

President's Report
2014-2015

This annual meeting is something of a milestone – it is the 10th AGM. While it is an organization of retired university academic and support staff members, UMRA is a young organization, young enough that the people most involved in its creation are still around. So I will begin by saying “thank-you” to all those who help establish UMRA and “thank-you” to all of you for becoming members.

The most important development of the past year was the termination of the no-cost or “free” gym membership benefit. Although the end of this benefit affected about 180 retiree users, both non-users and users of the gym were unhappy with this termination. In March I wrote to Gregory Juliano, associate vice-president for human resources, to register UMRA’s disappointment about the decision, the way it was implemented, and to ask to have existing holders of the no-cost membership exempted from the new fee by “grandfathering” their status. In his reply, Mr. Juliano said: “The new Active Living Centre is being financed in large proportion through the mandatory students fees agreed to after lengthy negotiations with our student unions. In other words, it is the students, not staff or retirees, who were the key to paying the constructions costs. It was felt that it would be unfair for staff or retirees to benefit from substantially improved facilities at the expense of the students.”

The request to “grandfather” existing retired facility users was refused. As of September, 2015, retirees who want access to the facilities of the Active Living Centre are paying an annual fee of \$350, which is the same fee that full-time staff members pay. Retirees who reach age 75, become eligible for the “Super Senior” membership, which is a slightly less expensive \$325.

In his letter Mr. Juliano said “I would like to offer my sincere apologies for the way in which the subject was addressed with UMRA and your membership.... our internal communications and our communications with UMRA were insufficient in this regard, and I want to assure you that we will do our very best to improve upon this in the future.”

The termination of the no-cost retiree gym membership did raise the question of how retirement benefits are created and how they may be terminated. UMRA, therefore, can and will play a key role in protecting and enhancing retirement benefits.

This summer just over 30 people travelled to the university research farm at Glenlea and spent the afternoon at the Bruce D. Campbell Farm and Food Discovery Centre. It was the first time that a summer event was planned and was a success in that it generated a “profit” of \$194, an amount that was added to the UMRA bursary fund.

In closing, I think that retirees are an important constituency within the university community. I also believe that UMRA can play a role in fostering a positive relationship with the university. Your membership and the extent to which you choose to become active in the association is an important component of our interaction with the university.

Ed Unrau

President