

RAQ *news*



Pensions, mental health and 'elder law' dominate fascinating CURAC session

In May, George Brandie* and I attended the sixth annual conference of College and University Retiree Associations of Canada (CURAC) in Montreal. Concordia University and Université du Québec à Montréal co-hosted the conference and planned an interesting program that focused on three areas: pensions, mental health of seniors, and elder law.

Pensions are always of high interest to retirees, so there were several presentations on pension-related issues. Last year the Ontario Expert Commission on Pensions was set up to take briefs about Ontario pension plans. The CURAC brief to this commission included 20 recommendations around three areas: promotion of long-term investment returns rather than low variability; full indexation of pensions; and effective involvement of both retirees and active plan members in administration and management of pension funds. The recommendations may be seen on their web site at www.curac.ca.

Queen's pension plan is a hybrid combining defined benefit (DB) with defined contribution (DC) components. DB plans are under threat across the country, particularly in the private sector, because of cost, regulations, and financial risk to the employer. CURAC would like DB plans preserved and increased because they provide more certain payout per dollar for retirees. In order for employers to agree to DB plans, it was suggested that incentives are needed – for instance, being able to take contribution holidays when the plan is in surplus.

How do university and college pension plans compare with other plans? The consensus was that they are pretty adequate, with the possible excep-

tion of plans for those working on contract or part time.

One of the speakers on mental health was the Chair of the Senate Advisory Committee (Seniors), Mental Health Commission of Canada. Until this Commission was established last year, Canada had no national mental health strategy. Another speaker

was the head of the Regional Geriatric Facility in Kingston. About 20 to 25% of seniors experience mental health problems – the same incidence as in younger groups. While depression is more prevalent (10% of seniors) than dementia (8%), it receives less advocacy. Diagnosis of

depression may be a problem because of denial by the individual and family. Some people believe it is a normal part of aging. It is *not*, and it is treatable. More information about how depression is recognized and managed is available from the Kingston Branch of the Canadian Mental Health Association.

The term "Elder Law" was unfamiliar to most of us. It means legal issues seen through an aging lens, rather than law that applies only to seniors. Age-related issues may include age discrimination, health law in terms of where treatment and money are allocated, end-of-life care, estate law, powers of attorney, and elder abuse. The term Elder Law originated in the United States, related to eligibility for Medicare. In Canada about 1,300 lawyers specialize in this field.

Over all, it was a fascinating conference. Many thanks to Queen's University for assisting with travel expenses. Most CURAC members are not so fortunate.

Discussions with other delegates made us even more appreciative of the variety, quality and number of events and programs RAQ offers its members. Thanks to those who have organized the Fall events you'll find in this issue. I look forward to enjoying them with you.

ARLENE AISH *President*

*RAQ V-P George Brandie is Secretary of CURAC.

Presidential News and Views

Pension and Benefits Committee Report

Bill Wright sorely missed

Bill Wright died on July 18 this summer after bearing his illness so bravely and cheerfully that few people realized how serious it was. Bill was involved with RAQ from its founding and was a major contributor to our efforts in the area of Pensions and Benefits. Obviously, with his experience as the Director of Personnel while on staff at Queen's and his particular talent for counseling new retirees, he was ideally suited to chair the P & B Committee, as well as write page 2 of this newsletter from its beginning.

Amongst so many other contributions, Bill spearheaded the open forum on health benefits, attended by more RAQueteers than any other event. For every newsletter, he wrote the pension report – the most valuable benefit of RAQ membership in the view on many members. He persisted in finding a source of medical insurance for retirees traveling outside Canada and led the charge to resist the Trustees' proposal to insert another committee between the Board and the Pension Committee, believing it would disadvantage current retirees.

Bill's quiet demeanor disguised a vociferous Gaels supporter. In Queen's football as in Queen's pension issues, his optimism, expertise, warmth, sense of humour and fair play will be sorely missed.

P & B Outlook: Good news, Bad News

In Bill's absence, we looked to Bob Weisnagel (Queen's Pensions and Benefits) and Rod Morrison (V-P Human Resources) for an update. The pension fund rate is heading south, they report (-3.79% through June, and July doesn't look very promising), although the four-year average is in the 8+% range. The issue of Socially Responsible Investing (SRI) is currently under discussion at both the Pension Committee and Board levels. Pension Plan negotiations with the various employee groups, union and non-union, is ongoing, but there is little to report in terms of plan revisions. The University has given the employee groups a proposal that has been accepted in part, but some key issues remain to be resolved and discussions will resume shortly.

As you will know by now from a direct mailing, Group Benefits renewal for 2008-09 confirmed that utilization was in line with current premiums and, in fact, resulted in a small decrease in the supplemental medical cost, while semi-private hospitalization remained unchanged for the coming year.

The RAQ Pension & Benefits Committee (Alan Green & David Bonham) have met to consider a replacement for Bill and have submitted a list of potential candidates to President Arlene Aish. It is hoped that this third member will be in place early in the fall, since this committee is critical to RAQ and its members.

JOHN GORDON

Volunteer hosts needed. Queen's International Centre is appealing for RAQ members to help them welcome newly arriving overseas students. Can you offer a safe and friendly bed for one to three nights? No daytime commitment or meals expected. **Susan Anderson at 613-533-2604** has details of this and the Centre's other volunteer needs.

Human History Project Report

1960s subjects fascinate and surprise our student interviewers

By the time summer is over, students working for the Human History Project will have completed and transcribed 25 interviews with Queen's faculty and staff about events in the 1960s, a watershed decade in the University's history.

The students reported that many of those interviewed were initially fairly diffident about what they might remember, but that, as they talked, they recalled incidents and amusing stories they had not thought of for years. I have reports that people

were impressed by the students' professionalism and had fun being interviewed, too. The students were fascinated to find every interview was different in unexpected ways.

We expect to do at least five more interviews in the fall, but there are still a number of people we want to approach next year. We are grateful for the funding from the V-P Academic, the Principal, and SWEP (an AMS student job initiative) that combined to enable this project.

To date, this has proven to be a most worthwhile RAQ undertaking. Transcribed interviews will be available in the Archives to interested scholars. Planning for next year is already under way. Suggestions and comments are welcome.

ALISON MORGAN

Partnership Update:

Mutual interests many and varied

The Partnership Agreement, approved by RAQ's Council, discussed at the AGM and reported in previous *RAQnews* issues, provides the basis for regular dialogue between RAQ and University representatives about matters of mutual interest. Patrick Deane, V-P Academic, has generously provided the services of his office to co-ordinate regularly scheduled, quarterly Partnership meetings.

The first was held on July 23. At that meeting, V-P Deane emphasized the University's interest in supporting the Partnership and its aims. In addition to establishing a plan and format for these meetings, a number of items were discussed, including:

- ❑ continuation of the volunteer involvement RAQ members have had this past year in reviewing high-profile scholarship applications;
- ❑ a proposal that RAQ develop a roster of faculty retirees who are willing, when volunteers

are needed, to chair these defenses, serve on committees or act as mentors;

- ❑ the suggestion that RAQ develop plans to organize a public panel/debate event addressing an important contemporary issue affecting the University;
- ❑ models of retirement housing or other forms of accommodation, examples of which can be found adjacent to campus at other North American universities. RAQ will remain involved in a working group to discuss such housing.
- ❑ the perennial problem of available and appropriate parking, in our case as it relates to the needs of RAQ members. It was noted that during this time of considerable construction and renovation around the campus, the future space and facility requirements of RAQ "remain on the University planning radar screen."

The next Partnership meeting will be held in October.

HENRY DINSDALE



Turtles' life *a good topic for relaxed Opinicon outing*

About 30 people attended the RAQ Picnic on July 23rd at Queen's Biological Research Station at Lake Opinicon, some enjoying this fourth annual event for the first time. In addition to catching up on one another's news and sharing some fine picnic

treats, pot-luck style, the attendees were introduced to the life of the Map Turtles of Lake Opinicon (called "map" because their shell resembles a topographic map).

As his RAQ audience sat around him in lawn chairs, the Opinicon Program Manager, Greg Bultè, brought out mature male and female map turtles and explained their life cycle. The mature female is about the size of

a dinner plate, and the mature male is about the size of a teacup, so presumably he knows what "no" means. Although the female lays up to a dozen eggs a year, only two offspring grow to maturity during her active breeding period, which is about 30 years. It seems like a small number of offspring after all that work, but, as Greg explained, "Otherwise the world would be full of turtles."

BOB CRANDALL

Coming RAQ Events Autumn 2008

Luncheon Reminder

On the last Monday of September, we're at Red Lobster, 410 Bath Road. Everyone is welcome – including members' spouses and friends. Contact Jerry Roddy, jroddy@kingston.net or 613-353-6959 for details and reservations.

Last call for Picton Music Festival Trip!

Thursday, September 18

If you've decided at the last minute that you'd like to join us for dinner at Picton's Portabello Bistro and an evening concert at the Prince Edward County Music Festival, call Joy Hoselton about availability, 613-533-6986. For more details, check RAQ's website or the concert program at www.pecmusicfestival.com

Apple-Picking Time in Prince Edward County

Wednesday, October 1
12:00 noon until?

Enjoy another outing to Prince Edward County – this time for a first visit to Ostrander's Orchards, preceded by a tasty luncheon at The Inn at Lake on the Mountain. There is a variety of entrees ranging from \$5.45 to \$19.45 (plus taxes and tips), payable at the restaurant. After lunch, take a short drive to Ostrander's to pick a basket or a bushel of your favourite apples – Spartans, Macs, Sweets, Empires or crabapples – or select some fall vegetables. Mark the date in your calendar now and return the Registration Form enclosed with this newsletter right away. A copy of the form is also available on RAQ's website – www.queensu.ca/retirees.

JIM KELLY

Fall Reception with Principal Williams

Monday, October 27
3:30 to 5:00 pm
at the University Club

This is an informal reception where retirees can hear Principal Tom Williams' update on current matters at Queen's, give him their views, and at the same time renew acquaintances with old friends. Tickets are \$6 each for snacks and use of the club's rooms. Cash bar. Please return the enclosed Registration Form by October 20.

Drama Matinee Returns "Drums in the Night"

Saturday, November 1
2 pm Discussion following.

This performance of Bertold Brecht's play *Drums in the Night* by Queen's Drama students will be directed by Prof. Craig Walker, who will also discuss the play with us after the performance. This is one of Brecht's early plays (1918). It takes place in Berlin at the end of WWI and tells of "broken promises, crushed ideals and compromises" experienced by one German family. The fate of these protagonists reflects the political realities of the time. Check RAQ's website and your e-mail in due time for location, ticket price and group reservation details.

MARION MEYER

Tour of Queen's Innovation Park

Wednesday, November 5
3 to 5 pm

Come and learn about the new Queen's Innovation Park, made possible by a \$21-million grant from the Ontario Government and located on the former Alcan property. It brings academic and industry engineers and scientists together under one roof as a

means of tapping their creative energy and fostering an environment of discovery that accelerates and supports the growth of new businesses. We will also tour the **Queen's-RMC Fuel Cell Research Centre** and learn about the R&D being done there to overcome the barriers to commercialization of fuel cell products. Please contact **Bruce Hutchinson** at 613-542-7645 or hutchinb@queensu.ca to register.

Monday Morning Forums

The new Fall series asks the provocative questions that have made these Forums so popular among early risers with ideas to share. All three listed below begin at 8:15 am with coffee and muffins. The guest lecture is at 9:00 am, followed by an exchange of ideas and discussion. All are welcome.

September 22

Will there be enough water?

Lecture by **DR. J. H. CAREY**
Water and Science Technology Directorate, Environment Canada
The University Club, 168 Stuart St.

October 22

Are universities still communities of scholars?

Lecture by **R.P. MACKINNON**
President, University of Saskatchewan
Policy Studies Building, Room 202
138 Union St.

Please note change of location.

October 27

Research and Development: Who Cares?

Presentation by **DR. ALEC T. STEWART**
Emeritus Professor of Physics,
Queen's University
The University Club, 168 Stuart St.

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