



REPORT OF LIAISON & PUBLIC RELATIONS COORDINATOR

OCRA™ - 7th GENERAL MEETING

Fleming College, Peterborough

OCTOBER 29, 2009

The liaison and public relations coordinator has had a busy year! Part of the job is to facilitate communication between OCRA and various organizations: college retiree associations, college human resource departments, and other retiree associations. To keep these contacts informed, I have created and maintained a large file of email addresses. At various times throughout the year I have been in touch with the organizations just mentioned as well as the college presidents, OCASA, the CAAT Plan, The Council, Colleges Ontario, etc., and to those special individuals who make up the highly confidential "Friends of OCRA" mailing list. If anyone here today would like to suggest names of suitable individuals to be added to that list, please let me know.

The production and distribution of the OCRA newsletter is always a big job, and in the absence of a communications officer, several executive members have shared this task. As well as helping to write and edit the newsletter, I wrote bulletins about matters of importance to the members for posting on the website between newsletters, and I also wrote articles about OCRA's activities for the Seneca Retirees Association newsletter.

This year I was responsible for the design of the 2009 general meeting brochure, receiving and routing of local retiree association newsletters to the OCRA Board and responding to surveys such as the survey sent to us by AROHE (Association of Retirement Organizations in Higher Education, the US equivalent of CURAC).

Liaison and public relations also means attending meetings and teleconferences on behalf of OCRA, and these have included:

- § Presentation of the Commissioner Harry Arthur's report following completion of the Ontario Expert Commission on Pensions hearings.
- § Meeting with representatives of The Council, OCASA, and OPSEU held in March 2009.
- § Teleconference meetings of the executive of CURAC - the College and University Retiree Associations of Canada, of which OCRA is a member.

OCRA's membership in CURAC provides information about the activities and events of education retirees from coast to coast. Through CURAC (www.curac.ca), OCRA members have access to discounted membership fees in CARP (Canadian Association of Retired Persons).

In the fall edition of the CURAC newsletter, there is an article describing the loss of indexed increases for the years 2010 - 2016 to the pensions of the retirees of Bishop's University in Quebec. Let's hope that something like this never happens to CAAT pensioners. A happier event on the CURAC schedule is the annual conference, to be held May 18-20, 2010, at York University. Interesting sessions and conference activities are being developed, and I hope that some OCRA members will plan to attend

Amendments to the OCRA by-law were made at the last general meeting, and this year I was involved in drafting more amendments to the by-law, and to the constitution as well. Both documents are now up to date with the association's practices and procedures, and these amendments will be presented for your approval today.

The OCRA brochure that is sent to the Human Resources Departments of the colleges for distribution to retiring employees has been updated and supplies sent to the colleges. As you will note in your meeting package today, an OCRA bookmark has been created, and this also will be sent to the colleges to give to their new retirees.

Another project this year has been to update my detailed spreadsheet comparing the extended health insurance benefits available to CAAT retirees with those available to retirees of other institutions and the general retiree public. Copies are available by email only, so if you would like to wade through this 12-page comparison, please give me your email address.

I find members often ask OCRA for assistance on a variety of issues. For example, we have received questions about travel coverage or who to contact to report a death or how to follow up on health or pension issues. Retirees have told OCRA they appreciate our help because they don't know who to ask to provide the assistance they need.

Following a question that was asked at last year's general meeting, I recently sent emails to the academic bargaining committee to ask if they could find a way to secure an amendment to the collective agreement to extend the group life insurance age limit from 75 years to life. We are awaiting a reply from OPSEU. We continue to pursue issues you believe are important.

As you can see from this report, liaison and public relations work covers a wide range of activities. There is always something new to be learned as I explore ways to establish communication channels and create opportunities for OCRA to fulfill its objective of being the voice of Ontario college retirees.

Joan Cunnington
Liaison and Public Relations Coordinator