

RALU News



PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE p. 1

CURAC/ARUCC 2019 ANNUAL CONFERENCE and AGM p. 2

THE CLAUDE GARTON (LKHD) HERBARIUM, A PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE. p. 4
Lada Malek

COMMUNICATING WITH RALU p. 5

EVENTS p. 6

GETTING THE BUSINESS: ON MONETIZING JUST EVERYTHING PT. 2 p. 7

THE NEW TRANSPORTATION MASTER PLAN: A RAILROAD JOB p. 7

WOLVES ATHLETICS p. 8
Margot Ponder

PROFESSIONAL PENSION REPORT p. 8
Abdul Mamoojee

EDITORIAL p. 10

SUMMER BIKING IN TBAY: DREAMING OF THE *GIRO* p. 11

PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

Another term begins with optimism. Before plunging forward into the new academic year with its excitement and challenges, it is fitting to take time out to remember colleagues we have lost over the past year.

Bonny will be sorely missed as an architect and prime mover of our organization. She was a founding member; a well-spring of positive energy; a benefactor of folks needing help with taxes; distributor of pro-bono help; gardener; and author of endless good fun. The list just goes on. A lover of wisdom and truth, Bonny supported the university and was curious about nature and number one supporter of the Herbarium.

George springs to mind as a staunch defender of retirees, he obeyed his calling as an academic and always stood up and spoke in his strong voice for what he saw as truth and right. He was a stalwart defender. An economist who loved the arts is so hard to find!

The greatest forward momentum was achieved in initiatives designed to improve health and vitality of members. Geraldine, as a one person locomotion department, organized activities including bowling and “walking”. These both promote members’ exercise regimes and sociability with a positive effect. Are you ready for a peripatetic book club? Can Scottish country dancing be far behind?

Another initiative designed to improve health and vitality of the whole university (and wider) community was our response to calls to arms (and hoes and rakes) in the garden, in a recent number of in the *Argus*. We at RALU pledge to obey the injunction of Sanjana Sharma, Co-ordinator of Students Feeding Change, to have more dinner parties as one way among many of advancing “food security” by promoting sharing for all members of the university community.

Lessons learned over the past year include my observation that it is easier to fix people in the current climate than to recruit and train new ones. Consequently

LU PROFESSIONAL PENSION PLAN REPORT

As in the past two years, pensioners can expect to receive a 'Pensioner Verification' form which they are requested to fill and return to the indicated address. The purpose of this annual exercise is to ensure that the Actuary is up-to-date on the present status of every pensioner and, where applicable, his/her co-annuitant. Without continual updates, over payments may occur that can be hard to recover and projections of future liabilities may be overestimated. Such occurrences would be potentially to the detriment of all current pensioners since the balance between liabilities and assets in the Retirement Accounts is one of the two factors considered in the annual decision to grant or deny a pension increase. Pensioners are therefore urged to cooperate in this endeavour to protect our Pension Fund and to respond in the common interest of all the people concerned. In an effort to reach the largest number of pensioners possible at their primary addresses and optimize the volume of responses, these forms are now being mailed, separately from the Actuary's spring communication, in August and with a postage-paid return envelope enclosed for Canadian residents.

Pensioners will have been disappointed to receive the Actuary's spring letter notifying them that there is no increase to their pension in 2019. This is nothing new to the bulk of them, the 124 individuals in Retirement Account No.1 who have been denied any increase in 12 consecutive years. To the 31 individuals in Account No.2, however, this represents a change from the past two years. In 2017 they had received increases ranging from 3.04% to 4.37% and in 2018 increases ranging from 3.01% to 5.51%. 13 of the 31 individuals in Account No.2 are also in Account No.3. From this last Account, a small one which is not in deficit, they will have seen additionally either a small decrease ranging from -0.32% to -0.12% or a small increase between 0.08% and 1.48%, depending on the "Base Rate" applied to determine their individual pension at inception.

2018 has not been kind to our Pension Fund. The net return on investments for the year was -3.81%, a big drop from 7.10% in 2017, 10.91% in 2016 and 3.77% in 2015. This is the fourth time in 20 years that a negative return has occurred, as happened in 2002 (-6.10%), 2008 (-18.05%) and 2011 (-1.59%). The Fund has also underperformed by -1.3% relative to its benchmark, a little worse than in the preceding three years: -0.5% in 2017, +3.3% in 2016, -0.1% in 2015. It ranked in quartile 4 (bottom 25%), as it did last year, in contrast to quartile 1 (top 25%) in 2016 and quartile 3 in 2015. The four year average return was 4.49% in 2018, a significant drop from 7.81% in 2017, 10.62% in 2016 and 10.30% in 2015. The geometric average used for those in Accounts 2 and 3 was 4.35%. Both averages are below the 'Base Rate' of almost everyone receiving pension except a very few in Account 3. The four-year average needs to exceed the 'Base Rate' for a pension increase to be granted

The Fund's negative return in 2018 is attributable to the equity exposure in the portfolio, which was 60.1%, a

figure consistent with its usual norm and the norm in similar balanced funds. Equity markets were generally down. The Canadian S&P/TSX Composite index finished the year with a loss of -8.9%. International and Emerging markets had a return of -5.6% and -6.5% respectively. The U.S S&P 500 exceptionally managed to eke out a modest gain of 4.2%. Markets had been positive until in the fourth quarter they sustained steep losses especially in the historically cruel month of October and then this time in December also. Just in that last quarter the S&P/TSX shed as much as 10.1%. These declines were triggered, in large part, by fear of an imminent global recession, worrisome omens of an international trade war and the vagaries of a loose cannon in the White House.

On the positive side, Equity markets rebounded strongly during the first quarter of 2019 and posted some further gains during the second quarter. As of June 30, 2019, the Year-to-Date return on the S&P/TSX was an impressive 16.2% and 13.4% on the S&P 500. Our Fund's continuing exposure to Equity in the vicinity of 60% paid off accordingly. As of June 30, 2019, it had recovered with a YTD return of 8.9%, although again under performing the benchmark, even more, by -2.2%. There is, of course, no telling how the year will end. August is experiencing a new round of extreme volatility on the downside even as the habitually jittery months of September and October approach.

Our Fund's poor performance in 2018 has plunged Retirement Account No.2 into deficit for the first time in three years. As at December 31, 2018, the assets in this Account were worth \$10,107,000 while the liabilities amounted to \$11,278,700. The resulting shortfall of \$1,171,700 is equivalent to 11.59% of the assets. It is a deficiency that can be surmounted in the foreseeable future if this year and the next one or two yield better returns. In the recent past, this Account had a deficiency, at the end of 2015, of \$544,000 or 6% of the then current assets. A year earlier, at the end of 2014, it had a deficiency of \$365,300 or 5% of the assets in that year. It took two years to recuperate from the last deficiency. It may take longer this time to recover from the present larger shortfall, but a recovery at some point is likely and a resumption of pension increases doable.

Such is not the case with Retirement Account No.1 where the great majority of pensioners have been placed. Five years ago, in December 2013, assets in this account were valued at \$54,716,900. The next year they fell to \$52,801,500, in the following year to \$47,993,500, then to \$45,965,000 and after that to \$42,428,000. As at December 31, 2018, these assets had dwindled to \$34,827,000. In the best of the past five years, 2016, when the investment return was 10.91%, the depletion subsided to \$2,028,500. In the worst of these five years, 2018, when the investment return was -3.81%, the depletion figure climbed to \$7,601,000. This pace of depletion is attributable principally to the disbursement of pension payments in excess of \$6,000,000 annually, e.g. \$6,894,720

back in 2013, \$6,172,224 at last count in 2018, figures well above inflows from investments.

In contrast, liabilities have not dwindled regularly with sporadic incidences of death but fluctuated upwards and downwards depending in greater part on the varying bond rates used in the 'solvency' valuation of liabilities. Liabilities stood at \$72,647,700 in 2013, peaked to \$79,004,700 in 2015 and fell back to \$61,580,900 in 2018. The resulting shortfalls stood at \$17,930,800 in 2013, soared to \$31,011,200 in 2015 and fell back to \$26,753,900 in 2018, equivalent still to a whopping 76.82% of the present assets. This does not look like a deficit that can ever be surmounted within the lifetime of the people concerned. After 12 consecutive years of no increase these folks can look forward to a permanent freeze until the end.

Sooner or later the University will have to face the crisis approaching in Retirement Account No.1. At that point, preferably sooner, it should, as Administrator, feel an obligation to reexamine objectively the circumstances that led to the creation of that Account, consider with fairness the iniquities that have resulted from its composition, and intervene accordingly. The 124 stakeholders won't be around much longer: as of December 31, 2018, their average age was 80.5.

If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to write amamooje@lakeheadu.ca. When in Thunder Bay, I can also be reached at (807) 767 5301.

Abdul Mamoojee, Pensioners' Representative on the Pension Board

August 2019

EDITOR'S MESSAGE: COMING UP FOR AIR 2019

Travelling earlier in the year to my *alma mater*, the University of Alberta, I was reminded how far corporations have dug their claws into academia. One Saturday morning I set out to warn the folks at the Alumni Office of the danger of behaving badly toward an ex-faculty member, Dr. David Suzuki. Large sections of the university are owned by corporations are that owned in turn by the oil business, as evidenced by the "Beefier Barley" scandal, where a highly-placed administrator commandeered the university's communication system to spread the gospel of climate denial.

Things wandered into a morass pretty quickly after I stopped in at the SUB (Students' Union Building) to find directions that would allow me to locate the Alumni Office. The information booth was shut down and all that was open was Shoppers Drug Mart. It was busy so I joined the lineup to the till and eventually was able to ask for directions. A crowd collected pretty quickly. Confusion reigned while everyone asked around. Nobody seemed to know where the office was. Next I asked where there was a copy of the campus map. More milling around. A campus map was produced. The next question is what does it cost?

Behind me there were grumblings from the throng that had collected. "Why should there be a charge?" the man behind me wanted to know. This being Alberta, the crowd was divided as to whether I should pay. There was clearly no way Shopper's Drug Mart could give me the map. More milling around. Did anyone know where it was? Eventually a compromise: I was allowed to peruse and quickly located the address on Saskatchewan Drive close to the salubrious and altogether upscale precincts of the Faculty Club. I walked for a few moments and, lo and behold, it was closed. No matter: on to my old haunt of Rutherford Library. It too was closed, which was new and a definite sign of the times.

I returned a few days later on a weekday to visit the place where it all began 50 years ago at what was then the School of Library Science. From here I emerged to take up the first part of my career as a lecturer at the University of Lethbridge, a dynamic and successful institution, whose success can be traced back to the far-sighted librarian who grimly demanded the funds needed to make a great library. It has paid off in spades. Now it is the School of Library and Information Studies (SLIS). Although the outside door of the library was open, the door to the library school was closed in the middle of the day. The doorway was dim and deserted like a sepulcher. Otherwise it was deserted.

I decided to head over the bookstore to revive my flagging spirit and check over new acquisitions in the Trade book section, which is always a high point on any visit. The shrinking collection consists of remainders. Instead, with the ordered rows of textbooks, there are racks of clothing and stacks of monogrammed "gewgaws". The trade book section too is closing! No need for libraries or books: It's all on Google!

The single issue that came into sharpest focus for me this past year is the importance of language first and last in all its dimensions in our academic community. This became abundantly clear especially in the unfolding pension debacle as we all try to unravel the "exponential complexity" as the Chairman of the LU Pension Board describes the burgeoning text. Perhaps the failure of the court case fought by LUFA and CAUT in the early 2000s on behalf of academics at LU to keep communications out of the hands of Google, was the beginning of the end. Subsequently, rather than being the two poles that provide the tension needed to keep the university a functional academic institution, LU and LUFA made an alliance and colluded to the detriment of some pensioners.

There's no need to sulk though... get set for a re-tooled comedy hour. If you don't have any original material, feel free to polish up any old comedy routines you might have lying around. Something as slight as a new verse of Oscar Brand's *The Erio Canal* or some other sentimental favorite. This is an admission by donation event. Proceeds to RALU. There comes a time in many comedies where the line is uttered (usually whispered): "There's been a change". The nurse to Sir Giacomo in the *Court Jester* or the count's sidekick, Gretzky, in Bob Hope's classic *Never Say Die*.

As it is comedy, so it is in life: there's been a change...

SUMMER BIKING: DREAMING OF THE *GIRO DI THUNDER BAY*

Summer on the bike in Thunder Bay is mostly pure pleasure. It's safe and unspoiled on separated trails and in the heat of midsummer it is easy to get lost in dreams of the *Giro*. Tall people with long legs in colourful costumes sail through the heat craze of tarmac all over the city on big road bikes. On a separated trail it might even be safe to get lost in the higher flights of fantasy, but our dream is likely to take a nasty spill when bikes cross an arterial roadway like William Street or Central Avenue or the intersection where Dease/Cameron crosses Waterloo/Balmoral. Then it's Hell on Wheels. For the two hours or so that make up "rush hour" it's much worse.

The Dease/Cameron Corridor is a major biking corridor for east-west traffic that funnels walkers and cyclists along both banks of the Neebing River into Chapples Park and the Trans Canada Trail system and Northwood. The complex nomenclature is an indication of the problems city planners face that multiply in this neighborhood where road and rail come together to cross the Neebing River. Cyclists and pedestrians have to cross three barriers in quick succession: the river over humpback bridge, a level crossing of a single CN track and then the road. Waterloo/Balmoral Street is a major arterial four lane, which forms an angle at the intersection with Dease/Cameron Streets. Here they form a shallow corner around which visibility is restricted for motorists. The only controlled crossing for pedestrians in a two kilometer stretch is on the south side of that intersection. This tangle of street names could also include Cumming, which is a long block south (across a bend in the river), because at times pedestrian flow takes this route crossing the road: as in sporting events.

The traffic stream on Waterloo/Balmoral includes transport trucks as well as light vehicles. 500 metres north of the intersection is Wequedong Lodge, which houses convalescents from Northern communities here for medical reasons. The north-south traffic stream during the two hours of rush hour averages 60 to 70 kph (estimate). Cars travelling at the speed limit (50 kph) are a hazard and routinely passed in the right lane.

For cyclists traveling west across the road the traffic light is operated by the vehicle turning left on the south side, so it is necessary to wait for a car. If none comes you can wait... and wait... or you can dodge the cars to cross Cameron Street to actuate the pedestrian light. All this in a heavy exhaust stream close to vehicles, some of which are loud. Now and again a vehicle will run the red light. Try this is darkness or twilight. Veteran commuter cyclists know to look for vehicles with no lights.

When the light does change and you cross you will magically be back on Dease Street and into Chapples Park. Chapples Park is the hub of a gigantic wheel of recreation and sport for all of the city. It is also a feeder for the central portion of the Trans Canada Trail which runs alongside Ford Street. There are connecting trails over the Neebing River and over the McIntyre Floodway to Confederation College. The "circuit" for cycling is the outer lane of the oval roadway, the surface of which is made up of a series of asphalt blobs about 30 metres long with a seam between, which produces a jarring "crash" every few seconds as the bike proceeds round. The faster the bike travels the more rapid and louder the "CRASH CRASH CRASH".

Here at the end of summer 2019 finally a positive move for cyclists (really any wheeled traffic, like a golf cart): the city has put a few dollars' worth of asphalt into each seam in the roadway to make a track that is less shattering. This is NOT yet a velo track but slightly less hard on the anatomy! Progress at last! "Crash crash crash!"

Before long I will be back on the trail and daydreaming of the *Giro* again.

RALU News

Volume 12 number 1

October 2019

RALU Newsletter

All issues other than the latest of *RALU News*, back to v. 1, number 2 (2008) are available on the RALU site.

Early issues are also available from Library and Archives Canada. http://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/201/300/ralu_news/index.html

RALU News is an irregular publication of the Retirees' Association of Lakehead.
Free with membership



RETIREES' ASSOCIATION OF LAKEHEAD
Membership Form

First Name _____

Surname _____

Email address _____

Postal address _____

Postal Code _____ Tel # _____

Former Department or Office at LU, if applicable

Membership is \$10 annually or \$30 per individual per three years, with equal status of membership for retirees, spouses and partners. Annual membership is from Sept 1st to Aug 31st. You are encouraged to support the association by joining us, even if you live far from Northwestern Ontario. Complete the membership form and return with a money order or cheque made out to the Retirees' Association of Lakehead University to RALU Treasurer, c/o 341 Norah North Street, Thunder Bay, Ontario, P7C 4H3.

Further enquiries ralu.communications01@gmail.com

Applying for (circle one) 1 year membership 3 year membership

Please complete a separate form for a spouse or partner.

Thank you for joining us.

Office use only

Paid _____ as Cash _____ or Cheque _____

Date dd/mm/yy. ____/____/____

Tell us how you want to assist RALU, for example, by contributing to the newsletter, giving us a presentation on your expertise, and so on. The Association needs your contribution.

Benefits of Membership in RALU

***Social support. Be informed and active in a group of like-minded people who share the same interests and background.**

***Economic fairness. RALU Pensions and Benefits Committee represents retirees and aims to be a consultancy for all members.**

***High FP Rating. RALU members have a higher than average Fun Potential rating. Get yours today!**

ISSN: 1918-4581

Subscription free with membership

© 2019

Editor Ian F. Dew

Set in *Calibri* typeface

Back issues of the newsletter from the beginning to v. 5, no. 4 (2013) are available free from Library and Archives Canada

http://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/201/300/ralu_news/index.html