UGRA’S PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

As we begin a new year for the UGRA Executive Committee, let me extend a heartfelt expression of thanks to Ted Burnside who this year stood down from the Executive after having completed several terms on the Executive. Most recently, he served his tenure as President and then Past President with passion in his vigorous defence of retiree interests, particularly his unrelenting push to have ad hoc pension inflation adjustments reinstated. I wish also to thank Ed Herold, who also completed his service to the Executive this past year. Ed worked hard to ensure the Newsletter had interesting content and reached retirees in a timely manner.

In the place of our two departing Committee members, I wish to welcome Dana Paramskas and Mark Sears as the new members of the Executive. They, along with Ron Mackinnon, will comprise the Communications Committee which is responsible for the newsletter and the UGRA website.

Finally, I would like to thank Ken Grant for his unstinting efforts on behalf of retirees last year in his role as UGRA President. As he took office a year ago, it seemed clear that a combination of university policy and unfavourable economic conditions had pretty much put an end, for the time being, to any ad hoc pension increases. Ken, ever creative, determined that because there was a surplus in the Non-Professional Pension Plan, the members of that plan should receive an ad hoc increase to their pensions. He pressed President Summerlee very hard on this point and for a short time, at least, success looked possible. But, by last April, Ken’s efforts also came to naught. I don’t believe anyone could have done more to make a break through last year. He did, however, manage to get the ad hoc-pension-increase door left open a crack. These days, this must be considered a success.

So, I begin my term as UGRA President asking myself what must be the priorities for the coming year. The last two or three years saw a tremendous and appropriate investment of energy and effort into securing pension and benefit improvements. The times are not encouraging with respect to any enhancements in those areas for the next two or three years, at least. That said, it is critical that the UGRA Executive maintain its efforts to ensure that the financial needs of retirees are protected.

As we have noted in past issues of this newsletter, U of G retirees are the most poorly protected retirees among all of Ontario’s universities’ retirees particularly in a low-inflation environment. We, alone, have no protection against annual inflation that is 2% or less. Over a ten-year period this amounts to a purchasing power reduction of approximately 20%. The issue is serious and we must continue to be serious in pressing the point by continuing to look for opportunities to ask for ad hoc adjustments.

While the UGRA Pension Committee under committee Chair, Dale Lockie, will continue to look for new arguments for why pension increases ought to be provided, we must also be realistic in understanding that economic conditions in general and the ill health of pension plan investment balance sheets in particular make the short-run future for increases cloudy indeed.

From my point of view as UGRA President, we

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need to strengthen our focus on communications with retirees. Some of this work was begun when Ed Herold was Chair of the Communications Committee and I think it needs a redoubled effort over the next year. At present, we have two main modes of communication with our members: newsletter and website. Of these two, the newsletter is in better shape; the website needs considerable work and, in addition, we need to coordinate these two communication devices better.

With respect to the newsletter, the Executive, at the end of last year, decided that we should return to three issues instead of the two issues with which we experimented last year as we were pushing strongly on pensions and hoping to make big changes with the website. I strongly endorse the move back to three newsletter issues. This is still our primary means of communication with most retirees. The Communications Committee will continue to strive to make the newsletters timely, informative and interesting.

The bigger job for the Communications Committee this year will be the work on the website. In its design, the website generally looks good; this is due to the fine efforts of George Loney when he served on the Executive until a couple of years ago and we owe him a huge thanks for it being there at all. Unfortunately, we have not kept the site current in terms of content. To be useful and attractive to visitors, it must offer something other than stale information.

In early 2009, Bob Creedy agreed to serve as webmaster. Under direction from the Communications Committee and Bonnie Hamilton, Chair of the Membership Committee, Bob created the master electronic membership list in a secure and password protected area within the website that is not open to anyone but the webmaster and the Membership Committee Chair.

With the master membership list securely in place, Bob was then able to create a member login area where retirees can post and read messages. Over time and with experience, we anticipate expanding the functionality of the messaging facility. Our hope is that this part of the website can become a useful and engaging place for retirees to visit.

Beyond the messaging facility, however, we need to significantly up-grade the site’s other content. While this will be the primary work of the Communications Committee, they will need to rely on advice and reaction from their fellow Executive Committee members and also on what we can learn from retirees in general. I encourage everyone to visit the website, log in and give us some advice on what you think should be done to improve the site.

I am looking forward to working with this year’s excellent Executive as we strive to promote the well-being and financial health of our members.

Bruce Ryan
President, UGRA

Using Your International Travel Health Insurance Benefit
by Phil Keddie

Do you have your “europ assistance travel card”? Until recently, I didn’t. All I’ve had for years was a plastic Sun Life, University of Guelph card with my plan number and member ID but without contact numbers in case of emergency. I also found an old Clarica card in my wallet with my plan number and member ID but with lapsed contact numbers. Given this state of affairs, all I can say is that I’ve been lucky while travelling in foreign parts: no medical emergencies. I simply did not have the critical plan contact information that I am required to carry with me if I want to ensure that I receive the medical assistance I might need.

On your Sun Life Financial “europ assistance travel card” you record your name, Plan/Contract Number and Member ID.

The card notes that “If you have a medical emergency while travelling, help is only a phone call away.”

The card further states: “In an emergency, contact Europ Assistance immediately (this is a requirement of your plan). Physicians and hospitals can call to confirm benefits and arrange direct payment”.

The card provides three contact phone numbers: USA and Canada; Mexico; + elsewhere – plus a fax number and an e-mail address.

If you don’t have this card and you plan to travel outside Canada, you really should get one. They are available at the Human Resources Desk, 3rd Floor UC or they can be accessed “on line” and printed. With your web browser go to:

http://www.uoguelph.ca/hr/hrmanual/documents/TravelMediPass_GB00200-E-07-07.pdf
may be reluctant to pay additional amounts in order to maintain the incomes of their predecessors. "Pure" pension designs are relatively uncommon at universities in Canada; as a consequence, risks frequently are shared between employer and employees under both DC and DB plans. There are hybrids, such as DC plans with a minimum DB guarantee, DB plans with DC termination and death benefits and near-DC deferral features (such as at Dalhousie), DB plans with sharing of contribution risk (e.g., U N B), and similar arrangements. Second, where it is permitted, the TPB model exposes retirees to high levels of investment and other risks, with little offsetting benefit. TPB disproportionately imposes risk on employees and retirees, but unlike a DC plan, employees do not share in the possible extra income produced by a TPB plan’s good investment performance.

Most jurisdictions in Canada do not permit TPB arrangements: not only may employee contribution levels not be varied at the employer’s discretion, but retroactive reduction of benefit levels is sharply restricted.

"In conclusion, an indexed DB pension clearly offers retirees the lowest risk and a high level of benefits. The TPB model combines the worst features - for employees, and particularly for retirees - of DB and DC plans. Submissions to the Ontario Expert Commission and N.S. Pension Review Panel may not be shared in the possible extra income produced by a TPB plan’s good investment performance.

A pension plan – whether DB [Defined Benefit], DC [Defined Contribution] or hybrid – is an insurance arrangement to deliver incomes to seniors by setting aside funds during their working lives. A variety of risks are shared among plan sponsors, active plan members and pensioners, depending on the terms of the plan. It may be possible to reduce the risks or to transfer them to another party, but they cannot be eliminated."

A Target Pension Benefit [TPB] model would offer employers and employees a middle ground for sharing the risks associated with pension plans, as an alternative to the two extremes currently offered by pure DB and DC... A Target Pension Benefit pension plan is a quasi-DB pension, in which employer contributions are capped, say at 8.0% of payroll, but may be less. Unlike a normal DB plan, the employer does not underwrite the TPB benefit level. Should a triennial actuarial valuation reveal that higher contributions are required to fund the prevailing level of benefits adequately, then either employees can provide additional contributions or else the plan’s benefits can be reduced, including the benefits currently being paid to retirees. In a TPB plan with a high ratio of pensioners to current employees, the latter option might be chosen because current employees
Members of the Executive Committee

From left to right: Dale Lockie, Clinton Martin (Treasurer), Phil Keddie, Bonnie Hamilton, John Holt (Vice President), Mark Sears, Joe Mokansi (Secretary), Ken Grant (Past President), Dana Paramskas, Bruce Ryan (President). Missing: Ron Mackinnon, Gary Frankie.

Letters to the Editor

Do you have comments or concerns regarding issues, in this newsletter or otherwise, that you would like to raise with other University of Guelph retirees? We welcome your ideas, suggestions and comments. You can write to us at:

Newsletter Editor
University of Guelph Retirees’ Association,
PO. Box 48-4916
University of Guelph
Guelph, ON N1G 2W1

Or you can go to the UGRA website and click on Contact Us under the About Us tab (http://www.ugra.ca/contact.shtml). Post a message and we will respond.

Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor,

I retired in 1996. For that year I am indexing my pension, the Consumer Price Index and my property taxes at 100 for that year:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Pension Index</th>
<th>CPI Index</th>
<th>Property Taxes Index</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>108.8</td>
<td>112.5</td>
<td>107.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>112.9</td>
<td>128.3</td>
<td>139.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I was fortunate to benefit from a number of “ad hoc” pension increases between 1996 and 2002. Consequently, in 2002 my pension was only 3.7 percentage points below the CPI. By 2008, the gap had increased to 15.4 percentage points.

It was recently announced that with an increase of the CPI of 2.12% between May 2008 and April 2009 that effective September 2009 pensions would be increased by 0.12%. This translates to $12.00 for every $10,000 of pension, the cost of a modest bottle of Chilean wine.

Given current realities, unless inflation is under 2% one can expect an annual erosion of 2% in the purchasing power of our pensions for the foreseeable future. A cross ten years, with inflation at 2% or more, this puts each of us an additional 21.9 percentage points below the CPI - in my case 37.3 percentage points below the CPI ten years from now.

Phil Keddie

Moving?

If you move to a new home, please remember to notify Human Resources of your new mailing address. This will help us ensure that you continue to receive your correspondence. Contact Human Resources at 519-824-4120, extension 53374 or by e-mail at hr@uoguelph.ca. They will inform the pension payroll administrator, of any address changes.

The UGRA is grateful to Wellington Park Terrace/Chartwell for their financial support of the UGRA Newsletter.

Chartwell: The Most Trusted Name in Seniors Housing

UGRA

Fall 2009
Students awarded U of G professors A’s for subject knowledge, teaching quality and availability to students. The University also received top grades for academic reputation, quality of its teaching libraries, sense of community and personal safety, and tolerance for diverse opinions and ideas. It was also highly rated for its extracurricular activities, student services and helpfulness of staff.

In all, the University earned four A-pluses, nine A’s and 15 A-minuses on its report card. A detailed listing is available online.

The University Report Card is the first in a series of surveys and rankings of Canadian universities that are released each fall. In the annual "Research University of the Year" released Oct. 27 by Research Infosource Inc., U of G ranked second behind the University of Waterloo in the comprehensive university category (without a medical school). Guelph has ranked first or second in this survey since its inception in 2003 and for the first time last year has ranked among the large universities with medical and doctoral programs in obtaining over $100 million in research support.

Finally, in the Maclean’s magazine University Rankings Issue of Nov. 5, 2009, the University of Guelph continues to be one of Canada’s top universities. U of G placed second in reputation and fourth overall among comprehensive universities.

“I’m pleased that we’ve been able to maintain our level of excellence despite some turbulent economic times,” said president Alastair Summerlee, “our continued placement among the nation’s top schools is proof of how hard our University community has worked together to address challenges and preserve the quality of the Guelph educational experience.”

The annual Maclean’s university issue includes two different surveys: an overall ranking of institutions and a reputational survey. In these surveys, universities are divided into three categories: medical/doctoral, primarily undergraduate and comprehensive (schools with a significant amount of research activity and a wide range of undergraduate and graduate programs). In the comprehensive university rankings, British Columbia’s Simon Fraser University was first, the University of Victoria was second, and the University of Waterloo was third. U of G was ranked No. 1 in total research dollars among comprehensive universities. In recent years, the U of G has ranked higher than fourth place.

In the reputational survey, Guelph was ranked second overall among comprehensive universities and second in each of four categories used to determine reputation: highest quality, most innovative, leaders of tomorrow and best overall. The reputational ranking is based on surveys from several hundred people across the country, including CEOs of major Canadian corporations, high school counsellors and academic administrators.

To determine the overall university rankings, Maclean’s uses 13 indicators to measure overall quality within six general themes: students and classes, faculty, resources, student support, library and reputation. U of G ranks about in the middle of comprehensive category in all these indicators except for research support, where we excel. Our lower than usual ranking this year is likely a reflection of the decreased support received from the province and budget shortfalls the university is grappling with. Tuition increases are not the solution as U of G already has the highest tuition of comprehensive universities.
Recent Retirees

May 1, 2009
Pat Arbuckle
Ernest Andrews
Pat Bordignon
Rita Burley
Michael Goss
Wayne Pfeiffer
Danny Lee Rinker

June 1, 2009
David Charles Irving
Patricia Anne Lorenz
Sandra Mcleod

July 1, 2009
Donna Andrew
Mary Buhr
Alice Deschene
Linda Georges
Thomas Herrmann
Ernie Mcfarland
Leigh Rodgers
Robert Watson

August 1, 2009
Ann Bell
Rick Bates
Kaye Barrett
Martin Hodgson
Lucille St. Jacques
Judith O'Donnell
David Sparling
Tony Vanroon

Sept. 1, 2009
Dilip Banerji
Messias Canario
Robin Davidson-Arnot
Susan Evers
William Frisbee
Adrian Fagan
Joan Hamilton
Philip Jones
Jacqueline James
Peter Kevan
Douglas Larson
Elaine Lowes
Tony Pellizzari
Sharon Sinclair
Frans Schryer
Mary Woodside
Linda Wood
Kenneth Woodside

October 1, 2009
Paul Snider
Nicholas Westwood

Physical Resources
Omara Research Stations
Graduate Studies
Hospitality Services
Kemptville Campus
Food, Agri & Resource Economics
Plant Agriculture
Kemptville Campus
Business Development
Human Resources
Omara Research Stations
Business
Centre for Students with Disabilities
Physical Resources
Lab Services, Executive Office
Human Resources
Business
Chemistry
Computing & Info Science
Physical Resources
Geography
Family Relations/Applied Nutrition
Marketing & Consumer Studies
Physical Resources
Pathobiology
Computing & Communication Services
Human Resources
Environment Biology
Integrative Biology
Athletics
Physical Resources
Business & Accounting
Sociology & Anthropology
School of Fine Art/Music
Psychology
Political Science
Plant Agriculture
Chemistry

Third Age Learning Lecture Series for Winter 2010, Arboretum Centre

Third Age Learning seminars each Wednesday from January 6th to February 24th. There are separate morning and afternoon series. Tickets are $30 for either series, or $5 for each lecture.

Contact: Third Age Learning
Guelph, R.O. Box 1862, Guelph, ON N1H 7A1
Telephone: (519) 821-0886
www.thirdagelearningguelph.ca.

Morning Sessions 10 am to noon:
Health Care - Problems and Prospects

Who is LHIN? Sandra Hanmer, CEO Waterloo Wellington LHIN
The Guelph General Hospital Richard Ernst, President/CEO Guelph General Hospital
A Family Doctor's View Dr. I.J. MacPhee, Family Physician and Coroner
Falling Through the Cracks Konnie Peet, Executive Director, Guelph Community Health Centre
Healing From Within: Medicine in the Age of Stem Cells Dr. Michael Rathbone, Medical Sciences McMaster University
Virus Vaccines: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow Dr. Ludvic Prevec, Professor Emeritus McMaster University
Getting There From Here: Navigating the System of Services for Seniors Cathy Sturdy-Smith, Trellis Mental Health and Development Services
A Public Health View Dr. Nicola Mercer, MOH, Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health

Afternoon Sessions 1:30-3:30 pm:
Guelph’s Vibrant Visual Arts Scene

The Hub of Arts and Culture Sally Wismer, Executive Director, Guelph Arts Council
Evolving a Vibrant and Valued Arts and Cultural Sector Ann Pappert, Director Community Services City of Guelph
Can Photography Be Fine Art? Trina Koster, Photography, Guelph
Guelph’s Cultural Gem – Macdonald Stewart Art Centre’s Sculpture Park Judith Nasby, Macdonald Stewart Art Centre
The School of Fine Art and Music: Its Role in Developing Regional and National Culture John Kissick, Director, School of Fine Art and Music, University of Guelph
Art Rules 9 Renann Isaacs with artist Ryan Price, Curator/Art Dealer Guelph
The Value of Functional Pottery in Today’s Society Heather Daymond, Potter

From School House to Studio Stephen Lewis, Sculptor
Be a Contributing Member of the UGRA (2009-2010)

All retirees are automatically members of the University of Guelph Retirees Association, but our capacity to operate effectively on behalf of retirees depends on members volunteering to become Contributing Members. This money covers the costs of the newsletter, scholarships, meeting room rentals and support for a member of the UGRA to attend the annual meeting of the College and University Retirees Association of Canada.

In truth, 2008-2009 year was not a good year for us with respect to contributions. A few members have contributed over the years where we were ‘on target’ for contribution income, the end of fiscal 2008-09 saw us nearly $5,000 below our projections. Well, it was a bad year for everyone; our retirement investments took a big drop and there was anxiety about the stability of our pensions. We are hoping things will work out better for this next year.

If you have already made a contribution to the UGRA for this year, we thank you. If not, we invite you to use the Contributing Membership Form for 2009-2010 to send with your Contributing Membership payment. We have asked for a contribution of $20 but always appreciate those members who add some extra funds to help us carry on the work.

We have also provided a place on the form for those who might wish to contribute more actively to the UGRA either by a willingness to serve on the Executive or by working on a committee or task group to carry out short term projects.

University Selects New Pension Custodian

The overall management of the University’s pension funds involves two different operational bodies. On the one hand, there are the investment managers who are charged with the responsibility of securing a good return on investments. On the other, there is the Pension Custodian. Any flows of money from the plans either into further investments, or out to pensioners in the form of pension payments is managed by the Custodian. The Custodian also sends out end-of-year tax statements to retirees. The use of the Custodian provides, among other things, a helpful intervening layer between the investment managers and the funds themselves; the investment managers cannot act alone. This offers more security with respect to the pension funds.

The University of Guelph recently selected a new Pension Custodian. As of December 31st the Custodian will be changed from RBC Dexia to CIBC Mellon with respect to the services provided directly to retirees. The changeover should be seamless. Further detailed information will likely be provided by the Administration shortly.

UGRA University of Guelph Retirees Association Contributing Membership Form

YES! I want to help promote the welfare of retirees and to foster a mutually beneficial relationship between retirees and the University. Please accept my cheque for $20 as my contribution to the UGRA’s administrative costs.

Name...............................................................................................................................................................................
Address ...........................................................................................................................................................................
City/Province ...................................................................................................................................................... Postal Code.......................................
E-mail ..............................................................................................................................................................................

I would like to receive more information about serving on the Executive of the UGRA or on one of its committees. Yes   No   Maybe Later (Please circle one)

If Yes, please provide a phone number: ....................................................................................................................... 

Please make cheques payable to: University of Guelph Retirees Association

Mail this form with your cheque to: University of Guelph Retirees Association
University of Guelph
Guelph Ontario, N1G 2W1
Letter to the President

Dear Alastair,

At its most recent meeting, the Executive Committee of the University of Guelph Retirees’ Association reviewed the various forms of feedback Committee members had received regarding the cancellation of the President’s Luncheon, which had been annually provided for retirees. We heard many expressions of strong disappointment over what many retirees regarded as an important social event that materially acknowledged the significance of retirees and their past contributions to the University. We feel an obligation as the body representing the interests of all retirees to formally communicate to you the dismay many retirees felt on learning of the change from the luncheon to the mid-afternoon social.

We do appreciate the difficult fiscal conditions that led you to cancel the luncheon in favour of the less expensive social. But it is also clear that there has been a significant cost in the loss of the positive bond between the University and its former employees that was signified by the luncheon. We all know the social was relatively poorly attended compared with the luncheons over the last several years. The drop in attendance is certainly consistent with the negative feedback the Executive heard from many of our members.

We further understand from Claire Alexander that the luncheon is highly unlikely to ever return in the future. We would, however, urge you to seriously consider bringing back the luncheon at the earliest opportunity. The symbolic significance of the luncheon for retirees is something that should not be underestimated; many retirees continue to make financial and other contributions to the University and the once-a-year luncheon was seen as an important indication that their efforts are remembered and still appreciated.

We trust that you will read this letter as a part of our on-going effort as an Executive Committee to offer you, in your own words, “wise and sage counsel”. We, and our retiree members, saw the luncheon as an important part of the annual University calendar and we don’t want the symbol of a strong affinity between retirees and the University to be lost and become merely a curiosity of our past.

Yours truly,

Bruce Ryan
President, UGRA

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Passings

Georgina Reinhart Sept. 27, 2009
John O’Brien Sept. 24, 2009
June Perry Sept. 9, 2009
Stewart H. Lane Sept. 5, 2009
Donald M. Irvine Aug. 17, 2009
Sam Lougheed Aug. 14, 2009
Terence Williams July 18, 2009
Donald Stewart July 6, 2009
Elmer Millson June 26, 2009
Dorothy Duncan June 25, 2009
Bruno Tedesco June 1, 2009
Elizabeth C. Taal June 1, 2009
John P. W. Gilman May 17, 2009
Jessie A. Townsend May 11, 2009
Robert A. Johnston April 15, 2009
Franklyn Theakston April 14, 2009
Bruna Bernardo April 7, 2009
Tomas Madrid April 7, 2009
James Harrison March 17, 2009
Hedviga Petersons March 7, 2009
Pasquale Maiocco Feb. 2, 2009