been to meet once per term but problems arose when the YUFA representative (who is also normally the chair of the committee) resigned earlier in the year. Art Hilliker is now the YUFA representative and the chair of AUCP.

I raised the issue of the wording of the letter sent earlier this year to all those receiving a pension from York. Many retirees felt the wording was unduly threatening and the deadline for response too short given that retirees may be away from home for extended periods. The representatives from the administration promised that in future the wording will be modified. We were informed that the purpose of the letter was to ensure that those retirees receiving a York pension (or their spouses) were still alive and entitled to the pension. Similar letters will be sent out on a regular basis in future so pensioners should return the information requested as soon as possible. If there is no response within a reasonable time there will be further attempts made

to contact the individual concerned before any move is made to terminate a pension.

We received a report from the pension plan actuary on the reasons for changing the mortality tables used to calculate pensions for future retirees. Note that this change does *not* affect anyone already receiving a pension. Based on the current data for York retirees the payouts from the pension plan are larger than anticipated. It seems that we are living too long and costing the pension plan too much. Future updates will be done on a regular five-year basis.

Shadow pensions

Members will recall that the issue of "shadow pensions" was referred to the Financial Services Commission of Ontario (FSCO) to determine if the administration's position on shadow pensions was valid under the terms of our pension plan. (A "shadow pension" is the reduced pension retirees would receive when the pension fund returns are less than 6% on a four-year average. Actual pensions are never reduced but the administration's position is that any increases to pensions based on superior returns are applied to the shadow pension and not the actual pension). FSCO has not yet issued a ruling and instead has asked the parties involved at York to try to resolve the issue internally. It is YURA's position that the notion of a shadow pension does not apply to current retirees and that any discussions regarding shadow pensions must recognize this point. YURA has sent a letter to both YUFA (who initiated the referral to FSCO) and Vice-President Brewer emphasizing these points. The chair of YUFA has replied that they are in complete agreement with our position and VP Brewer has acknowledged that York pensioners' interests must be taken into consideration in any discussions. We will keep a close eye on any future developments.

Al Stauffer is YURA's representative to the All University Committee on Pensions.

Study compares health benefits for non-academic retirees

A YURA committee to study health benefits for non-academic retirees at York has completed the first phase of its study. The results are summarized in a 13-page chart comparing staff retiree health benefits of the nine Ontario universities (including York) which provide formal retiree health plans. The committee is chaired by Ken Thomson, assisted by Susan Lanoue. (Frances Bukovek was also a member of the committee in the early stages.)

Ken Thomson explains that the study, including the chart, was modelled on Cynthia Dent's excellent 2004 report on health benefits for academic retirees, plus a more detailed description of the York Plan's features taken from the HR booklets on York's Web site. Its main object was to alert the Executives of current employee groups, as well as staff retirees, to the scope of staff retiree benefits available across Ontario.

The YURA committee is pleased to report very cordial separate meetings between YURA members and members of the YUSA and CPMEA Executives, recognizing that improvements to retiree benefits can only be achieved through actions by current employees. Both YUSA and CPM were given earlier drafts of the chart, and they will now receive the final version.

For the future, we know that changes will occur. At the time of writing YUSA and York University are working on a new contract, and Cynthia Dent's data from other universities are now over a year old. The committee aims to establish contact with the other universities and exchange information on an ongoing basis. Efforts are under way to upload the chart onto the YURA website for easy access.

YURA members turn out for new Dining Group

Twenty-one YURA members, friends, and spouses turned out on June 8 for the first – and, many hope, not the last – YURA dining group. The scene was the Eating Garden Chinese Restaurant on Baldwin Street in Toronto. Many who attended, as well as others who were not able to go, have voiced enthusiasm for more dinner outings.

Rosemarie Nielsen, who proposed the dining group and carried out all the organization, has agreed to think about another dinner event. If anyone wishes to suggest restaurants, or to assist in the planning, Rosemarie would like to hear from you by e-mail or telephone.

YURA membership exceeds 500

YURA has welcomed 32 new retirees to its membership since the last Newsletter appeared in May. In August, the total number of members stood at 504.

The new members include: Robert Allan, Elizabeth Brendel, Heiderose Butscher, Elio Costa, Barrie Coukell, Gordon Darroch, Gene Denzel, Bruce Dugelby, Jerome Durlak, Pilar Ford, Helen Freedhoff, Carl Garry, John Harries, Deborah Heller, Ian Howard, Ishtiaq Khan, Clifford Leznoff, Norman MacMillan, Dorothy Miller, Christopher Nichols, Carol Ohlers, Marianne Rogers, Janet Rowe, Judy Rowles, Kumud Sharma, Marie-France Silver, Meena Singh, Michelle Srebrolow, Paula Thomson, Maria Wacyk, Betty Witmer, and Joyce Zemans.

Part-time invigilation opportunity for York retirees

If you're interested in part-time invigilation work at York University beginning in 2006, Ann-Marie Elliott in York's Student Community

Development & Registrar's Office would like to hear from you.

Invigilators supervise and monitor exams and tests for students (including alternate exams for students with disabilities), provide instructions in accordance with university policies and procedures, provide scribe or reader assistance for students with disabilities, complete related invigilator forms and reports, pick up and deliver exam and test materials, and resolve problems or issues as required.

Invigilators will be needed on an on-going basis with a varying number of part-time hours throughout the year. Invigilator hiring, training and scheduling is managed by Sherry Lewkowicz, Assistant Registrar/Systems, Registrar's Office. If interested, contact:

Ann-Marie Elliott
Student Community Development & Registrar's Office
416-736-2100 ext 20438
aelliott@yorku.ca

YURA members contribute to student and other aid

In order to sustain a clear understanding for retirees on financial, tax-deductible donations, the YURA Executive has entered into an informal relationship with the York University Foundation, by which information and advice can be funneled both ways.

Last year emphasis was placed on matching grants for graduate students, and the contributions of YURA members totaling \$17,000 became seven graduate scholarships worth \$15,000 each. This year the scale of matching was reduced, while most members preferred to focus their donations on undergraduate aid, on program support, and on libraries. As a result, YURA donations have been able to finance one graduate scholarship of \$15,000; well over \$96,000 has gone into undergraduate student aid; \$46,330 into program support, and another

\$27,630 to the various libraries of the university.

Contributions this year have been close to \$140,000, which with matching grants brings the total to nearly \$190,000. These figures are all in addition to the established William Small Award and the Mature Student Bursary, which are granted each year from a capital fund that now comes to more than \$60,000. Members wishing to comment on this subject should feel free to E-Mail the Executive at yura@yorku.ca.

YURA provides subsidy for YYC Summer Day Camp

At its June meeting, the Executive of YURA approved a subsidy of \$1,050 to the Summer Day Camp of the York Youth Connection. Nancy Accinelli, Manager of this year's camp, reports that the grant made it possible for the Camp to partially subsidize ten campers.

The York Youth Connection Summer Day Camp – founded thirty years ago by Denys Brown, a former Executive Officer in the Faculty of Arts when she was approaching retirement, together with Rosemarie Nielsen, a current member of YURA -- has a rich history of providing summer activities for children from the York and surrounding communities.

This year, two sessions were held, each with 70 to 80 campers between the ages of 8 and 14. Activities included exploration programs in theatre, visual arts, science, and sports, and also leadership programs for the older children.

Use of SIN for insurance claims

Until recently, York retirees have been required to use their Social Insurance Number (SIN) when submitting claims to Great West Life. The Department of Human Resources & Employee Relations (DHR) has changed this practice for new retirees. Retirees are now being issued a new number, based on the former employee number by

changing the first digit from a one to a nine. For example, if the employee number was 123456789 it would be changed to 923456789.

While DHR does not have the resources to change the numbers at once for all retirees, individuals who wish to change from the SIN to a new number may contact HR individually to request a new number. Anyone wishing to do this may contact the Pension and Benefits office at 416-736-2100, extension 77567, or e-mail benefits@yorku.ca. The Pension and Benefits office cautions that it may take some time to respond to requests for the change.

In Memoriam

Harold Clayton, May 28, 2005
Michelle Colavito, July 21, 2005
William McGrath, May 7, 2005
Paul Medow, May 20, 2005
Nellie Minnema, May 21, 2005
John Mole, February 5, 2005
Jack Parish, June 16, 2005
Shirley M. Sharek, March 14, 2005
Allen P. Smith, March 15, 2005
Bruna Vacchiano, April 12, 2005
Grace Witty (nee Gidge), June 4, 2005

With thanks to the Department of Human Resources for assistance in providing this information.

YURA Executive

For information about YURA, contact any of the members of the Executive Committee, or the YURA office.

- Albert Tucker, president,
416-921-1887; atucker@gl.yorku.ca
- Ken Thomson, past president,
416-241-6331; kthomson@yorku.ca

- Mildred Theobalds, secretary,
905-669-0664; theobald@yorku.ca
- Catherine Ng, treasurer,
416-638-0737, ngc@yorku.ca
- Pearl Kroll, communications co-ordinator,
416-496-0261; pkroll@yorku.ca
also available in the YURA office at ext. 70664;
- Frances Bukovec, information officer,
416-633-2225, fbukovec@yorku.ca

Members-at-large:

- Cynthia Dent,
416-488-7087, cdent@yorku.ca
- Susan Lanoue,
705-445-8135, slanoue@yorku.ca
- Michael Lanphier,
416-961-7236, lanphier@yorku.ca
- Alex Murray,
416-924-1588, amurray@yorku.ca
- Barbara Tryfos (newsletter),
416-494-1709, bjtryfos@yorku.ca

Ex Officio:

- Morton Abramson, nominee to the Pension Board of Trustees,
905-764-7674; abramson@mathstat.yorku.ca
- Al Stauffer, representative to All University Committee on
Pensions, 905-707-7179, stauffer@yorku.ca

The Executive welcomes help in carrying on the work of the Association. To volunteer, phone or e-mail the office or any of the members listed above.

The *YURA Newsletter* is published by:

York University Retirees Association

101 Central Square

York University

4700 Keele St., Toronto, ON Canada M3J 1P3

Telephone: 416-736-2100, ext. 70664

E-mail: yura@yorku.ca

Web site: <http://www.yorku.ca/yura>