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Nora Gaskin, Secretary

**The 35th Annual General Meeting
Of the McMaster University Retirees Association
Thursday November 26, 2020, 1:30 PM - 3:00 PM, Zoom**

The meeting was preceded by a half-hour of online social time involving 44 participants from coast (Newfoundland) to coast (Vancouver), and at its peak, had 50 attendees.

BUSINESS MEETING

MURA President Helen Barton called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone to MURA's first Zoom Annual General Meeting. Helen noted the unusual timing of the meeting, which had to be postponed from June to November due to the pandemic, and that there would be another meeting in June 2021. She explained that the meeting had been restructured to permit "essential" business to be conducted first to ensure a quorum, followed by the presentation, and then the remainder of the meeting agenda.

A head count established that we met the requirement for a quorum as specified in article 4.06 of MURA's constitution: "At any meeting of members thirty regular members shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business."

1. Nominating Committee Report (Heather Grigg)

Heather Grigg, chair of the 2020 Nominating Committee, presented the Nominating Report for 2020-21, which was circulated to members via email. The members of the Nominating Committee were Heather Grigg (Chair), Betty Ann Levy and Kathy Overholt. Heather explained that the Nominating Committee report as included in the agenda package was accepted by Council in October and published in the Fall *MURAnews*.

Our constitution permits new nominations to be made up to 7 days before the AGM.

Heather called for any additional nominations to be phoned in to Mahendra Joshi within the ensuing ten minutes, and explained that she would resume her report, with possible additions from the floor immediately after the Treasurer's Report.

2. Approval of minutes

Moved by Brian Beckberger, **seconded** by Rocco Piro

“that the minutes of 34th AGM, June 5, 2019 2019 be approved as distributed”

Carried.

3. Treasurer’s Report (Helen Barton for Debbie Weisensee)

Helen gave a brief overview of the MURA financial statements for the year ending April 30, 2020, as circulated by email to attendees and published in the Fall *MURAnews*, and relayed Debbie’s comments on them. She explained that the statements were being submitted as unaudited, since Nancy Gray, who was to be our Auditor, discovered that the conditions of her CPA designation didn’t allow her to perform audits. The plan now is to find an auditor as quickly as possible, and present an audit statement at that time, via email and in *MURAnews*.

Income: MURA income is primarily from grants from our supporters: Unifor Local 5555, the McMaster University Faculty Association, McMaster University Office of the President, and SEIU Local 2. These four groups have signed an agreement with MURA to provide funding from 2018 through to 2020 (a total of \$11,250 annually). The payment from SEIU has not yet been received for the year ending April 30, 2020, which is represented by the \$442 in accounts receivable.

Expenses: Our website expenses are substantially higher this year than last because web hosting services are contracted and paid on a biennial basis to take advantage of discounts.

Special Events: A new category this year represents the survey of its membership that MURA conducted to gather information to help guide MURA for future plans in remaining relevant to all retirees.

2020-21 Fiscal Year: Going forward, there has been minimal activity since March, so we will be under budget for items such as the AGM (no lunch), printing and postage (Spring and Summer newsletters not printed or posted).

Balance sheet: The amount ‘Due to McMaster University’ in the Balance Sheet represents outstanding invoices for University services such as catering and postage unpaid as of April 30, 2020. This is unusually large because of payment processing delays caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Moved by Mahendra Joshi, **seconded** by Heather Grigg

“that the MURA Financial report be accepted as circulated”

Carried.

4. Completion of Nomination Procedure (Heather Grigg)

The nomination list as circulated is:

Executive

Past President (ex officio):	Heather Grigg
President (Nominated):	Helen Barton (until spring 2021 AGM)
Vice President (Nominated):	Hank Jacek (until Spring 2021 AGM)
Secretary*:	Nora Gaskin
Treasurer*:	Debbie Weisensee

Councillors

Nominated for office until 2022:	Barb Carpio
Nominated for office until 2023:	John Horsman

Continuing in office until 2022:	Mary Gauld Debbie Weisensee
Continuing in office until 2021:	Cliff Andrews Nora Gaskin Mahendra Joshi Mary Law Kathy Overholt

*appointed

There were no nominations from the floor.

Moved by Brian Beckberger, **seconded** by Mahendra Joshi

“that nominations be closed”

Carried

5. Election of Executive and Council (Heather Grigg)

Moved by Nora Gaskin, **seconded** by Helen Ayre

“that the slate of nominees for the 2020-21 MURA Executive and Council be accepted as presented”

Carried

6. Special Presentation by Lori Burrows

Mary Law introduced Dr. Lori Burrows, microbiologist, Associate Director (Partnerships and Outreach) of the Michael G. DeGroote Institute for Infectious Disease Research and Professor, Department of Biochemistry and Biomedical Sciences, who presented a fascinating talk, **“What happens when antibiotics stop working?”**

Dr. Burrows remarked that she has been joking for years that we needed a Kardashian to get an antibiotic-resistant infection to get some attention for this issue, but that, due to the pandemic, infectious diseases are finally in the spotlight. McMaster has been investing in research on antibiotic resistance for the past 15 years, and that research has expanded since the pandemic started. Her talk dealt with four major topics: what antibiotics are; why antibiotic resistance is a serious problem; how we got to this point, and what we are doing about it.

Antibiotics (drugs that kill bacteria) were discovered by Sir Alexander Fleming almost a century ago. The first antibiotic, penicillin, was a game changer during WWII when it was used to save the lives of injured soldiers. Although antibiotics kill bacterial infections, they cannot kill viruses, so it can sometimes be difficult for a family doctor to resist prescribing them to a patient whose symptoms could be bacterial in origin, but might instead be viral. Antibiotics changed our lives by extending our life expectancy over the last century by at least 20 years, but they have also changed how we die. In 1900 almost half of deaths were due to infectious diseases, compared to only 3% in 2010. If antibiotics stopped working, we would have no treatment for patients who get bacterial infections whether due to illness, wounds or burns, surgeries, or compromised immune systems due to organ transplants, chemotherapy, etc.

Bacteria (not patients) become resistant to antibiotics when random mutations in the bacterial strain survive treatment with an antibiotic, then multiply and also spread that resistance to other species of bacteria. The misuse of antibiotics in agriculture (giving low dose antibiotics to animals, spraying them on fruit crops, etc.) has contributed to antibiotic resistance, although there have been efforts in Canada to reduce the use of antibiotics in food production. However a lot of our food doesn't come from Canada, and other countries, like China, the USA and Brazil, have poorer regulation in this area.

Resistance appears rapidly after we start using a new antibiotic. There was a lot of drug discovery in the 1940's-60's era, but developing new ones has become more and more difficult, with very few antibiotics being discovered since the 1980's. The pharmaceutical industry has retreated from antibiotic discovery and development because it is economically unsustainable, and even small biotech companies who

have stepped into the breach have gone bankrupt due to the low return on investment.

We need new strategies, and fast. We are starting to see strains of bacteria that are resistant to every antibiotic in existence. Fortunately, global leaders like the United Nations and World Bank are starting to take notice of both the health and economic ramifications of having infectious diseases for which there are no treatments. A report published in the UK in 2014 found that "...by 2050 – if effective interventions against antimicrobial resistance are not made – 10 million deaths and an economic loss of US\$100 trillion may occur annually as the result of such resistance". Last year the major pharmaceutical companies got together and pledged to invest nearly US\$1 billion, with the aim of bringing two to four new antibiotics to market by 2030.

The Canadian government has put forth a federal action plan that has four pillars: prevention of infection; surveillance of the situation; stewardship (ensuring appropriate use of the antibiotics that we have already); and innovation (funding the discovery of new ways to treat antibiotic resistant bacteria), however the government has not yet implemented this plan. Dr. Burrows and her colleagues are working with the Public Health Agency of Canada to try to get the plan executed.

On the innovation front, Dr. Burrows and her fellow researchers are: repurposing old drugs, as well as using drugs in combination; working on ways of making bacteria less toxic without actually killing them; looking for new drugs and new drug targets and using bacteriophages (viruses that kill only bacteria); developing immune stimulators; and developing vaccines against the most important diseases, such as *Streptococcus pneumoniae*, or pneumococcus (the most common cause of bloodstream infections, pneumonia, meningitis, and middle ear infections in young children).

Things you can do to help: only use antibiotics when prescribed by a certified health professional; when given a prescription for antibiotics always take the full prescription, even if you feel better; never use leftover antibiotics; never share antibiotics with others; and prevent infections by regularly washing your hands, avoiding contact with sick people, and keeping your vaccinations up to date.

Things that are happening at McMaster: The late David Braley funded the development of the David Braley Centre for Antibiotic Discovery, a new centre within the Michael G. DeGroote Institute for Infectious Diseases, dedicated to finding new antibiotics and new ways to overcome antibiotic resistance. The Centre is hiring three new faculty members, including a specialist in machine learning. The Global Nexus for Pandemics and Biological Threats was just launched, new lab space to be housed in McMaster Innovation Park, which will bring people from multiple disciplines within academia, public health and industry to work on infectious disease problems together. McMaster's Biointerfaces Institute is doing work where they are envisioning paper-based diagnostics, like Kleenex or diapers that can diagnose illnesses in their users.

At the conclusion of the presentation, Helen thanked Lori, and presented her with a copy of Alvin Lee's memoir, *There Was a Farm in Eden*, and there was a draw for two gift certificate door prizes, which were won by Ralph Matthews and Susan Birnie.

7. Reports on Pensions

7.1 Salaried Plan (Brian Beckberger)

- In addition to his written report, Brian noted that Human Resources would be sending the biannual pension statements in December, and that anyone who didn't receive a statement by January, or had questions, was encouraged to contact the Human Resources Service Centre at 905-525-9140 ext. 22247.
- Brian remarked that after some instability in March 2020 the pension plan recovered quite well, but he still couldn't predict with certainty whether or not there would be a pension increase in January.

7.2 Hourly Plan (Cliff Andrews)

- In addition to his written report, Cliff remarked that the plan, being closed, is administered quite conservatively, but there is still the possibility that there may be some changes in investment strategy.

8. Incoming President's Address (Helen Barton)

Helen welcomed to Council Barb Carpio, retiree from the School of Nursing, and John Horsman for his second term, and thanked Hank Jacek for stepping into the Vice-President's position.

Helen especially acknowledged outgoing Council member Phyllis DeRosa-Koetting, who served on Council for the past 5 years, was very involved in keeping *MURAnews* vital for all those years, and contributed greatly to Council owing to valuable background from her years at McMaster.

Helen also thanked those who are continuing on Council, as well as several "behind the scenes" retirees who contribute on an ongoing basis: Helen Ayre, Denise Anderson and Mary Johnston of the *MURAnews* team, and Betty Ann Levy, MURA's observer to the Board of Governors and an active ex officio member of Council.

The Past Year & 5 months

Although our time since March has been "unusual", MURA's activities on behalf of retirees since the last AGM in June 2019 was "usual" in many ways.

- Acting as the voice of retirees to the University when called on to do so
- Helping members with their issues and concerns (mostly pensions and benefits) with Human Resources and other university office as they arise

- Participating in pre-retirement seminars to familiarize upcoming retirees with MURA
- In particular this year, we spent considerable time and effort on:
 - The survey of members, which had a very good participation rate at 30%. It revealed that retirees are a very busy group, active with volunteering, caregiving, creative endeavours and continuing academic & professional activities. The top categories of interest for future MURA events were educational and cultural events and day trips.
 - Working with UTS to ensure that Mac's email transition from "MacMail" to Microsoft 365 was as easy as possible for retirees
 - Seeing that issues with ID cards were taken care of
 - Working with HR and UTS to ensure that their newly redesigned websites provide ongoing good service to retirees (work with UTS is ongoing)
 - Establishing a new graduate scholarship fund with a first goal to endow a \$1000 scholarship for a graduate student researching technological advances related to seniors (we already have a fully endowed \$2500 undergraduate scholarship and a \$750 graduand prize in Health, Aging and Society)
 - Conversing with HR and university employee groups on the pending new definition of a University Retiree. This will define who will qualify for retiree supplementary benefits, such as parking, library access, tuition assistance and discount programs in the future. The new definition would cut out those in the group RRSP plans who retire when they are under 65, and would require a retiree to be age 65 at retirement and to have at least 10 years of service, citing costs of supplementary benefits. A very active group is being cut out; those hired in approximately the past 10 years and from now on in TMG, senior academic and administrative positions, and hourly rated positions in parking & security, O&M and hospitality.
 - Due to the pandemic there was no new retiree lunch this fall and there will be no Christmas lunch in December.

The Year (7 months) Ahead

- Helen called on MURA members to participate, and especially to let MURA know by email if they would like to get involved with the *MURAnews* group and/or to contribute articles.
- For Council the focus will be on items brought out by survey results (events of interest), to help retirees with their issues and concerns, and to maintain visibility, inclusion and good service from all parts of the university for retirees.

- 9. Other Business** – Ralph Matthews suggested that Council find ways to include those who live outside of Hamilton in our future events and meetings, and Helen responded that since we now have the capability to meet on Zoom, possibilities for including people virtually have expanded.

10. Adjournment

Moved by Brian Beckberger, seconded by Nora Gaskin

“that the meeting be adjourned”

Carried at 3:12 pm