



PRESIDENT'S REPORT

OCRA™ - 7th GENERAL MEETING Fleming College, Peterborough

OCTOBER 29, 2009

In 2009 OCRA focused on our mission of advocating for CAAT retirees on pension and health benefit issues. We have continued to develop, establish and maintain liaison with those who are responsible for matters that affect retirees.

With all the acronyms we use, we thought it important for OCRA members to know the language too. Derrick May, past President, has put a document on the OCRA website that deciphers and elaborates on the acronyms we use regularly. I will explain the acronyms as I use them in this presentation.

In the newsletter and on the website, we have already informed you that OCRA made two submissions in 2007 to the **Ontario Expert Commission on Pensions**. Early in 2009 I attended a follow up meeting with Dr. Harry Arthurs, Commissioner of the OECP. He presented his report entitled *A Fine Balance: Safe Pensions, Affordable Plans, Fair Rules* to all the stakeholders who had made submissions. Of particular interest to OCRA were the recommendations in Chapter 8 on Governance. OCRA has always believed retirees, as a group, should have a voice in decisions that affect our interests. The Commission agreed and specifically recommended in Chapter 8-24 that retired plan members should be eligible to participate in any plan's governance in which active plan members are eligible to participate. As you know OCRA has been promoting this principle for some time. We believe that retirees must be able to select their representatives to speak on their behalf regarding pension matters and health benefits.

To keep the dialogue going and position **OCRA as a leader in looking after CAAT retiree issues**, we have met with representatives of OPSEU (Ontario Public Service Employees Union), OCASA (Ontario Colleges Administrative Staff Association), the Council (College Compensation and Appointments Council) and the CAAT (Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology) Pension Plan over the past year. Our aim is to advocate on your behalf. OCRA believes that retirees' voices must be heard at the table where decisions are made about pension or health benefits. Currently, it is mostly active employees who decide who represents retirees. As an example, in the past few weeks, OCASA sought a retiree to sit on the CAAT Pension Plan Board of Trustees. They have few retirees in their Association and as far as we know, only those few people were asked if they would like to be a trustee. If you are not a member of OCASA, you may not have known there was an opportunity for you to be a trustee on the CAAT Pension Plan.

OCRA finds this unacceptable. The Ontario Expert Commission on Pensions also finds this unacceptable. How can we change this process so that all retirees have input on matters important to them? How can retirees have input into who sits at the table and makes decisions about our pension or our health benefits? OCRA, the largest and only association dedicated entirely to CAAT retirees, should nominate and select their representatives on all relevant bodies such as those dealing with health benefits and pensions.

To make this happen OCRA believes we must build a relationship with those who currently control our pensions and our health benefits in order for us to move forward. We must keep the dialogue going to explain that retirees have a vested interest in these matters. To drive this point home, one of the phrases I often use in meetings with non-retirees is “everyone at this table will be retired at some point”. Wouldn’t you want your trustee to be someone who understands what a retiree needs? OCRA believes that active employees who currently appoint people to sit on committees dealing with retiree issues often do not comprehend retiree concerns. No retiree can afford to lose sight of the impact of others deciding our future and making decisions without our input.

Today we will hear from Derek Dobson the new CEO of the CAAT Plan. OCRA met with him in June shortly after he assumed his new job. We agreed to continue to liaise with the Plan. At that meeting Derek volunteered to speak to retirees at this General Meeting. This afternoon we will hear from Mary Hofweller of the Council. (Formerly the Council of Regents.) The Council is the policyholder of the CAAT retiree health plans. The Council hosted a meeting for OCRA with OPSEU and OCASA in the spring. We had a frank discussion and look forward to further talks on how we can work together with all three groups in the best interests of retirees.

On the health issue front, OCRA has recently prepared a paper for submission **to the Committee of Presidents**. The paper clearly defined OCRA’s position on retiree representation on a new kind of health committee that would have a democratic structure allowing retirees to make decisions about their future. We owe a special thank you to Board members Anita Blair and Jim Martin who drafted the paper and to the rest of the Board for their input finalizing the document.

We were asked by **FSCO** (Financial Service Commission of Ontario) to comment on their **Statement of Priorities for 2009**. FSCO is an arm’s-length regulatory agency of the Ministry of Finance. They regulate pension plans, insurance companies etc. via the Pension Benefits Act. FSCO is the body that OCRA has dealt with regarding the retiree representation issue and the CAAT Pension Plan. We commented on several issues in FSCO’s Priorities for 2009. One particular recommendation was that FSCO have legal rights to enforce certain processes so that the *intent* of a Superintendent’s order can be accomplished. OCRA was successful getting FSCO to order the CAAT Plan to conform to the Pension Benefits Act but in doing so, the Plan removed the retiree trustee position from its Board of Trustees.

You may have heard of **Bill 90, the Collective Bargaining Act** recently passed by the Ontario Government. This Bill changes the way bargaining occurs at the colleges and introduces a new group called the College Employer Council. This new Council will replace the current College Compensation and Appointments Council. Why is Bill 90 important to retirees? The current Council is the policyholder for the CAAT retiree health plans. Section 87 of Bill 90 refers to the new College Employer Council being responsible for insured benefit plans only for persons employed by the colleges. There is no mention of responsibility for retiree benefit plans. I have contacted Don Sinclair, the Executive Director of the Council to ask him to find out if this was an oversight and what the implications are for retirees.

At the General Meeting last year, the membership approved a motion that **OCRA be charged with lobbying improvements to the CAAT Health Benefit Plan** as outlined in a presentation St. Clair retirees made at the meeting. OCRA has done this in a letter to the Council. Among the issues we addressed were the selection of retirees to sit on the CRGIAC (College Retirees Group Insurance Advisory Committee); travel/medical insurance; the inconsistency of benefit information the colleges give to retirees; the cancellation of life insurance coverage for retired faculty after the age of 75. The response from Council was that they reviewed the recommendations and they suggested OCRA look at other organizations for travel coverage and speak to the union about the life insurance for faculty. OPSEU is currently at the bargaining table and we have alerted them to this issue. We sent the Council another letter and outlined again what OCRA believes is important in the changes we proposed and offered to work with the Council to market the health benefit plans and provide input to Plan amendments.

Although there are still major issues confronting us, OCRA has not lost sight of our priorities. We will continue to position OCRA as the advocacy voice for its members. I am personally grateful for the outstanding work of Board members. Thanks to their commitment, creativity and passion, and your support we will move forward. One way you can show your support today is to volunteer your talents to work for OCRA. You will have that opportunity in the election portion of the agenda.

Linda Choptiany
President