

Association of Bishop's University Retirees

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Member of CURAC (The College and University Retirees Association of Canada)

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APBU UPDATE

There are three items here which you should be aware of:

(i) Travel Insurance

At the prompting of one of our members who travels quite a bit, we have uncovered some important details about the Travel Assist Plan from Great West Life. If you are planning to be away for an extended period you should know that: (a) if you are taking any type of medication on a regular basis you must be medically "stable" on this medication for a period of at least three months before you depart in order that the Plan will cover unforeseen events such as heart attacks, strokes and seizures. Your physician's records will serve as proof of this stability requirement, (b) medical tests, even if deemed urgent may not be covered by the Plan if you are physically capable of returning to Canada, and (c), the maximum period of consecutive days you may be absent is sixty; after that you must return to some location in Canada. Following this brief return, you may re-embark on another sixty day absence.

(ii) Supplemental Health Care Plan

At last, the University promises to have new updated booklets from Great West Life available in January, 2011. These booklets will replace those you received at retirement and labelled "Canada Life". As far as we are aware, there are no changes to the supplemental health care plan.

(iii) Health Care for Surviving Spouses

According to Memorandum of Agreement #3 (2004) and Letter of Intent #05/12 (2005), spouses of faculty members who passed away after January 1st, 2001 will receive drug coverage for a period of two years only. However, both documents state clearly that the supplemental health care plan will be extended to surviving spouses "as long as they are receiving a survivor pension from Bishop's". To date only one surviving spouse has in fact benefitted from these agreements. According to the University, it is under no legal obligation to continue this portion of the supplemental health plan. The APBU has recently informed us that they will support our position which is identical to that found in the documents mentioned. We hope for an early and positive resolution to this matter.

BISHOP'S UPDATE

Other than a brief e-mail encounter with the Vice-Principal concerning changes to the office space allocation in MacKinnon #5, there has been no contact at all with the University.

CURAC UPDATE

This year the annual CURAC conference will be held at the University of Regina, May 11th-13th, 2011. Curt Rose and Dieter Riegel will attend on behalf of the Executive, but all members are welcome to attend. Do we have any takers from our Western residents?

MEETINGS

Our September Pot Luck supper was its usual success with about 40 retirees and spouses on hand. The December 10th wine and cheese reception was attended by about 35 retirees.

The annual general meeting of the Pension Committee will be held on Friday, March 11th, 2011 at 1 p.m. in BWH. All are welcome to attend.

Our own Annual General Meeting will be held in early May, 2011. Notices will be sent out at a later date.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

When it concerns the well-being of retirees, success never seems to be achieved in "great leaps forward". It is rather a slow and ponderous process that takes time and a lot of e-mails and telephone time. So let me begin by saying that some small successes are now upon us. The decision by the APBU to support our position on health care coverage for surviving spouses is certainly welcome news (see below for details). Even though the number of people affected by this decision is not great, the principles behind it are enormously important; adherence to written agreements signed by the APBU and the University is one of these basic principles as well as non-discrimination when it comes to the details of who is covered and who is not. Second, a short note we received this fall from the Pension Committee indicating that in the event of a vacancy for the retirees representative, the Committee would ask the ABUR to name a temporary representative until a regular election could be held at an annual general meeting of the pensioners; this note is encouraging since the Committee now recognizes that we exist and that we will be closely monitoring the Committee's activities for a long time to come. Third, it seems that we are far from alone in our struggle with the University's "corporate model" of management. Retirees at Memorial, Dalhousie, U.N.B. and Concordia are all in parallel situations regarding some or all of their supplemental benefits, particularly the health care provisions. I would here like to thank the Concordia University Pensioner's Association for their continuing moral support and for their innovative thinking on this important matter. Watch for a new development in 2011 involving more than one retiree association taking on the traditional model of University/Retiree relations.

We continue to work toward a complete understanding of our legal position vis-a-vis the APBU and the University. Able assistance in this complicated area has now been acquired and Anton and I are certain that we will have a concrete idea of the legal options open to us before the annual meeting in May. We continue to have the reinstatement of some form of pension indexation as our major objective, but I am beginning to attach equal importance to the matter of full and continuing representation on any committee that decides any question affecting retirees, not just on monetary issues but on other matters such as health care and non-monetary items such as secretarial services, e-mail, office space, parking and so on. There is no question that we must continue this work for a good

while into the future since it will be most valuable for those who retire after us. Speaking of those who are still working here, some people would say that lately I have been too hard on the younger generation and that I should heed what another James (not P.D. but Henry) said about them:

“I shall never be ill-natured with the young; they touch me too much” (The Portrait of a Lady, 1881)

Maybe I'll repent, maybe not.

Take care,

Curt Rose

We welcome your comments and suggestions. Curt Rose can be reached at cerose@videotron.ca or 819 346-2612. For information on membership and dues, please contact Terry Skeats at ptskeats@sympatico.ca or 819 842-3102.

Let us hear from you!