

Retirees Benefits Advisory Committee Agreement

At its regular meeting on June 19 the board of ADRP approved the Terms of Reference negotiated with Dalhousie's Human Resources Department for a Retirees Benefits Advisory Committee (RBAC). This most recent step moves ADRP to a new stage in oversight of health benefits and their administration after several years discussion with senior administration.

Members may recall this process started several years ago when it was observed that premiums for the over-65 members were far too high as they matched those of active employees. However retirees did not have drug coverage.

Further years of ad hoc discussion between ADRP representatives and Dalhousie Human Resources resulted in a premium decrease for over-65 retirees effective Sept 1, 2009, and a tabulation of over-payments for several years previous. At the same date all retirees, both those over-65 and early retirees under-65 were moved to a separate plan. However the deficit for the early retirees, who had drug coverage, was subtracted from the previous over payments by the over-65 retirees. In addition the administration made no response to ADRP suggestions in February 2010 for further discussion on repayment to the over-65 group, and resolution of our opposition to the two moves.

Subsequently in late spring 2010 the DFA filed a grievance concerning the moves affecting the early retirees. In the fall of 2010 after further overtures by ADRP the administration agreed to the set up of a forum for future benefits discussion and offered a draft Terms of Reference. Progress on agreement to a final set of terms was slow, interrupted both by the successful DFA grievance and devising of a remedy, and negotiation of collective agreements with both the DFA and NSGEU.

Meanwhile, as a means to rebate previous overpayments by the over-65 retirees, ADRP had been able to obtain two years of premium holidays for those affected. With agreement on the terms of reference for the RBAC it is expected that further years of premium holidays will be provided for members of that group until a satisfactory refund process has been completed.

In addition annual reviews will be done by the RBAC of Blue Cross premiums and of the set of benefits available for retirees. This has been a routine process on the Employee Benefits Committee, but as ADRP has had no place on that committee retirees have been excluded from participation.

Members of the ADRP Benefits Committee have spent many hours and held many meetings the past several years to bring us near the conclusion of this process. A final step in it will be to appoint the initial ADRP representatives to the RBAC. Two members from the over-65 group and one from the under-65 group will be required.

The Terms of Reference for the RBAC and a call for volunteers to serve on it will both be published in the September edition of the ADRP newsletter.