

ADRP NEWSLETTER

Volume 11, Number 3, October 2012

Association of Dalhousie Retirees and Pensioners

GENERAL MEETING

Wednesday, 12 December 2012

1:30 Meet & Greet

2 – 3:30 Meeting

University Hall, MacDonald Building, Dalhousie University

Elevator available

Membership fees for 2013 may be paid at the meeting.

**Following the meeting there will be a Social from 3:30 to 5:30
Earl of Dalhousie Pub, University Club**

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FROM THE EDITOR

The sudden passing of Ken Rozee after a brief illness has left a large void not only in the ADRP and SCANS but in the lives of many of us. Until April, Ken served on the ADRP Board of Directors and was Co-Editor of our newsletter. He was also Past President of SCANS and served on several of its committees where his vision and commitment to its guiding principles were always evident and encouraging to others. Besides all of his many accomplishments in the field of Microbiology, he was above all a husband, father, grandfather, gentleman, and friend, a man with an easy style and a wonderful sense of humour. He had a smile and a twinkle in his eye that could light up a room. He will be sadly missed.

A big welcome to Denise Sommerfeld as the new Co-Editor of our newsletter. Until her retirement in 2007, she had been an Associate Professor in the School of Nursing and served on the Senate of Dalhousie University. Denise is a member of the Board of Directors and, until recently, served on the Benefits Committee.

We encourage you to take time to read this issue carefully, as its content concisely describes the nature of the significant work accomplished by the ADRP Board and Committees on your behalf over recent years, and the challenges that continue. As you mingle with other retirees here and there, we hope the work described therein will become part of your discussions, and hopefully result in sending us feedback on the issues at hand. Your help in enhancing the visibility of the ADRP and its mission to members and potential new members, will be greatly appreciated.

We welcome your comments and letters which you may send to the ADRP Office (address below) or to myself at tcreighton@eastlink.ca or to Denise at denise.sommerfeld@dal.ca.

Blanche Potter Creighton, Co-Editor

Editorial Policy: The ADRP intends to publish the newsletter every three months. It is hoped the newsletter will serve the following purposes: To provide pertinent information; To provide a forum for the free exchange of views on issues relevant to our membership; To serve as a documentary record of matters relating to the ADRP. The Editorial Board, under the ultimate direction of the ADRP Board, takes responsibility for the contents of the newsletter. Signed contributions will take the form of short articles and letters to the editor; these will normally represent the opinions of the author, and need not represent the views of the ADRP. Anonymous material will not be considered for publication. The Editorial Board retains the right to edit or reject contributed material and to elicit similar and opposing views surrounding any issue raised.

The Editorial Board: Blanche Potter Creighton, Co-Editor; Denise Sommerfeld, Co-Editor; Ex-officio: Randy Barkhouse.

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

After a largely glorious summer of sunny weather in Nova Scotia, interrupted by the spectacle of the XXX Olympiad in London, it is a pleasure to once again be reporting to the ADRP membership in our newsletter.

For me as President, this past summer was the first of three in which there was a lull in activity during the July to September period. The reasons for that are easy to identify.

First, we finally resolved our contentious benefits discussion with agreement in late spring with the University administration to establish a Retirees Benefits Advisory Committee (RBAC). David Tindall, Mike Bradfield, and Carolyn Savoy will be our three inaugural members. A big thanks to those three for taking on that duty. In addition to annually reviewing terms of our Blue Cross contract, including premiums and coverage, the RBAC will review disposition of the over-65 surplus account to eligible members.

The second reason for a lull in ADRP business is that discussions have yet to begin of the special Pension Plan review committee set up under terms of the LOA contained in the new collective agreements for both the DFA and NSGEU local 77. That is partly due to the belated new agreement between the University and NSGEU Local 99 (trades and custodial). When discussions do begin, ADRP will be representing Dalhousie retirees.

The deadline of early spring of 2013 will be extended to allow review of the several issues identified in the LOAs for discussion, plus others that may be raised. For retirees the most important issue may be the continued lack of indexation as Plan returns continue below the threshold required for such to be considered by Plan trustees. The outlook continues bleak for indexation under the "excess interest" provision of the Plan.

The timeline for market interest rates to remain low was effectively extended into 2015 by recent U.S. Federal Reserve announcements. That will make six years of abnormally low rates with no promise when rates might rise subsequently.

The purchasing power of their Dalhousie pension has now fallen by at least 16% for those retirees affected for the longest time (retired before 2007). A further four years without indexation would likely push that loss close to the 25% level, a full one quarter loss since those individuals retired. Those who have been retired for fewer years will have suffered progressively less, but all are enduring an erosion of their pension's value with each passing month.

This erosion of purchasing power raises the obvious question: "Should we stick with the excess interest provision for pension indexing?" The administration has suggested it would be open to some other provision, but of course all parties would have to agree, including each of the unionized employee groups. If you have an opinion on this matter

please contact either myself, or our primary Pension Advisory Committee rep, Paul Huber.

It was enjoyable to see many ADRP members at the recent SCANS Open House for the preview of courses for the fall term. Several ADRP members, including immediate past President Philip Welch, and our newsletter editor, Blanche Creighton, serve on the SCANS board. They oversee an operation that continues to gain support and scope across Nova Scotia. Keeping the mind engaged by attending a SCANS course is beneficial to one's health, as well as providing insights into areas we might not have had time to explore during our earlier careers.

I'll close on a sombre note to observe the passing of ADRP members over the summer. Death is a part of life, but we'll greatly miss those deceased members with whom we shared so many working years while serving at Dalhousie.

-Randy Barkhouse

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4 June 2012

FIRST ANNUAL REPORT TO THE HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE **BOARD OF GOVERNORS, DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY**

Introduction – Who We Are, and Why Our Association Exists

The Association of Dalhousie Retirees and Pensioners (ADRP) is pleased to report to the Human Resources Committee of the Board of Governors. We believe that this first annual report will start to fill a gap in the continuum of oversight exercised by the Board.

The ADRP is a decade-old registered non-profit society, the membership of which comprises a substantial majority of the now over 800 Dalhousie pensioners. These pensioners enjoy an average age of 74 years. ADRP members include retired Dalhousie faculty, staff, administrators and surviving spouses. Some of our members continue to conduct research, publish, and teach. Many have been committed to the University for years and the status of their former departments today would be vastly inferior if not for the hard work and personal investment of some of these members during their years of active service. Often today's retirees

played an integral role in the flourishing of departments and the successes of students in past years. Some still do.

A prime objective of the Association is:

to represent and to promote to the University
community and to the public the interests of retirees
from Dalhousie University (and its constituent parts)
and their spouses and beneficiaries.

These interests include direct financial interests, such as pensions and benefits - both of which are addressed in some detail below - but also the intellectual, social and physical well-being of our members. These interests also extend to the health and vigour of Dalhousie and of the wider community, to which many of our members could contribute if the relationship of the University to its retirees could be made more productive.

In furtherance of this goal, the ADRP seeks mutually beneficial interactions with the University Administration. Although some members of Dalhousie's senior administration share this goal and appreciate our potential contributions, a regrettable number of Dalhousie's senior administrators appear indifferent toward retirees. We find this frustrating, to say the least.

Pension Matters— Loss of Purchasing Power, Lack of Involvement in Governance

The state of the Dalhousie Pension Plan remains of great concern to pensioners because since 2001 our pension payments have fallen further and further behind inflation. For the majority of pensioners the loss of purchasing power of their pensions has now exceeded 15%. In other words, pension payments to all those who retired from the University a dozen or more years ago would have to rise by nearly one sixth to make it possible for them to enjoy the living standard they had just after they first retired. This contrasts dramatically with the experience of those still employed at Dalhousie (including senior administrators) whose salaries have substantially risen and purchasing power has gained over the same period.

The ADRP does recognize pension indexation at Dalhousie depends to a large extent on investment results of the Dalhousie Retirees' Trust Fund [RTF] and that inadequate indexation partly resulted from reasons beyond Dalhousie's control: poor investment markets and exceedingly low interest rates. However, the University is responsible for at least two factors that have contributed negatively to retirees' losses in purchasing power over the past decade. First, over the fiscal years 2005 through 2009, pension management at Dalhousie appeared to suffer from benign neglect; performance was noticeable worse than in comparably-sized pension funds in Canada. Fortunately, during the subsequent fiscal year (2009-2010), some money managers were changed and relative performance of Dalhousie's funds improved. Second, although the RTF enjoyed modest surpluses during much of the past

decade, the trustees decided to use only a minimal amount for discretionary indexation.

Regrettably, the ADRP was not permitted to influence or to make representations with respect to either of these factors. No ADRP member or RTF nominee serves as an RTF trustee at the present time. Furthermore, Dalhousie's senior administration has thwarted timely and accurate communication between the RTF trustees and our organization. In a time of crisis with pensions generally, and the Dalhousie Plan in particular, Dalhousie pensioners have an acute interest in what is happening to the largest asset most of us have.

Our association does have non-voting membership on Dalhousie's Pension Advisory Committee [PAC] and has been represented at every PAC meeting held over the last decade. The ADRP is also projected to be a member of the new Joint Committee studying the Dalhousie Pension Plan, a committee which was established by Letters of Agreement with employee groups through collective bargaining. It anticipates continuing to advocate for ADRP representation among the trustees of the Retirees Trust Fund (RTF).

Our association supported the University's efforts to secure temporary and then permanent solvency relief for our Pension Plan. Our representative appeared before the Law Amendments Committee of the legislature to comment on the proposed new Pension Benefits Act. Our representative made a submission to the Department of Labour on the somewhat flawed draft regulation associated with the new Act. We believe our long experience with the Dalhousie Pension Plan, and other work on university pension plans across Canada through the College and University Retirees Association of Canada provides useful assistance in ongoing efforts to sustain the Dalhousie Plan.

Benefits – A Frustrating Saga of Delay and Unilateralism

For five years, the ADRP has been attempting to resolve issues arising from grossly excessive premiums charged to the roughly 300 retirees over age 65 who were individual or family members of the University's Blue Cross Extended Health Benefits Plan. Premiums charged were two to three times higher than warranted by costs, a situation that had prevailed (and been tolerated by the University Administration, which should have been aware of the situation) since at least the year 2000, but likely for many years prior to that. To some extent, these excess premiums from retirees had been subsidizing the charges to current employees, but, in addition, a large surplus had accumulated in the Blue Cross account.

Many of the retirees who were overcharged are now aged 80 years and older. While securing refunds has been an urgent matter for ADRP, this has not been reflected in the University Administration's response to the situation. However, somewhat over a year ago, the ADRP and Administration agreed to a premium holiday for the oldest plan members. This was implemented effective 1 May 2011

for one year. Initially the University indicated that further refund discussions would then be deferred until collective bargaining with the employee groups was concluded, a position that held retiree's funds hostage to a process which excluded them. Discussions did resume last November and a second year of premium holiday was subsequently agreed to, but several more will be required to before all of the accumulated overpayments will have been repaid. We emphasise that these refunds do not come from the University's operating budget, but from the surplus accumulated in the Blue Cross account.

In April 2011, the Dalhousie Faculty Association [DFA] won a grievance against the Board of Governors on behalf of about 150 early retirees (under age 65) who had been removed from the Blue Cross Plan and enrolled without prior notification in a separate plan at a much higher cost (almost \$100 extra per month), contrary to the terms of their collective agreement. The remedy was to be agreeable to the two parties and the retirees. Hence, in July 2011, the ADRP (as representative of the retirees) were briefed on the proposed remedy: The early retirees were to be returned to the common plan, paying the same rate as active employees, effective September 1, 2011, and a mechanism for repayment of the excess premium amounts paid by this group since September 1, 2009, totalling about \$150,000, was implemented, also effective September 1, 2011.

Ongoing discussions on setting up a Retirees' Benefits Advisory Committee (RBAC) to provide a forum for regular review of retiree benefits have yet to reach a successful conclusion. This exercise began in November 2010, and seemed one that should be concluded in a matter of weeks, but progress thus far has been exceedingly slow.

Other – The Potential for Greater Engagement with Dalhousie's Retirees

The ADRP founded, and continues its relationship with the Seniors' College Association of Nova Scotia [SCANS], an organization active in Halifax, with satellite operations in Truro and Mahone Bay, and soon to be in Liverpool. SCANS has thus far proven wildly popular and has enabled many of our retirees to remain intellectually vigorous.

The ADRP was a founding member of the College and University Retiree Associations of Canada [CURAC] a decade ago. Together with the St. Mary's University Retirees Association [SMURA], the ADRP co-hosted a regional CURAC meeting, a successful Atlantic University Retirees Associations conference in October 2011. In April 2012, ADRP representatives attended the national CURAC conference at the University of Victoria. Attendees were impressed by the extent of engagement of many other Canadian universities with their retirees. It would be useful and gratifying if Dalhousie could move decisively in this direction, too. The loyalty built among retirees through years of service to the University offers latent possibilities that to date have been largely unexplored.

In our second annual report in 2013 we look forward to reporting progress on each of the topics mentioned this year.

ADRP BENEFITS COMMITTEE REPORT

Since the April 2012 Newsletter (AGM Edition), much has happened: The most notable being the successful conclusion of the interminable negotiations with the BoG which have put control of Benefits (excluding pensions) in the hands of a Retiree Benefits Advisory Committee (RBAC) comprised of 3 nominees of the ADRP and two from the BoG. More about this later.

We welcomed Carolyn Savoy to the Committee and, very much look forward to her bringing a fresh new perspective.

Unfortunately, we have also said goodbye to Shirley Dean, Carol Smillie and Denise Sommerfeld - all of whom have made major contributions to the committee over many years. Thank you Shirley, Carol and Deni – we hope you will continue to send us suggestions from time-to-time, including suggestions for new members!

As John Barry noted in the last BenComm report, he stepped down as BenComm Chair after convincing me, a rookie to the committee, to take over. I am delighted to report that John, while fading a little from the limelight, had been a pillar of strength to me with, what he calls, his “uncalled for interference”.

Much of the work of the BenComm is done by e-mail, but we did hold one in-person meeting on July 24th. The main purpose was to report on and discuss the RBAC terms of Reference (<http://retireesandpensioners.dal.ca/RefBenCom.pdf>) which had been approved by the ADRP Board at its June meeting, upon recommendation from a sub-committee consisting of Randy Barkhouse, John Barry (until May), Michael Bradfield and David Tindall (from January) who had met with Lee Crowell of the Administration and Kirk Shand (Plan Consultant from Mercer) to negotiate the Terms.

We also discussed some possible benefit changes: primarily the addition of some form of Travel Coverage, which as you know, is not part of our Plan. Once we get more details of coverage and premium cost we plan to survey the Plan Members to see what you would like.

A potential change, which would result in some cost saving, could be to drop the Semi-Private hospital Coverage. Kirk Shand, the Plan advisor from Mercer, suggested this as it is covered by MSI, if recommended by the attending physician.

Composition of RBAC: The ADRP nominees to RBAC are Michael Bradfield (Secretary), Carolyn Savoy and David Tindall (Chair). From the BoG: Lee Crowell

and Kirk Shand. Suggestions/Volunteers to serve on the Committee are always welcome.

David Tindall
Chair, ADRP Benefits Committee

THE VALUE OF ADRP MEMBERSHIP - Randy Barkhouse, President

The President of one of Quebec's English language university retirees associations phoned me early in July after reading about the new Retirees Benefits Advisory Committee (RBAC) agreement on our ADRP web site (ADRP.DAL.CA).

Their association is a fairly young one, having been formed in the fall of 2009.

It seems their association had been seeking instances of retirees' associations having their own discussion channels with university administration, separate from those available to active employee groups. The gentleman found the RBAC announcement and text very helpful for continuing efforts at his former university.

In their case they apparently have no involvement in advisory groups for either pensions or other benefits, and have been subject to the preferences of others when changes have been made. Retirees at that university lost pension indexing a year or more ago when that was one measure used to address their pension crisis, by agreement between the University and the faculty union.

It was a double surprise to find that there are university retiree associations who have considerably less influence with their university administrations than we do, and that the RBAC announcement has already proven useful to one of them.

I believe our positive relations with Dal's employee groups are a significant strength, and quite a contrast to the state of relations I perceive at many universities.

The call reinforced my impression that many (most?) retirees at Dalhousie may not recognize the advantages of having ADRP work on their behalf for \$1.66 per month.

The instance in late June of having the university's error revealed and corrected in administration of the Transfer Ratio rule for pensions is but one further example. Not only did the recent complainant, with ADRP advice and assistance, get the holdback of 15% of a pension guarantee payout corrected before it was applied, but a number of previous instances of the holdback on the estates of deceased Dalhousie pensioners were reversed.

A more substantial example is the 2011 arbitration win instigated by ADRP reducing Blue Cross premiums by about \$90/month for roughly 100 early retirees, plus a refund

of up to \$2000 for those affected. Had that not happened those individuals would collectively be out over \$250,000 by now, and together be paying close to \$9,000 additional each month.

An even larger one is the 2009 premium reduction and ongoing recovery of over \$800,000 due about 300 over-65 retirees for excess Blue Cross premiums. Had that not happened those retirees would be out nearly \$1.5 million by now, and a further \$18,000 as each month passes.

Our most significant achievement may be yet to come, if ADRP can win greater influence over administration of our pension plan assets. That will be very difficult, but not impossible. Engagement on that topic will begin this fall, and conclude by next spring under terms of the LOAs signed by Dalhousie with both the DFA and NSGEU local 77.

ADRP MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE REPORT

As you know, many members have chosen to pay their annual dues by monthly Payroll deductions. Any applications for payroll deductions are to be sent directly to the Payroll Office.

For those of you who prefer to pay yearly, I will give you the address to which your cheques or money orders should now be sent.

It is: Association of Dalhousie Retirees and Pensioners
Room 2831, Life Sciences Centre
Dalhousie University
PO Box 15000
Halifax, NS, B3H 4R2.

The response of new and renewing members has been great. Keep the momentum going to have more members and so increase our ability to influence “the powers that be” for our greater benefit.

Thank you.

Gweneth Munteer, Chair, Membership Committee

SENIORS' COLLEGE ASSOCIATION OF NOVA SCOTIA (SCANS)

The Seniors' College Association of Nova Scotia suffered a sad loss this September on the passing of Ken Rozee, Past-President of SCANS and both a visionary and a determined hard worker through promotion of adult life-long learning. He will be sorely missed.

Meanwhile, SCANS continues to grow and develop with currently over 600 members and offering 11 different academic life-long learning courses in the Halifax area and a total of 9 additional courses in SCANS chapters now established in Liverpool, Mahone Bay, and Truro. Plans for additional Chapters in other areas of the province are under consideration.

Earlier this year, SCANS applied for a grant from the Federal New Horizons Program. In due course, a grant of \$25,000 was awarded to support the promotion of SCANS programs, particularly outside Halifax Regional Municipality.

Single special lectures/presentations are also provided by SCANS in the Halifax area; these are free to all SCANS and ADRP members and are usually given on Tuesday morning. Three were planned for the fall 2012 and typically encompass a two-hour session given by an established academic and are given in the Bloomfield Community Centre on Agricola Street. The two remaining presentations for 2012 are “The Problems of Aging” to be given in October, and “The History of the Earth’s Climate and Its Changes” to be given in November. Further details of these presentations can be found on the SCANS website www.theSCANS.ca

Philip Welch, President SCANS

ANNOUNCEMENTS & EVENTS

ADRP Board Vacancy

The ADRP board has a vacant position for a member-at-large, regrettably due to the recent resignation of Dr. Andrew Wainwright. We are canvassing for a member to serve in this position until new elections are held next April. As member-at-large basic duties include attendance at monthly board meetings to discuss and vote on matters which arise. Prominent among those matters for the remainder of the year are benefits and pensions.

Any members interested in further details may contact either the Secretary, Colin Stuttard (colin.stuttard@dal.ca), or the president, Randy Barkhouse (randy.barkhouse@dal.ca)

SCANS LECTURE SERIES

There are two lectures left in the fall session and there has been a change in venue. The lectures will now be in the Multi-Purpose room at the Bloomfield Community Centre, 2768 Agricola St., Halifax. These lectures are free to all ADRP members but you must register if you wish to attend. To do so call the SCANS office at 444-7588 and leave your name, phone number and the lecture you wish to attend:

Tuesday, October 23 – 10 to 12 noon : “**The Problem of Aging**” – Dr. Melissa Andrew – Asst. Prof. Geriatric Medicine, Dalhousie University.

Tuesday, November 20 - 10 to 12 noon: “**The History of the Earth’s Climate and its Changes**” – Paul Mandell, Ecologist and Paleoclimatologist.

OTHER EVENTS OF INTEREST

Alzheimer Society of Nova Scotia - 23rd Provincial Conference. “Facing Dementia” – What does Facing Dementia mean to you? ,**October 15 & 16** – Harbourview Holiday Inn, Dartmouth. For more information or to register visit www.alzheimer.ca/ns or call 422-7951

Healing Hands: Mental Health Association of Nova Scotia

October 20, 2012 – 9:20 – 11:30 Multi-Purpose Room, Bloomfield Community Centre, 2768 Agricola St., Halifax : “**Loss, Grief, Bereavement: Let’s Talk About It**” - Dr. Virginia Walford, Registered Psycholgist. Pre-register via email hmhans@gmail.com or call 479-4656

IN MEMORIAM

Dr. Arthur Edward Sedgwick, 66 of Halifax, died of a sudden heart attack while vacationing in Vermont on July 5, 2012. He received his PhD in numerical analysis at the University of Toronto and in 1978, arrived at the Dalhousie mathematics Department as the first faculty member with a specialization in Computer Science. He retired from the Dalhousie Faculty of Computer Science in December 2010. He had been recently honoured with a distinguished service award for exemplary commitment and service from Science Atlantic, and also by having their annual C.S. lecture named after him. Our condolences to his wife Jane and his children and grandchildren.

Dr. Kenneth Roy Rozee, 81, in Halifax on September 5th following a brief illness. He was awarded the first PhD ever granted by Dalhousie University and retired from Dalhousie University in 1996. In retirement he was appointed the honour of Professor Emeritus in the Department of Microbiology and Immunology at Dalhousie University. He was the founding Chairman of the Canadian College of Microbiologists in 1974 and was awarded their Distinguished Microbiologist Award in 2004. Until April of this year he served on the ADRP Board of Directors and was Co-editor of ADRP Newsletter. Our condolences to his wife Patricia and his children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. The Rozee family had dedicated a website in Ken’s honour www.dr-kennethrozee.ca