



## **MCMaster UNIVERSITY RETIREES ASSOCIATION**

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Nora Gaskin, Secretary

### **Minutes for COUNCIL MEETING of McMaster University Retirees Association Wednesday, January 8, 2020, 1:30 PM in MUSC-224**

#### **1. Welcome & Regrets**

**Present:** Cliff Andrews, Helen Barton (chair), Brian Beckberger,  
Phyllis DeRosa-Koetting, Alison Forler, Nora Gaskin, Mary Gauld,  
Heather Grigg, John Horsman, Hank Jacek, Mahendra Joshi, Mary Law,  
Kathy Overholt

**Regrets:** Betty Ann Levy, Debbie Weisensee

#### **2. Minutes of Previous Meeting**

##### **2.1 Council Meeting December 11, 2019 (for approval)**

**Moved** by Brian Beckberger, **seconded** by Heather Grigg

*“that the minutes of December 11, 2019 be approved”*

**Carried.**

#### **3. Business Arising**

- Heather suggested a master list of retiree deaths be displayed each year at the MURA AGM
- There were some retirees attending the Christmas Lunch whose transponders wouldn't let them in; add a note to next year's Christmas Lunch notice re: renewing your transponder

#### **4. Human Resources Report (Alison Forler)**

- Tax slips will be mailed out in February
- Deaths: HR is getting an influx of death notices, especially ones from the past, which makes it difficult to administer pensions, benefits, etc. When CIBC Mellon gets a death notice, they can't tell HR anything else, e.g. date of death, person to contact, etc. Best thing is for it to come to HR in a timely manner, but it often doesn't.
- Upcoming retirement info session for hourly group: Feb. 10, evening
- Office 365 email developments coming

- There was an overpayment of pension for 14 retirees who also receive a government annuity that is partly paid by McMaster where the increases were being applied overall, not to the portion of the pension paid by McMaster.
- ID card issues are still on the list

## 5. President's Report (Helen Barton)

### Definition of a Retiree and Retiree Supplemental Benefits

- The meeting with Wanda McKenna and the head of UTS, Assistant Vice President and Chief Technology Officer (AVP & CTO) Gayleen Gray, is scheduled for January 20. We will continue to press for a change to the proposed policy that those retiring with the group RRSP will only be considered retirees of the university if they have attained age 65.
- Still no response to our request for information regarding: stats on how many retirees use tuition assistance/bursary benefit; how many employees in the defined benefit plans retire at their "special retirement date" with unreduced benefits, as compared to age 65; demographic information for future retirees (list of all of employee groups with their retirement entitlements; and a chart of all of the groups, with eligible retirement dates and numbers for each classification going forward to 2025.
- We will also be bringing a couple of new topics to the table for discussion:
  - Equal access for retirees to electronic and other University system services: retirees currently are not given access to services such as Office 365 and LinkedIn Learning, and non-faculty retirees have less access to library e-resources that either faculty retirees or alumni.
  - Reinstatement of the personalized annual pension increase letter (see Pension Overpayments/ Repayments below)

### Keeping MURA Relevant for Retirees

- The MURA member survey is ready, and will be mailed separately to our approximately 600 postal mail members. Council will be asked to test it before it goes out. The target is to have the survey online by mid-January, with promotion in the newsletter.

### Planning for a strategic planning exercise

- Will be done as soon as possible. Hoping for Heather's leadership on this.

### Three-Year Funding

- Request letters for renewal of our 3-year funding agreement with Unifor, MUFA, SEIU and the President's Office will go out next week.

### Renewal of CURAC Membership

- Renewal request has been received. The annual fee has remained at \$300.

### Pension Overpayments / Repayments

- One of our retirees received a letter from HR right before the Christmas closure stating that she had been overpaid more than \$5,000 in pension payments over the past 3 years. The issues were a) the letter was very "cold" and exhibited no empathy or remorse for the University's error; b) there was not an adequate explanation of the numbers presented in the letter; and c) the two options given for repayment were not reasonable.
- After writing to HR (with MURA's help in composing the letter), the retiree received an apology from the head of HR and assurance that the numbers would be

explained to her satisfaction and that other “options for resolution” would be personally explored with her. The retiree and a MURA rep are meeting with HR on Wednesday afternoon for these purposes.

- MURA wrote to the head of HR to find out if other retirees had been sent “correction of pension repayment letters” recently, stating we believe MURA has an obligation to ensure any such retirees are aware that they should question the amount if they do not understand it, and should also request better repayment terms if the timing does not seem reasonable or presents an undue hardship for them, and that we would do so by a notice in *MURAnews*.
- The head of HR replied that “approximately” 14 retirees (out of about 2500) were impacted. We were assured that (presumably after the first case had been brought to their attention) each of the others “have been contacted in writing by the pensions team and will also receive a follow-up phone call to explain the details and initiate conversation on preferences for repayment.”
- The upcoming *MURAnews* will alert all retirees that they should contact HR with any questions about their pension calculations. It will also include the information that all retirees who have received a notification about a pension overpayment and required repayment should have had a follow-up phone call from HR to explain the details and discuss preferences for alternate repayment options.

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

- Signing authority has been completed. Debbie is waiting for December bank statements and University account activity, and then will prepare updated financial statements as of the end of December for the February meeting.
- Not sure if President’s Office has been billed for Christmas Lunch.

#### 7. Reports on Special Projects

##### 7.1 Academic Awards Endowment (Helen Barton) – written report

- was \$87,929.64 as of November 11/19
- Proposed wording for a new MURA academic award:

##### **MURA Academic Scholarship**

Established in 20XX by the McMaster University Retirees Association (MURA). To be awarded by the School of Graduate Studies to a graduate student researching technological advances related to seniors, and who demonstrates academic excellence.

**Moved** by Phyllis DeRosa Koetting, **seconded** by Kathy Overholt

*“that MURA Council approve the proposed wording for the new MURA academic award”*

**Carried.**

Council discussed and decided:

- The fundraising target will be \$25,000, which will support an annual award of \$1,000.

- Strategy will be to start low and grow over the years, as we did with the undergrad awards vs. setting a high initial target.
- The fund will be seeded from MURA surplus funds, amount to be determined at the February Council meeting.
- No decision was made on whether MURA should pay the first 1 year (or 2, if necessary) of the award so awards can be given as soon as the target has been reached. This will be determined by a future Council.

**7.2 Archives** (Mary Johnston) – no report

**7.3 Fundraising – MURA Cards** – no report

## **8. Information Reports from Committees**

**8.1 AGM** (Mary Gauld) – ideas for speaker: do some work for February meeting; Council invited to send ideas

**8.2 Christmas Lunch** (Mary Gauld) – no report

**8.3 Communications** (John Horsman) – no report

**8.3.1 Condolence cards** (Heather Grigg) – written report

**8.3.2 Web site** (Nora Gaskin) – no report

**8.4 Constitution and By-Laws** (Brian Beckberger)

Proposed MURA Constitutional Amendment #1 -- Definition of a retiree

- Proposal is to include the definition in Article 1, Definitions, as opposed to Article 3, Membership.
- **Action:** the committee will work on the final wording of the definition

**8.5 Membership** (Kathy Overholt) – written report

**8.6 MURAnews** (Phyllis DeRosa-Koetting) – deadline is January 10; issue will be big; stuffing date is January 22

**8.7 Nominating** (Heather Grigg) – activity is picking up; still looking for one or two non-Council people for the committee

**8.8 Pensions and Benefits** (Brian Beckberger & Mary Law)

Issues dealt with since the last meeting:

- pension overpayment issue
- one complaint about no access to library e-resources
- one complaint about no access to LinkedIn Learning

**8.9 Trips & Special Events** (Mary Gauld) – no report

**8.10 Volunteering** (Betty Ann Levy) – no report

## **9. Information Reports from Liaisons**

**9.1 University Board of Governors** (Betty Ann Levy) – written report

- Negotiations for the new Strategic Mandate Agreement between the Ontario government and McMaster are underway. Since subsequent funding will depend on meeting the goals set, the negotiations will be critical.
- The report on the McMaster Innovation Park Strategy indicated excellent growth and plans for further development.
- There was an excellent presentation on the many developments to improve student engagement and student wellness.

**9.2 Community Engagement Committee** (Betty Ann Levy) – no report

**9.3 CURAC** (Helen Barton)

MURA has received the request for 2020 membership at \$300

**Moved** by Brian Beckberger, **seconded** by Cliff Andrews

*“that MURA renew its membership in CURAC for 2020”*

**Carried.**

- Call for nominations for CURAC directors was received; if anyone is interested in getting involved, let Council know and we will nominate you.
- A draft policy paper from the Health Care Committee, *Medications And Older Persons*, was circulated via email and forwarded to Council; feedback is requested by February 19

**9.4 MUFA** (Hank Jacek)

- Lowering the flag to half-staff for deceased retirees monthly may have some support from MUFA; Hank will investigate.

**9.5 Unifor** (Mahendra Joshi) – Unifor retiree chapter is quite active

**9.6 Hourly Staff Liaison** (Cliff Andrews) – no report

**9.7 Hourly Pension Committee** (Cliff Andrews) – no report

**9.8 Salaried Pension Committee** (Brian Beckberger) – next meeting January 21, extraordinary meeting, not sure why

**9.9 Age-Friendly University Committee** (Mary Gault) – no report

**10. Other Business**

- Will retirees with no access to Office 365 still be able to use McMaster email? We don't know yet; will find out at January 20 meeting. Update: yes, details to come.

**Moved** by Brian Beckberger at 2:54 pm

*“that the meeting be adjourned”*

**Carried.**