



Vol. 35, no. 1, June, 2025



President's Message

Garry Milton

Some Thoughts & Thanks following Eight Years as President

In my first President's Message following the elections at the April 2017 Annual General Meeting, I expressed my great pleasure on taking on the role of President of the Concordia University Pensioners' Association. As I prepare to step away following eight years as President, my conviction that the need for and importance of having a strong Pensioners Association has only grown deeper.

I believe that Concordia pensioners are and should be recognized as a valued part of the overall University community. We have much to offer. Prior to retirement, we contributed to the growth and success that the University enjoys today, and we continue to do so. Our active representation on the University Pension Committee, the Pension Investment Sub-Committee and the Concordia Employee Benefits Committee is significant and benefits pensioners, as well as active faculty and staff. Our participation and fundraising success in the annual Concordia Shuffle has been remarkable. Our Student Awards Program supports graduate and undergraduate students through the annual awarding of meaningful scholarships and bursaries. In addition to the formal awards, we continue to provide additional student financial support through other means such as donations to the Student Emergency Food Fund and the Stingers Women's

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Message du président

Garry Milton

Réflexions et remerciements après huit ans à la présidence

Dans mon premier message du président, à la suite des élections de l'assemblée générale annuelle d'avril 2017, j'exprimais mon immense plaisir d'assumer la présidence de l'Association des retraités de l'Université Concordia. Alors que je m'appête à quitter mes fonctions après huit ans à la présidence, ma conviction quant à la nécessité et à l'importance d'une association de retraités forte n'a fait que se renforcer.

Je crois que les retraités de Concordia sont et doivent être reconnus comme une composante précieuse de la communauté universitaire. Nous avons beaucoup à offrir. Avant notre retraite, nous avons contribué à la croissance et au succès que l'Université connaît aujourd'hui, et nous continuons de le faire. Notre représentation active au Comité de retraite de l'Université, au Sous-comité des placements des régimes de retraite et au Comité des avantages sociaux des employés de Concordia est importante et profite aux retraités, ainsi qu'aux professeurs et au personnel en activité. Notre participation et notre succès en matière de collecte de fonds dans le cadre de la Marche annuelle Shuffle ont été remarquables. Notre programme de bourses d'études soutient les étudiantes et étudiants du premier et du deuxième cycle par l'attribution annuelle de bourses d'études et d'aide financière importantes. En plus de ces aides officielles, nous continuons d'offrir un soutien financier supplémentaire aux étudiants par d'autres moyens, notamment par des dons au Fonds alimentaire d'urgence pour les étudiants et

suite à la page 3

(continued from pg 1) Hockey Team. We are involved in activities supporting the Library. And, with the challenges Concordia is currently facing, we will continue to look for opportunities to support the University.

Of course, a strong and meaningful Association can only be accomplished with a dedicated Executive Committee and a solid membership. In terms of the former, I have been fortunate during my tenure to be part of an Executive group that has been cooperative in spirit and committed in meeting their various responsibilities.

A key role of CUPA is to contribute to the oversight of the University's Pension Plan and Benefits Plan. The importance of these plans is fundamental to the continued well-being of our members, and we have been very fortunate to have been represented ably and expertly by Bryan Campbell, Hal Proppe, George Tsoublekas and Howard Fink. Moving forward, Bryan and I will continue in the Pension Portfolio with Jamshid Etezadi and Amely Jurgenliemk in the Benefits Portfolio.

Joanne Locke, and more recently, Joanne Beaudoin have effectively managed our student awards program, which includes our significant annual scholarship and bursary awards, and are responsible for the implementation of necessary changes to the Retired Faculty and Staff Endowment agreement to better respect the Association's wishes.

Most of our communications are now done electronically, especially following the pandemic. Roger Kenner managed our website and list server for many years, with Mike Babin taking on these duties more recently. Our Facebook page was developed and administered by Sandra Spina and Kathleen Perry and Craig Buchanan continues as Editor of the Newsletter following many years of service. Our new logo resulted from the work of Veronique Verthuy, Sandra Spina and Lina Uberti.

Our Social Outreach and Member Activities portfolio has been developed and managed throughout my tenure by Wendy Hedrich, Sandra Spina and Lina Uberti. They are responsible for the organization of the General Meetings, Holiday Luncheons, receptions and various cultural activities that many of you have attended and enjoyed.

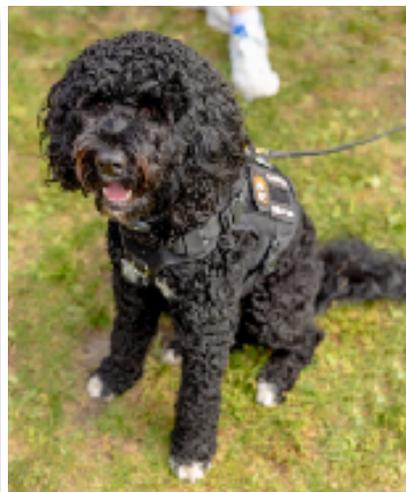
The success of any association requires an effective Secretary and Treasurer and we have been fortunate that Nancy Brennan, Bryan Campbell, Hal Proppe and Mike Babin have fulfilled those duties. Similarly, every President requires good guidance from their Vice-President and the

Past President, and in those positions, I have been fortunate to have received sage advice on many topics from Bill Knitter, Howard Fink and Kathleen Perry.

A solid membership base is essential for CUPA to maintain its role as an important voice for Concordia Pensioners within the broader University community. We have developed a presence that is strongly felt and appreciated, but healthy membership numbers are important as they are influential when discussing matters of interest to retirees with the University, such as those related to our benefits or otherwise. Under Kathleen Perry's leadership and following Joyce Payan's tenure on the Membership Portfolio, we are at the highest membership level ever for the Association. Let's keep that trend going!

I would like to thank all the Executive Committee members I have served with over my years as President for their dedication to CUPA and the considerable time spent on behalf of Concordia Pensioners. In addition to those mentioned above, Jitendra Desai and Nancy Helms served as Members at Large. I would also like to thank all the members who over the years have expressed their support. It is very much appreciated.

As retirees of Concordia, we have strong ties with the University and, as shown through our membership in CUPA, a desire to remain connected in some way. I hope you continue to retain membership in the Association, encourage others to join and consider taking on a leadership role in CUPA.



Newton, Concordia's resident therapy dog is expected to make a visit to our Holiday Lunch in December. This Portuguese water dog will be ready for a

pat, cuddle and even a hug.

(suite à la page 1) à l'équipe féminine de hockey des Stingers. Nous participons également à des activités de soutien à la bibliothèque. Et compte tenu des défis auxquels Concordia est actuellement confrontée, nous continuerons de chercher des occasions de soutenir l'Université.

Bien sûr, une association forte et significative ne peut être bâtie qu'avec un comité exécutif dévoué et une base solide de membres. À cet égard, j'ai eu la chance, durant mon mandat, de faire partie d'un comité exécutif animé d'un esprit de coopération et engagé à assumer ses diverses responsabilités.

Un rôle clé de l'ARUC est de contribuer à la supervision du régime de retraite et du régime d'avantages sociaux de l'Université. L'importance de ces régimes est fondamentale pour le bien-être continu de nos membres, et nous avons eu la chance d'être représentés avec compétence et expertise par Bryan Campbell, Hal Proppe, George Tsoablekas et Howard Fink. À l'avenir, Bryan et moi continuerons de gérer le portefeuille des retraites, avec Jamshid Etezadi et Amely Jurgenliemk au portefeuille des avantages sociaux.

Joanne Locke, et plus récemment Joanne Beaudoin, ont géré avec efficacité notre programme de bourses d'études, qui comprend l'octroi annuel de bourses et d'aides financières importante, et sont responsables de la mise en œuvre des changements nécessaires à l'accord de dotation pour les professeurs et employés retraités afin de mieux respecter les souhaits de l'Association.

La majorité de nos communications se font maintenant par voie électronique, surtout depuis la pandémie. Roger Kenner a géré notre site Web et notre serveur de listes de diffusion pendant de nombreuses années, avant que Mike Babin ne reprenne plus récemment ces fonctions. Notre page Facebook a été développée et administrée par Sandra Spina et Kathleen Perry, et Craig Buchanan demeure rédacteur en chef du bulletin après de nombreuses années de service. Notre nouveau logo est le fruit du travail de Véronique Verthuy, Sandra Spina et Lina Uberti.

Notre portefeuille d'activités sociales et de mobilisation des membres a été développé et géré tout au long de mon mandat par Wendy Hedrich, Sandra Spina et Lina Uberti. Elles sont responsables de l'organisation des assemblées générales, des repas des fêtes, des réceptions et de diverses activités culturelles auxquelles nombre d'entre vous ont participé et apprécié.

Le succès de toute association repose sur un secrétaire et un trésorier efficaces, et nous avons eu la chance de compter sur Nancy Brennan, Bryan Campbell, Hal Proppe et Mike Babin pour remplir ces fonctions. De même, chaque président a besoin des conseils avisés de son vice-président et de son prédécesseur. À ces postes, j'ai eu la chance de bénéficier des précieux conseils de Bill Knitter, Howard Fink et Kathleen Perry sur de nombreux sujets.

Une solide base de membres est essentielle pour que l'ARUC conserve son rôle de porte-parole important des retraités de Concordia au sein de la communauté universitaire. Nous avons développé une présence bien ancrée et appréciée, mais maintenir un nombre élevé de membres est essentiel pour notre influence lors des discussions avec l'Université sur des questions d'intérêt pour les retraités, notamment celles liées à nos avantages sociaux. Sous la direction de Kathleen Perry et à la suite du mandat de Joyce Payan à la tête du portefeuille des membres, nous avons atteint le niveau d'adhésions le plus élevé jamais enregistré par l'Association. Continuons sur cette lancée !

J'aimerais remercier tous les membres du Comité exécutif avec lesquels j'ai travaillé pendant mes années de présidence, pour leur dévouement à l'ARUC et le temps considérable qu'ils ont consacré aux retraités de Concordia. Outre les personnes mentionnées ci-dessus, Jitendra Desai et Nancy Helms ont également siégé à titre de membres à titre personnel. J'aimerais aussi remercier tous les membres qui, au fil des ans, m'ont exprimé leur soutien. Je leur en suis très reconnaissant.

En tant que retraités de Concordia, nous conservons des liens forts avec l'Université et, à travers notre adhésion à l'ARUC, exprimons le désir de demeurer connectés d'une manière ou d'une autre. J'espère que vous continuerez à faire partie de l'Association, à encourager d'autres personnes à s'y joindre, et à considérer vous impliquer dans un rôle de leadership au sein de l'ARUC.

Concordia University is located on unceded indigenous lands. The Kanien'kehá:ka Nation is recognized as the original custodians of Tiohtià:ke/Montreal.



PENSION REPORT

Bryan Campbell

The books are finally closing on the Fund's returns for 2024. I can report at this point a 6.4% net return for our Fund during this period. As we need a 5.9% return to meet future pension liabilities, this return is reassuring. Nonetheless, several points are worth mentioning:

- The return would have been a percentage point higher if not for the poor performance of our active hedging strategy. It has been in place for the last several years and has performed well. But this past year was somewhat of a disaster. We have recently abandoned the strategy and have returned to a passive 50-50 hedging strategy relative to US\$ returns. Also, we have commissioned a review of the hedging landscape available from different managers to determine whether an alternative to this passive strategy would be to our benefit. We hope to make a decision in this regard by the fall.
- The 5.9% objective is an ongoing benchmark that should be applied on a mid-term basis. The Fund's returns over the recent 3- year period is 2.56%; over 5-years, 9.01%; and over 10-years, 6.32%. The return over the recent period is a concern; more on this point, below.
- The Canadian CPI in 2024 was 1.8%. As I have discussed in previous newsletters, our indexation policy is conservative depending on past returns. Unfortunately, the calculations incorporating this year's returns with those of recent years do not support an indexation gain to cover the 1.8% erosion in the purchasing power of your pension due to inflation. During the summer, you will be receiving a notice in the mail detailing these calculations.

The impact of COVID followed on its heels by policy turbulence in American trade policy, all in the context of ongoing geo-political uncertainty certainly amount to a challenge for prudent investments that meet the 5.9% objective. We have been undergoing a review of our current portfolio managers as well as assessing strategies that are more appropriate in the current financial climate. Come the winter, I suspect that there will be interesting changes in the line-up of our managers. *A suivre.*

CURAC

Did you know that CURAC, the College and University Retiree Associations of Canada, has an affinity program that includes travel, home and auto insurance as well as travel planning services? You are a member and can take advantage of these programs just by being a member of CUPARUC. For more information just go to curac.ca



MEMBERSHIP

Kathleen Perry

As is our established practice we send out membership renewals in the spring. Many of our members have already renewed – if you have - thank you.

This year you may have noticed we introduced a new option to pay your dues for 2 years. The annual dues remain \$30 with \$5 going directly to our student support/ awards fund. Members can renew by e-transfer or by cheque. This past year we had 392 members, but I have no doubt this year we will break through that number. As of going to print 107 persons had paid their 2025-26 dues. Last year we had 47 new members. We continue to offer one year of free membership to new pensioners.

Why are membership levels important? The more active members we have, the greater our influence when discussing matters with Concordia. A larger membership also supports the possibility of a wider range of activities and reinforces our place in the larger Concordia community.

Maybe you know of Concordia pensioners/retirees that are not members, and you think they might be interested in CUPARUC, please let me know (mkperry@sympatico.ca) and I would be happy to get in touch.

If you have not yet paid your membership dues, you can do so in person at the AGM on June 18. Membership and renewal forms, which include payment instructions, can be found on the Association website - cuparucconcordia.ca.

Should you have changed your email or postal address recently please let the association know by sending an email to cuparuc@concordia.ca or leaving a voice mail message at 438-722-9119.

BENEFITS REPORT

Amely Jurgenliemk & Jamshid Etezadi

Elections held last fall brought in new CUPA representatives to the Concordia University Employee Benefits Committee (CEBC). Consequently, this is our first newsletter as members of the CUPA Executive. Members of the plan are indebted to former representatives for their exceptional scope of knowledge and diligence throughout many years of service. So, we, as new reps, are starting this report with our thanks for the exemplary stewardship of this file to date.

This winter marked the culmination of several years' work on revision and development of the group health insurance plan to acknowledge its increasing costs while addressing, as well as possible, the changing needs of plan members. Before discussing the changes to that plan, we'll note that there haven't been significant changes to other benefits available to retirees which may include basic life insurance, tuition waivers and, depending upon one's former employee association or union, access to services, activities and events.

In early December 2024, Human Resources presented two online information sessions on the upcoming changes to the group health insurance plan, one each in French and English, specifically for retired members. The sessions were very informative, quite comprehensive, and well-attended.

In the following paragraphs, we aim to (1) summarize the main material effects of plan revisions on Concordia's retirees; (2) note certain problems which have complicated the transition to the new plan; and (3) highlight ways in which each of us can try to maximize our benefits.

So, to begin: Previous newsletters identified the important changes for retirees. Here is a brief summary of the most substantial among them, to refresh your memory:

1. The monthly premiums paid by pensioners aged 65 years or more increased substantially due to a change in the cost-sharing formula between policy holders and the University; that is, the University will no longer contribute to the share of the premium which is payable to RAMQ. These members are now paying up to three times what they did under the previous plan. The exact amount of the premium can be seen as the monthly deduction on the pension statement.

2. Introduction of a Health Care Spending Account for every plan member goes a long way toward compensating for the premium increase. Should anyone choose to, they may be able to defray the entire amount. More on this below.
3. There is no longer any deductible payable by the policy-holder. However, a \$3.00 dispensing fee is charged for each prescription filled.
4. RAMQ-listed medications are reimbursed at 80%. When a generic alternative to a patented product is available, only the generic cost can be claimed. Where no generic alternative exists for acceptable prescription drugs, reimbursement will be 60%. When the total cost of a policy-holder's prescription drugs has reached \$3,000 (including the share paid by the plan), subsequent prescriptions will be reimbursed at 100%.
5. Compensation for para-medical services has improved in several areas, for example:
 - 5(a) Mental health support services. For psychologists, psychiatrists and psychotherapists, reimbursement increases from 50% to 80%, with a combined annual maximum for the category of \$1,500.
 - 5(b) Kinesiologists have been added to the category of occupational therapists, physiotherapists, physical rehabilitation therapists and sports therapists. This group is combined with chiropractors, massage therapists, naturopaths, osteopaths, podiatrists, chiropodist and acupuncturist services. The combined annual maximum for the category is \$1,000.
 - 5(c) Speech therapists and audiologist services have a combined annual maximum of \$1,000.
 - 5(d) Pharmacogenetic tests have been added as an allowable expense.

Implementation of the changes has been uneven. Although the new plan was six years in the making, it seemed that SunLife was not ready to get started in January 2025. The higher premiums were first charged against the pension payment in February 2025, with the effect that pensioners paid the substantially higher rate for February as well as paying, retroactively, the difference for January. It was a big spend all at once which, for many, was unexpected.

Further, many plan members have encountered problems with their claims, especially during the first two weeks of January but also continuing to the present. SunLife has made errors and, frankly, interpreting pharmacy receipts is tricky at the best of times. It's understood that big changes are always challenging and some problems are inevitable, so we've felt it's particularly important to work closely

with HR to identify issues and work together in finding solutions. To that end, we're often in touch with the new Manager of Pension and Benefits, Tania Lacroix. Hal Proppe also met recently with Tania and Jean-Sébastien Senécal, the University's Director of Compensation, Pension and Benefits, to review overall implementation to-date and consider how well it's playing out. One take-away is that Human Resources will prepare a guide to understanding our pharmacy receipts, so that we can recognize when the charges are correct and when they might not be. We're told this will be available to our members fairly soon.

To move to our final point, suggestions for optimizing your benefits, we'll focus on the Health Care Spending Account (HCSA). The HCSA is a new element of Concordia's healthcare group insurance plan, designed to add flexibility and a limited capacity to reduce your cost for services not directly covered by our plan. Each plan member receives an annual allocation of funds which can be used in the way the member chooses, for example, for dental or vision, or to defray the premium increase. This is important; you can use the whole allocation against the cost of your premiums. For members over 65 years of age, the annual amount allocated for a family for 2025 is \$1,280, and \$670 for a single person. If the entire amount isn't used in 2025, the difference will be added to your allocation for 2026. If it's not entirely spent in 2026, you lose the remainder. So, it makes sense to use it. We've found the claim is easily made online and there's also an interactive, printable form on the home page of the Pensioners Corner.

You'll want to keep this in mind as well: The HCSA is a taxable benefit, but the amount on your tax slip won't necessarily correspond to your actual usage. Your "taxable benefit" will be the average usage in your category. If you have used less than the average, you'll be taxed for benefits you didn't actually get. We hoped the University might reconsider this approach after accruing some claims experience, but we've been told it's a legal requirement to set the taxable benefit at average usage.

Note that there are excellent sources of information online specifically geared to inform plan members about these changes. The best, comprehensive source of general information about the group insurance plan is probably this one: <https://www.concordia.ca/content/dam/concordia/services/hr/docs/benefits/healthplan/gip-summary-pensioners-en-v3.pdf>.

Progress is being made on updating the HR website but, meanwhile, you can contact the Employee Services Team at hr-employeeservices@concordia.ca with questions about the group insurance plan and any other Concordia benefits issues.



CONDOLENCES - DECEASED MEMBERS

Since November 2024 Newsletter

Leonda Adler, Mathematics & Statistics
Judith Appleby, Library
Carolyn Beckman, Biology
Henry Beissel, English
Charles Belanger, Academic Facilities & Services
Morton Belinsky, Mathematics & Statistics
Laila Berger
Ronald Crawford, Management
Fausta De Souza
Artur Dias, Operations
Susanne Dragffy, Bookstore
Raymond Dumas, Mel Hoppenheim School of Cinema
Barbara Elmhirst, Registrar
Janet Fradette, Registrar
Pascale Goulon-Danesh - Cinema.
Dieter Halbwidl, Psychology
Mohamed Ibrahim
Pierrette Kearney, Printing
Melvin Komoda
Bernard Lagacé, Music
Sharon McLean, Distribution & Transportation
Pierre Marchand, Physical Plant
David Marler, Continuing Education
Diane Moray, Political Science
Joseph Mouledoux, Sociology & Anthropology
Rodolfo Polcari, Facilities
Krishnaiyan Thulasiraman, Electrical and Computer Engineering
Olive Walker, Faculty of Commerce
Jacqueline Wilson, Creative Art Therapies



SCHOLARSHIPS AND AWARDS FUND

Joanne Locke

Over the past twelve months since the 2024 Annual General Meeting, many initiatives have come to fruition with respect to the Concordia University Retired Faculty and Staff Scholarships and Awards. In addition to adding 12 more award recipients to the already impressive list of 244 students, we have moved further forward with the one-time 3-year undergraduate entrance scholarship to honour Dr. Howard Fink; transferred in excess of \$42,000.00 to grow the CUPA Endowment; closed the CUPA Development Fund account; and arranged to transfer \$4,000.00 from the funds accrued through the \$5.00 non-receipted membership donation to deserving student athletes.

However before we review each of these actions, a bit of background...

Established in 2002, the Concordia University Retired Faculty and Staff Scholarships and Awards Endowment is the result of an agreement between the University and the Concordia University Pensioners' Association (CUPA) to use the proceeds of the demutualization of the Sun Life Insurance Policy to provide, in perpetuity, in-course support for graduate and undergraduate students in any Faculty at Concordia University. The annual payout from these invested funds is split equally between graduate awards and undergraduate awards. Further, the monies allocated at the undergraduate level are equally divided between scholarships and bursaries. Graduate award recipients are selected on the basis of academic excellence. The School of Graduate Studies administers these awards allocating funding across Faculties through the application of their Funding Allocation Formula. Undergraduate awards are administered by the Financial Aid and Awards Office through their Undergraduate Student Awards Committee. Scholarships are awarded on the basis of academic merit while bursaries are awarded on the basis of financial need and academic standing.

The original Agreement signed in 2002 called for 4 graduate awards, one per Faculty, 4 undergraduate scholarships with one per Faculty and 4 undergraduate bursaries, again one per Faculty. While values were included in the original Agreement, it also provided that in the event that the total payout required to meet the specified obligation was not met, the value and/or number of awards in a given year could be altered without amendment to the Agreement. Over the years this has

proven to be a very wise provision as the values of the awards have fluctuated somewhat depending on the dollar amount of the payout in a given year. At the graduate level the range has been from \$4,000.00 to \$5,000.00 while at the undergraduate level the range has been from \$2,000.00 to \$2,500.00. The provision was especially significant when in 2014-2015 the Foundation reduced the payout of all endowment funds from 5% to 3.5%.

It has always been a CUPA goal to ensure that students from all four Faculties benefit from CUPA awards and that the awards are at the highest possible level. The aim therefore is to offer \$5,000.00 awards to graduate students and \$2,500.00 at the undergraduate level, requiring an annual Endowment payout totaling \$40,000.00. The above mentioned award values are the recommended minimum amounts suggested by the Faculties together with Advancement.

To meet this obligation, with the help of University Advancement, in 2021 a CUPA Development Fund was established to hold any monies raised by the Shuffle and any donations. The original purpose of the CUPA Development fund was to top up any shortfall between what was generated by the Endowment payout and the amount of awards money needed to fulfill our obligations. When the CUPA Development Fund was established, the amounts being generated each year were in the \$2,000.00 range. Then somewhat unexpectedly in the past three years these amounts have grown significantly, primarily due to the hard work of the CUPA Shuffle team, the Pacemakers, and their amazing supporters so that the CUPA Development Fund totalled over \$69,000.00.

It was quickly recognized however, that donations to increase the Endowment would not only remedy the shortfall but would ensure that no shortfall would exist in the future. An added bonus would be to continue to grow the Endowment and eventually increase the values of the awards.

Fundraising success and the resulting CUPA Development Fund monies allowed for an initial transfer in January 2025 of \$20,000.00 to the Endowment to ensure, as best as possible given market trends, that the \$40,000.00 obligation is generated.

In addition the one-time 3-year undergraduate entrance scholarship to honour Dr. Howard Fink who passed away in 2023 was created and will be awarded on admission to an undergraduate student in 2025-2026. The value of the award is \$2,500.00 for the 3-year period thus totalling \$7,500.00.

The remaining monies in the CUPA Development Fund are being transferred to the CUPA Endowment Fund. This is in

the amount of approximately \$42,000.00 thus closing the CUPA Development Fund. Subsequent fundraising proceeds will go directly to the Endowment; growing the Endowment is in line with the original agreement, that is, to offer awards to students in perpetuity.

Finally it is exciting that the \$5.00 non-receipted donations from each membership now totals in excess of \$6,000.00 of which CUPA is able to donate \$4,000.00 to the championship Concordia Women's Hockey team. In the future the CUPA Executive, on behalf of the Association, hopes to be able to support other niche student needs within the University.

As donors, we have every reason to be proud of our initiatives. It is our continuing generosity that has supported over 250 students in their studies.

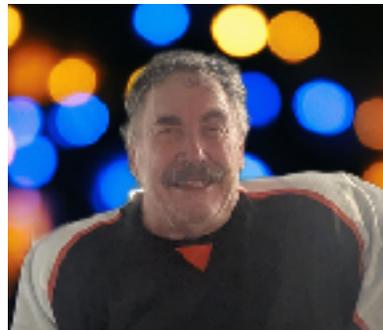
NEW MEMBERS Since November 2024

Matthew Anderson	Johanne Biffi
Jeanne Bisson	Catherine Bolton
Donald Chambers	Marcio Coelho
Russell Copeman	Claude D'Astous
Elaine Denis	Jean-Marc Edwards
Terry Emrick *	Rose Fong
Samia Gamati	Janet Henderson
Adrian Iovita	Philippa Langshaw
Denis Legault	Louis Lapointe
Marielle Nitoslawska	Sandra Pearson-Whitney
Rosemary Reilly	Yusef Shayan
Geneviève Sicotte	Marie-Christine Simard
Katherine Tweedie	René Witte

* Announced at the December 2024 FGM, but not included in November 2024 Newsletter

The Ladies' Morning Musical Club is putting on another year of wonderful chamber music concerts in our Oscar Peterson Concert Hall starting September 7. A full season subscription for 10 concerts is \$350 and single tickets are \$60. All concerts are on Sunday afternoons. For more information go to lmmc.ca.

SHUFFLE REPORT Kathleen Perry



Shuffle 36 is Friday, September 26, 2025. I'm so pleased to announce that Mike Babin will head up our team - The Pacemakers this year. The Shuffle website for donations is expected to go live around the end of July - watch for it.

Just like last year, you can do the shuffle and fundraising in your own individual way, but if you are up to it, the walk to Loyola is a wonderful way to spend a fall afternoon.

Remember all funds raised go to the Retired Faculty and Staff Scholarship and Awards Program.

REMINDER:

The Annual General Meeting and spring lunch will take place on Wednesday June 18 in the Concordia University Conference Centre, 9th floor of the John Molson School of Business Building. The meeting is scheduled from 10:15 to 12:15.

Prior to the meeting representatives from Human Resources will be on hand to answer questions and address issues from retirees.

Reservations for the lunch reception that follows the meeting are now closed. Requests received now will subject to availability.

FINANCIAL REPORT Garry Milton

This report should be considered interim as the May 2025 figures were not finalized at the time of publication. The final 2024-2025 Financial Report will be available in the Fall Newsletter and presented at the Fall General Meeting.

The Association remains in a strong state financially. The 2023-24 membership year ended with a balance of

\$40,185.11. As of the Newsletter publication date, we have a healthy balance approaching \$38,000. CUPARUC has adequate operating funds, the ability to meet foreseeable obligations to maintain our student awards program and the flexibility to take on projects that may be identified as beneficial to our members.

The following items are of note:

1. Membership fee revenue will be down over \$3,000 from 2023-24. Fees are recorded when they are received regardless of the year for which they are intended. Therefore, the figures reported in the financial statements usually do not reflect the actual number of paid-up members for a particular year. Our paid membership figures are up this year. The revenue decrease reflects the fact that some members pay for multiple years at one time and the timing of payments.
2. General Meetings & Events. Expenses have remained relatively stable compared to last year. The cost of events is partially offset by the receipts (\$4,575.00) shown in the revenue section of the financial statement. It is anticipated that moving forward, due to inflation and other issues related to the hospitality services industry, expenses will increase and must be monitored.
3. Student Support/Awards. The source of this money is the \$5 from the \$30 annual membership fee that goes automatically to our student awards program, as well as individual donations from members. A transfer did not occur from 2021/22 - 2023/24 due to issues that required clarification with University Advancement. As these the issues are now resolved, a transfer of \$4,000 was made during the 2024-25 fiscal year to the Friends of Concordia Women's Hockey fund, which provides financial support to members of the Stingers Women's Hockey Team. As of the publishing date, a balance of \$2,780 remains in our Student/Support Awards Fund. Please note that this fund is separate from our Retired Faculty and Staff Endowment, which supports our graduate and undergraduate scholarships and bursaries.
4. CURAC. The expenses include our annual membership fees in the College and University Retiree Associations of Canada as well as registration fees for the CURAC National Conference.
5. Website. The increase in expenses result from renewal of our domain name and site hosting as well as those related to the development of our new website.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY	2023-24	2024-25
June 1, 2024 - May 31, 2025	Final	Interim
Opening Balance June 1, 2023		\$40,185.11
INCOME		
Membership fees	\$10,820.00	\$7,595.00
\$5 Donations to Student Support / Awards Fund	\$2,590.00	\$1,570.00
Receipts - Events	\$4,095.00	\$4,575.00
CURAC Affinity	\$0.00	\$16.85
Concordia contribution	\$500.00	\$0.00
TOTAL INCOME:	<u>\$18,005.00</u>	<u>\$13,756.85</u>
EXPENSES		
General Meetings & Events *	\$12,048.03	\$11,080.61
Legal Fees	\$0.00	\$0.00
Student Support/ Awards	\$0.00	\$4,000.00
CURAC Membership	\$300.00	\$630.00
Website	\$27.37	\$795.27
Postage	\$628.69	\$198.48
Printing & Copy Centre	\$109.27	\$65.00
Stationery and Supplies	\$95.16	\$139.10
Voicemail line	\$137.78	\$152.48
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$13,346.53	\$17,060.94
NET INCOME	\$4,658.47	-\$3,304.09
Closing balance as of May 31, 2024		\$36,881.02

* The 2023-24 'General Meetings & Events' expenses included June 9, 2023 AGM, Dec. 4, 2023 Fall General Meeting & Holiday Luncheon and the Feb, 27, 2024 MMFA Tour. The 2024-25 expenses included June 3, 2024 AGM and Dec. 4, 2024 Fall General Meeting and Holiday lunch..

I – M – P – A – C – T

Kevin Austin

Basically, first things first. Context.

Like tens of thousands of Canadians in the middle-age years of their life – us, my parents packed the family of five with two suitcases and one tea-chest onto a small ‘ocean-going’ liner boat in 1957 and left British [north London] slums to create a better life for their children. We arrived in Québec, an unskilled laborer, a tailor soon to become a factory sewing machine operator, two early teenage children, and a quiet, withdrawn 9-year old, me, little knowing that while in England they had been told the two younger children would never go to university. When I was 17, however, I was the first person in the whole family to finish their first year of university education. . . and more.

From the age of 10, in grade 5, to 16, grade 11, I delivered newspapers, at first every afternoon six days a week, and sometimes morning and afternoon paper routes, and for the last two years, morning papers six days a week – getting up at 5 in the morning, before going back to the empty apartment at 7:45 for a bowl of cereal and going to band practice for 8:15. Being a slow-learner, and very shy, I did 2-3 hours homework almost every night throughout high school.

I was weird, and different.

Lots and lots of individuals helped me navigate the ‘outside world’, and still do. They acted in my best interests when I had been unable to. Culminating with a Master of Music degree in composition – five years of university that took me 8 years to complete, I was offered a part-time job at Sir George Williams university when I was 21, 55 years ago. On June 1, 2025, my employment contract with Concordia University ends. Full retirement.

Every day of my employment here has been educational. The people in the classes thought I was there to teach them. I was there to learn. And every class was part of my continuing education.

As the old saying goes, “To teach is to learn twice.” Before going into the classroom, I ‘flushed’ my mind of all my information; I would bring knowledge. My continuous question was not what or whether they learned, but would their experience be one of transformation of their minds.

This model of education evolved over decades, starting before I was 10. I had been in years of classes gathering information, <blech>, and there were individuals, individual moments, moments of insight into relationships between ‘bits’ of information, that would produce the effect[s] of knowledge.

The knowledge developed inside each person’s mind. With this as a model – a miniaturization of my experiences in school and life, every class, no matter how many times I had covered the material before, was an exploration, a growth. What allowed me to maintain this focus over five and a half decades?

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I discovered that two things people don’t want to talk about are money and death, and they will talk about death before they will discuss money. I have listened to stories and anecdotes from thousands and thousands of people, family, friends, neighbors, colleagues, those in the classrooms, street people, cashiers, waiting for an appointment, waiting for a gap in the traffic to escape across the street, the sandwich-maker, misbehaving three-year-olds to whom I introduce myself as Santa on vacation, hotel desk workers, and the room cleaners, nurses, ER attendants, my cardio surgeon, his assistant – you get the idea.

Sometimes it is about the weather, sometimes a small thing that happened, sometimes life stories condensed into 25 words, occasional comments on my embroidered shorts – more frequently now, school, children, education, and on occasion, what is the last question people ask before they die.

Sometimes, is there a god? Often, is the world a better place because I lived?

That’s a tough one.

Some people come to this question when they see their stock portfolios reaching one, two or ten-million

dollars, their personal wealth reaching five-million dollars, and sometimes, a weird kid, eleven years old, seeking a truth by which to live his life. You get the idea.

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Early on I found out that I did not understand life, or people, or behavior, or moods, or 'like', or dislike, or differences in skin color, gender, religion, or nationality. These were colorations of universal energy. People didn't disappear when they died, their energy was re-transformed, again.

I learned to act locally, while thinking 'globally'. Could I do anything that would transform a universal? Probably not. How could I evaluate it? I learned to assess the power of the action to help others transform their lives. Would this action have, for want of a better term, impact.

It was more important to be – in modern jargon, an agent for change than to be first, or even best. But how to have impact? even if I would probably not see the results. It meant changing my focus from simply 'doing things', to believing in the possibility that *this* small action, over time, would help others transform their lives.

My 'Former Students' email folder, now numbering over 10,000 communications with 'former students' tells me of the power of investing in the future, rather, investing *now* in the future. Frequently, people want to 'do something' but just need a nudge. Like the Pensioner's Association explosion to support Awards through the Shuffle.

My discipline, **Electroacoustic Studies** aka sound design, electronic music, music technology, became embedded at Concordia through what at the time appeared 'small actions' of a few people. Phil Cohen, who developed the Music Department in 1969 said to me in my first weeks of teaching in 1970, "Build an Electronic Music program." "Sure thing Phil, give me 30 years to get departmental approval." You get the idea.

I examined what needed to be done. I started contributing to the creating of an endowment fund for students in electroacoustics in 1981±, in my first

year as a full-time professor. I had been prompted ten years earlier to stay 'on target' by Mark Schofield of Audio Visual. One day I asked him if those in my class could borrow tape recorders to do their work. He said "Sure. I'll sign them out to you for the year." All the rest is history.

These small actions of these two visionaries had a **multiplier effect** through perseverance, and the lens of my experience growing up poor. I decided that I would focus my energies, with assistance, on change, one person at a time.

It started in 1982 with one small \$250 award. My last award was a \$15 book prize in grade 10. I was not an impressive student in university. No matter. This program of continuous donation has grown over 45 years into 8 awards in electroacoustics, and three other awards in the Faculty of Fine Arts, and awards in five other universities in Canada. I also fund 12 annual competition prizes nationally for Canadian electroacoustic practitioners.

My objective was, and remains, impact. The fruits of these small funded initiatives / investments go onto more than 20 CV's per year, now numbering in the several hundreds. They have attracted larger donations for the Electroacoustic Studies program, and encouraged others to donate to the awards. The *impact* of the small gestures of dozens of people throughout five and a half decades has magnified through the investment, in all of the todays, in the creation of traditions that will continue having impact long after I am pushing up daisies and will have entered into my next lives.

As a brief addendum, I have been asked about the difference between giving now, and including philanthropic activity in my will. Having been on all three sides of this question, my solution has been that if my objective is long-term impact, I give now and have the funds grow in an endowment fund. However, if my objective is for immediate short-term impact, I give now.



CUPA/ARUC

Concordia University Pensioners' Association
Association des Retraitées et Retraités de
l'Université Concordia

Fall General Meeting

Wednesday, December 4, 2024, 10:15 am –
12:15 pm

9th floor Conference Centre
John Molson School of Business Building, Sir
George Williams Campus,
Concordia University
Hybrid In-person/Zoom Meeting

Draft Minutes

1. **Call to Order and President's Remarks** (Garry Milton)

Garry Milton, CUPA/ARUC President, called the Fall General Meeting to order at 10:15 am, welcoming everyone to the meeting. He began by acknowledging that Concordia University is located on unceded indigenous land and the Kanien'kehá:ka Nation is recognized as custodians of the lands and waters on which the meeting took place.

Garry stated that the turn out for this event was very good with is an anticipated 75 participants attending the meeting, another 15 joining via Zoom and some 90 would be attending the lunch. The meeting was recorded and the link to the recording will be made available to members upon request.

Garry thanked Michaela Ciamara and Laurie Kerr from Human Resources for being available to respond to pensioners' questions and/or concerns. He encouraged anyone whose questions went unanswered to contact HR and consult the Pensioners' Corner on the Concordia web site. An email address set up for collecting such questions will be distributed to the membership.

Garry also thanked the CUPA/ARUC Executive acknowledging all the hard work accomplished over the last year and continues to be done in support of the CUPA/ARUC membership. The executive has taken on several projects with the goal of sharpening focus on what is most important to the CUPA/ARUC membership. Reports on some of these will be given later in this meeting, reports on others will be given at the June annual general meeting.

Garry explained that the Executive has also had a great deal of involvement with various university departments representing Pensioner's interests. Of particular interest will be Hall Proppe's report regarding the upcoming changes to the group insurance plan (GIP). Garry highlighted the fact that HR has scheduled information sessions regarding these changes for the following Friday (10:00 am - English, 1:00 pm – French) and that it is important that pensioners register for them as HR will send back an email containing a link for the Zoom session as well as an email address where questions can be sent. They will compile these questions and summarize them in a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) section in the Pensioners Corner on the HR web site.

Garry noted that as of this meeting, only 47 people had registered for these sessions. HR is going to make provisions for people who can't be there on Friday and CUPA/ARUC will follow up as soon as we know what these provisions are.

Garry introduced the new logo to the membership and thanked Veronique Verthuy, Sandra Spina and Concordia's University Communications for their hard work in making this happen.

1.1. **Welcome to New Members**

A warm welcome was extended to approximately 20 new members, a couple of whom were in attendance:

Marie-Anne Cheong-Youne (in person)

Terry Emrick (via zoom)

1.2. **Remembering Colleagues**

Garry recognized and read the names of Concordia retirees who had passed away since May, 2024. A moment of silence was held in their memory. Garry thanked everyone for the remembrance and noted that the names of the individuals were included in the recent Newsletter.

2. **Approval of the Agenda.**

Moved by Miriam Posner and seconded by Danielle Carter, the Agenda was approved with no additions. Although the Agenda was approved as presented, Garry received notification from Bryan Campbell that he would be late in arriving to the Meeting and requested that the Pension Committee report be moved to farther down the agenda.

3. **Minutes of the June 3, 2024 Annual General Meeting.**

Garry pointed out that the Minutes of the June 3rd Annual General Meeting (AGM) were included in the Newsletter which was sent out to all members.

Moved by Jitendra Desai and seconded by Lynne Prendergast, the Minutes of the June 3rd, 2024, AGM were approved as presented.

3.1. **Business Arising from the June 3, 2024, Minutes.**

Any business arising has already been included in the agenda and would be addressed during the meeting.

4. **Reports:**

4.1. **Concordia Shuffle 2024 (Kathleen Perry)**

Kathleen reported that this year's Shuffle was very successful with the CUPA team (the Pacemakers) raising almost \$23,000 which was \$7,000 more than the previous year. Letting people know that they didn't have to come on the walk was a major factor in this increase. Some people joined the active participants at the picnic.

Special mention was made of Kevin Austin (professor in the Department of Music) who was the largest donor. Kathleen thanked him for his leadership gift.

Kathleen informed the membership that she will be retiring as Shuffle Team leader and will be looking for volunteers to take on this role. She noted that it was a fun job and does take up a little bit of one's time over the summer but found it well worth it.

Kathleen expressed amazement that one of the CUPA/ARUC members in attendance (Karen Hilker) has participated in all 35 shuffles. She also thanked everyone who was a team member (whether they walked or not) and especially a huge thanks to all our donors.

4.2. **Pension (Bryan Campbell)**

Bryan recounted how the recent occurrences of some bizarre events among other things seem to

indicate that we're at what economists call an inflection point. In this context it is important to remember that pensions work on risk return analyses.

The expected return must be 5.9% on an annual basis to cover our liability. The risk profile is going to be considerably different over the next few years which puts terrific pressure on pension funds.

Plan performance in the mid-term is OK with returns of 7.3% (10-year average) and 7.9% (5-year average). The past three years have been tricky with 3.8% (3-year average). The rolling three-year period a little better at 5.6%. The year to date is 4.6% as of October which doesn't include certain components of the portfolio that are thought to be positive this year.

The Committee has a fiduciary responsibility to guarantee a 5.9% expected return while minimizing risk. There is also a need to preserve intergenerational equity (current members of the plan shouldn't be paying for our pension in the future). With this in mind and given the new risk environment, the plan has done 2 practical things.

The first is that an imaginative hedging program was put in place. Normally, a lot of our returns are in U.S. dollars which, by law, must be converted back to Canadian dollars within a time constraint which is where a hedging program is used.

Most pension funds have 50/50 hedging programs where they take futures and hedge half the amount that's on the table. This is done under certain conditions to keep the volatility down in the hedging. The new hedging program is based on different factors which are calibrated to produce a number. When a certain number is reached, a 100% hedge is taken otherwise no hedging. Some pension funds are completely naked (no hedging). Bryan opined that this is not sensible because there's too much risk.

The idea with the hedging plan that was put in place here is that we're looking at signals from the market over some period that will entail movement in the exchange rate when it's best to be fully hedged and, to otherwise, simply go with the market.

This strategy had been successful but it has performed dimly over last 18 months which has resulted in diminished returns. The hedging plan factors were adjusted and back tested to ensure that there is an improvement. Ultimately, the main factor affecting the hedge program performance was found to be related to inflation.

The other thing that was done recently was the adjustment of the constraints on plan liquidity. This is important if you want to be able to quickly get money out of the plan to pay something off as opposed to being forced to sell things you don't want to sell. Liquidity is a premium that one pays on returns.

Bryan went on to discuss the Pension committee's continuous review of fund managers who aren't performing well according to benchmarks that have been put in place. Invariably, every year there are two or three managers that are dropped resulting in a great deal of effort to go through the process of replacing them according to our strategic policy.

Bryan mentioned that Patricia Saputo and Christian Russo left the Pension Committee obligating a search for a new independent member. The commitment is large because the Investment Subcommittee meets 8 to 12 times a year for the better part of full days plus the Pension Committee meetings as well. The person eventually hired was Pierre Collins, who is joining the committee starting in January. Bryan participated in the search and is very comfortable with the choice.

Bryan finished by reassuring everyone that the Pension Committee is working hard to respond to this difficult time keeping in mind that defined benefits plans like ours are getting more rare.

Garry mentioned that there's been a change in the representatives this year for both the Benefits Committee and the Pension Committee. Hal Proppe has been the CUPA representative on the Pension Committee for eight years, and this is the end of his term. Hal decided to step down. Garry thanked Hal on behalf of the membership for all the work he'd done over the years. Moving forward, Brian Campbell, who's very knowledgeable, very involved and very well respected, is going to be staying on the Pension Committee and on the Investment Subcommittee. Garry will be joining him and learning from him to help move the interests of Concordia University Pensioners forward.

4.3. Student Scholarship and Bursary Program (Joanne Locke)

Garry reported on behalf of Joanne Locke as she was unable to attend. Although there was a full report in the Newsletter, Garry highlighted several points.

A Development Fund had been created several years ago to make up for shortfalls in the annual payoffs from the Endowment Fund to meet our commitments. As approved at one of the annual

general meetings, part of each year's renewal fees was to be automatically placed into the development fund. Additionally, arrangements were made with Advancement to transfer funds raised in the Shuffle into this Development Fund. It was anticipated that after topping up the payout, a small balance would remain allowing some flexibility to target special needs. In the end, primarily due to the successful efforts at recruiting new membership and increased fundraising in the Shuffle a rather large balance in the Development Fund resulted.

This report is focused on the decisions that were made in consultation with Advancement on what to do with these outstanding balances.

There were some issues that needed to be sorted out with Advancement who are the intermediaries between us and the departments that distribute the funds (Financial Aid for undergraduate students, the Office of Graduate Studies for graduate students). A decision was made to not transfer the funds until we were sure these funds were going to be used as intended. These issues have been resolved and starting this year fund transfers are set to restart.

The current balance of the Development Fund is now nearly \$66,000. Twenty thousand dollars of that is going to be moved into the Endowment Fund which will increase the annual payout and allow us to meet the minimum requirements and at the levels we intended without requiring annual top-ups.

Garry pointed out that once money is moved into the Endowment Fund, we lose control of it because then it's just a percentage payout which can change over time. Keeping funds in the Development Fund provides the opportunity to target different initiatives. One example is to support something like the Student Emergency Fund. Another example would be to develop a one-time award. At the end of that award, we can return to this group and propose another one-time award.

The first award we're doing is a three-year renewable award in honor of Howard Fink who was a longtime member of the executive and one of the founders of CURAC, the national association of university retiree organizations. The details are currently being worked out with Advancement. The award may start this year or next year and will be a three-year entrance scholarship valued at \$2,500 a year. At the end of the three years our obligation is finished and then we can move on to something else.

We are stressing with Advancement, the Office of Graduate Studies and Financial Aid that whenever possible, we want to spread the awards across all the Faculties. That's not always possible because of the way things are put together, but generally it has been pretty much so.

Sylvia Ruby thanked Joanne for a wonderful report in the newsletter and all the work that she has done.

Garry also mentioned that Joanne Beaudouin, a recent addition to the executive is working with Joanne Locke in this portfolio. He also thanked them both for their great work.

4.4. Member Activities & Community Outreach (Sandra Spina)

Lina Uberti reported on behalf of Sandra Spina as she was unable to attend.

Lina recounted that Danielle Carter approached Sandra at the previous year's fall general meeting to see if it would be possible to hold a 50-50 draw in support of a community long-term care facility with which Danielle is involved. The funds were to be used to support residents who could not afford to attend special gatherings that had a cost attached. This initiative aligned with Sandra's mandate for community outreach and so this fundraising activity was adopted.

A total of \$860 was raised, \$430 for the community facility and \$430 for the on-site winner. Thanks were expressed for Professor Lauzière from Études Françaises who won this draw and generously donated \$130 from his share towards the community facility.

As a result of the success of this on-the-spot fundraiser (a pop-up fundraiser) the executive agreed that the fall holiday luncheon would continue to help the Concordia Student Emergency and Food Fund while the spring gathering would have a 50-50 draw for an organization outside the university.

Lina expressed thanks to Perla Muyal, a member of our organization for her work putting together a list of organizations that could benefit from this activity. Lina informed the members to let the executive know of any organizations that they feel would be deserving of such support which could be added to the list.

The membership was then updated on retiree help given to Concordia's Epic Used Book Fair, which is held twice a year (springtime and early fall). This year, 21 retirees volunteered. The book fair has

raised over \$350,000 for student scholarships over the 23 years it has existed. This year, the fair raised a total of \$70,000 which is a new record.

Congratulations to everybody for their help in making this happen.

Sandra wanted to leave everyone with the following messages from the core organizers of the Epic Book Fair.

Luke Quinn from Advancement wrote:

“Since the arrival of the Concordia University Pensioners Association volunteers, the Concordia Epic Used Book Fair has nearly doubled the funds raised. In 2023, the two events generated a combined \$39,000 while in 2024 the two events generated a total of \$70,000. This was only possible thanks to the major and reliable support provided by CUPA volunteers. Thank you all.”

Another note from Jean Bison from the Office of the President who wrote:

“We are very grateful for the help of the University Pensioners Association, whose members make a huge difference in the quality of the work completed before and during the Concordia Used Book Fair. We wouldn't complete the colossal amount of work required without their assistance. Thank you to each member who volunteered to our cause and to our students. Thank you.”

4.5. Benefits (Hal Proppe)

Hal recounted how, at the last general meeting, he was unable to provide much information about the revised group health insurance plan (GIP) because the agreement hadn't yet been approved by the Benefits Committee and the university's Board of Governors.

As it turns out, several fixes had to be put in place as late as October.

Hal strongly urged members to attend the HR's information session on the new GIP scheduled for the Friday following this general meeting.

The most worrying aspect of the revised plan to many members will be the almost 200% increase in premiums. A feature of the new plan is the Health Care Spending Account (HCSA) which is meant to offset that increase. This is an account held by Sun Life which can be used to pay for medical expenses that are not covered by the plan (e.g. dental costs).

The reason for the premium increase is due to a large increase in claims and the university decision

to no longer cover the RAMQ component (approximately \$740/person). Previously, the university was covering 50% of the total of the insurance plan premium and the RAMQ fee combined. Initially the HCSA was supposed to completely offset the premium increase, but this changed after the financial problems with Quebec that arose last year. There was also a 10.4% increase in the premium that was going to be implemented because of huge increases in claims over the last year.

There are other improvements to the plan such as coverage for paramedical expenses, for mental health (psychiatrists, psychologists, psychotherapists), physiotherapists and the other therapies. Several other medical services (e.g. chiropractors, acupuncturists) that were treated separately, are going to now be grouped together with a higher cap (greater than the sum of the individual caps). There are also some new categories added to the GIP.

After a great deal of negotiation, the threshold for medication prescriptions (below the threshold the plan pays 80%, above the threshold the plan pays 100%) was increased to \$3,000 per plan vs the current \$2,000. The university wanted to remove the threshold. The \$60 deductible has also been removed.

Non-RAMQ drugs are going to be reimbursed at 60% instead of 50%.

Another new thing is the implementation of a \$3 DIN charge (a charge paid to the pharmacist for filling your prescription) that will be applied every time a new prescription or a renewal of a prescription is filled. The idea is to encourage plan members to request that their prescriptions be filled for 3 months at a time instead of the usual 1 month which will cut down plan costs.

A substantial question and answer period followed the presentation focussing on various elements of the revised plan including the NCSA, DIN charges, RAMQ premiums, plan implementation and the premium increases.

Garry proceeded to inform everyone that hard copies of the invitation to the information session on Friday are available.

Garry also expressed thanks to Hal and George for all their hard work serving on the Benefits Committee and informed the group that both have finished their terms and are both retiring from the Benefits Committee. The new representatives that

will be serving on the benefits committee are Jamshid Etezadi and Amely Jurgenliemk

Garry also mentioned that there was probably going to be a bit of confusion regarding the new GIP; some of it because there's still a lot of details to be worked out and explained. He reassured the membership that they could contact the executive committee for help should they have trouble getting answers and that we will also continue to monitor what's going on.

4.6. Membership (Kathleen Perry)

Kathleen reported that CUPA has 379 paid members which is an increase over the previous year.

She encouraged current members to reach out to people who are about to retire and talk about the benefits of joining this association. Examples of CUPA's role in actively representing the interests of Concordia pensioners are the issues with the new GIP and Pension Committee activities that were reported earlier.

Kathleen set a goal of trying to reach 400 members which would be a level that is consistent with other university retiree associations (as per her discussions with CURAC - College and University Retiree Associations of Canada). She asked the membership to send her an e-mail should they find some who's interested in finding out more information and she will happily respond.

4.7. Web & Digital Media (Mike Babin)

Mike explained that a project to update the website is just beginning. Ultimately, the goal is to simplify or make it as easy as possible for our members to access the information they want or need. He noted that this is not change for change's sake. Rather, there has been a great deal of technological advancements since this site was first constructed. Internet and computing speeds have increased exponentially. There are new standards for how to construct websites to make them more easily navigable. There are new tools that simplifies web site design and content management.

Aside from that project, Mike asked that if some people notice that they are not receiving CUPA e-mail, to please reach out to us. There's a phone number on the web site where you can leave a message. An e-mail could also be sent.

Garry Milton added that all CUPA's communications are digital even though there are a few members that receive things by post (either because they're not comfortable with the electronic versions or there are accessibility issues). Unfortunately, it was

not possible to do this for this meeting because of the postal strike. The listserv emails go out to roughly 650 people. There's less than 100 people that receive printed versions by mail.

4.8. Newsletter (Craig Buchanan)

Garry reported briefly on behalf of Craig who was still at the registration desk.

Included in the Newsletter, as a vehicle to inform our broader community, are the various committee reports, minutes of the Annual General Meeting (June), and minutes of the Fall General Meeting (December). There is additional space for other kinds of articles as well. Craig is always looking for potential contributors and new ideas.

4.9. Financial Report (Garry Milton)

Garry noted that the financial report included in the Newsletter is a summary and interim as we are waiting for some expenses to be posted.

The CUPA finances are in very good shape and there's flexibility to do things. The executive will be looking at options between now and the annual general meeting and will come back with some ideas for that meeting.

Other items to note:

The membership fees always vary year to year because the report is based on when these fees are received not for the year that they apply to. They can be low in a particular year and very high the previous year because a lot of people had sent in their membership fees earlier than year-end (May 31) and were recorded in the year in which they're received and not the year for which they applied.

For this reason, it is necessary to look at the membership numbers along with the fees.

The costs for general meetings and events have gone up quite a bit over the last few years mainly because of the return to in-person activities following COVID but also because catering costs have significantly increased. These costs have been offset by the fees charged to members for certain events. CUPA always subsidizes portions of each event. One example is that there's no charge for the reception that follows the AGM. There's a charge for the meal portion of the catering for today's reception because it's a much higher cost.

Members were encouraged to contact Garry should they want more detailed information on CUPA finances.

Garry also informed the membership that often, before the fall general meeting a request to senior

offices is made to ask for contributions for door prizes etc. Because of the financial situation that the university finds itself in, it was decided to not add any extra burden to the university offices when they're already dealing with staff issues and budget constraints and so forth. A communication was sent to these departments to let them know what we were doing (or not doing) which they appreciated. Some responded and offered to waive some of their charges which is quite useful.

Garry pointed out that the financial statement presented for this meeting was for the 2023-2024 fiscal year. The current balance is approximately \$39,000 with several large expenses expected in the future. This includes costs related to this general meeting and money that should have been transferred to the Endowment Fund but was held back until certain issues were resolved. This should be completed this year which will result in a reduction of between \$5,000 and \$6,000.

4.10. Relations with Other Associations (Garry Milton, Kathleen Perry)

The main external association that CUPA is a member of is the College and University Retirees Association of Canada (CURAC), an umbrella group for approximately 50 individual university retiree/pensioner associations across the country.

CUPA's membership cost is relatively inexpensive and is based on membership numbers (75 cents per member) to a maximum of \$300 per year. CUPA exceeds the maximum number and therefore pays \$300 annually.

Garry recommended that members regularly consult the CURAC web site because they offer several services and discounts that may be of interest such as vehicle insurance, travel insurance, health insurance, travel planning, lifelong learning opportunities and interesting articles on pertinent topics.

Garry noted that Concordia retirees are fortunate to have a benefits package after they retire. This is not the case for many other universities' retirees.

He recounted how Chris Ross gave a very favourable report of one of the insurance programs offered by CURAC at one of the previous general meetings. The membership was invited to contact CUPA should they have difficulty navigating the CURAC web site and/or arranging for any of the services offered.

Kathleen Perry reported on a recent CURAC meeting that she attended. She found it interesting that all these associations are all grappling with the same

problems such as growing/maintaining membership, best practices, use of electronic communication and online newsletters. She found that it's beneficial for CUPA to participate in these meetings.

Garry then informed the members that the other external group with which CUPA is involved is Convergence which is an informal group of Francophone universities that meet to share ideas. It was formed in 2019 and includes the whole UQ network, ETS, UdeM, UQAM, McGill, University of Moncton and University of Ottawa. Generally, the discussions are focused on best practices and collaborating on events.

After the pandemic this group was not very active. A meeting was held November 18th via Zoom with the primary purpose of determining if there was continued interest in these meetings. Consensus was that these should continue as long it remained informal.

One of the things that differentiates CUPA from other university retiree associations is that CUPA represents retired administrative and support staff as well as faculty which is not the case with many other associations.

Sandra Spina represented CUPA at the last meeting. Roger Kenner attended the previous meetings. Sandra reported that everyone was very open to sharing ideas and learning from each other resulting in some interesting discussions. The next meeting will be co-hosted by CUPA and UQAM. Sandra and the person from UQAM will work on an agenda for the next meeting. There should be more to report at the AGM in June.

4.11. Concordia University Relations (Garry Milton)

Garry reiterated that one of CUPA's focuses was to try to develop relationships with departments that are beneficial to CUPA. His experience has been very positive. It is important to remember that we're not always number one in their priorities because there's a lot of stuff going on at the university.

Garry has seen a positive change over the last 12 months. When he's had a practical concern that needed to be addressed it seems to have been more easily addressed than it has in the past.

5. Other Business:

Q: Bryan had mentioned in the Pension Report about the need to defend the defined benefit pension plan. Is there any possibility that we will lose it? What would be the scenario of that?

Bryan responded that this is not at all imminent. It would take a catastrophe of some sort for obligations not to be met.

One scenario would be if premiums have to skyrocket to maintain benefits.

Defined Benefits is effectively a risk sharing scheme between university and the benefits recipients. Up until two years ago the university assumed 100% of the of the risk and now it's a 60/40 spread that came from legislation from the government. All the scenarios in this case would have to pass through the government which is unlikely because of its relationship with the public sector. This would have to happen in the public sector as well.

This comment was made to highlight the fact that one must work hard to make sure that the plan is sustainable.

One member extended his heartfelt thanks to the executive committee members for all the hard work that they've been doing, keeping this Pension Committee and this Pension association together. He'd been told by acquaintances that they've never seen a pension association so solid and with such good benefits and good programs.

Garry thanked the member for his kind words and that it's a good group and it has been a pleasure.

6. Next Meeting:

10:00 a.m. Location and date to be determined — May/June 2025.

7. Adjournment.

Motion to adjourn moved by Danielle Carter, seconded Tim Lapin. All were in favour.

Meeting adjourned at 12:09 p.m.

Mike Babin

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