

## **CURAC Ontario Regional Conference**

**15 October 2012**

### **Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations**

#### **Topic 1 Drummond Report on Post-secondary Education in Ontario (Facilitator Peter Russell)**

We focussed our discussion on the recommendations in Chapter 7 of the Report of the Drummond Commission on the Reform of Ontario Public Services, and a discussion paper put out by the Ministry of Training, Colleges & Universities, on “innovation to make our university and college system stronger”.

The three groups who discussed these papers were struck by what was missing from them. There was no reference to another Ministry report written by Rick Minor, entitled “Jobs without people and people without jobs.” There was no discussion of the Ph D – its cost and its questionable value as a credential for university teaching. Drummond was faulted for paying so little attention to teaching through the Internet – its costs and its possible uses to alleviate strain on Ontario’s post-secondary system.

There was considerable concern about the politics of moving towards a tiered system of Ontario universities – with a few full research universities at the top, a middle tier of universities considered to be less than comprehensive research institution, and a bottom tier of primarily undergraduate teaching institutions. There was support for differentiating among departments and faculties at all universities as to their research capability.

There was much discussion of Drummond’s call for making it easier for community college students to complete degrees at universities. While there was generally support for this kind of “laddering”, many expressed concern about the need to upgrade community college courses designed to provide a solid foundation for students going on to study at higher levels in disciplines at a university. Here, use of excellent courses available through the Internet might be of help. Close collaboration between universities and colleges would also be needed to improve the prospects of “laddering”.

All three groups expressed concern about the top-down, government, and university administrator control of academic planning implicit in these documents. They exclude any role for faculty in academic planning, and treat universities as branches of a government department. This approach, a number of participants said, posed a serious threat to academic freedom.

## **Topic 2 Drummond Report on Health (Facilitator Doug Creelman)**

The discussion was focused on Chapter 5 of the Drummond Report, *Health*. The wide-ranging discussions with two groups came to several conclusions from very different paths.

One group shared war-stories from individual experiences with the Ontario health system, while the other discussed aspects of the wide-ranging Report in more general terms. Both approaches arrived at some specific conclusions. Here are some of the items that participants suggested as important:

- In general the recommendations from the Drummond Report are supported, although they require considerable further work fleshing out the (sometimes very general) recommendations. The Report was seen, in many ways, as setting tasks rather than suggesting specific actions or policies.
- The current single-payer support system of OHIP must be maintained.
- The focus on prevention, on expansion and increased support for LHINs, (Local Health Integration Networks) and on the importance of adequate digital records and communication are all timely and important.
- Support for home care, affordable long-term care, and palliative care, all currently insufficient, should be instituted. These are seen as currently ignored. As the Report suggests, overall savings would result.
- The importance of changing the basis for recompense to physicians, from the individual practitioner fee-for-service model to a combination salary, outcome-based system was seen as important, although difficult to implement.

One set of issues was identified which Drummond did not address. This is the inclusion of social services and public health in the mix. These are too often seen, according to the participants, as separate while in fact all are involved in the health of Ontarians. Recreation, community health and recreation all contribute to the health outcomes, and should be seen to be on a continuum of care rather than as separate worlds.

In summary, Drummond was seen as on the right track, with important ideas that need to be fleshed out into specific actions and programs.

## **Topic 3 Proposed Single Pension Fund Administrator (Facilitator Janet Rowe)**

“Establish a single pension fund administrator for all university and college pensions, while recognizing differences in pensions.”

The consolidation of pension plans in Ontario was interpreted to mean the consolidation of Ontario University Pension funds which would result in a total investment fund of approximately 10 billion dollars. Representation, consideration of investment strategies, and possible risk were also discussed.

The discussion identified the advantages, disadvantages and risk involved in consolidation.

For a full description of the recommendation go to  
<http://www.fin.gov.on.ca/en/reformcommission/chapters/ch7.html>

#### **Topic 4 Co-housing (Facilitator Al Stauffer)**

The co-housing group began by reviewing the basics of the scheme:

Co-housing is a type of housing development comprising about 20 households or no more than 35 individuals. Residents participate in planning and design and are responsible as a group for the final decisions. The physical layout of the design encourages a strong sense of community. Common areas are an integral part of the community, designed for daily use and to supplement private living areas. Residents manage the development, making decisions respecting common concerns at community meetings. The organizational structure is non-hierarchical. There are no real leadership rules. Responsibility for decisions is shared by the community. The community does not generate income. Individuals have their own primary income. (Source: Charles Durrett, *The Senior Co-housing Handbook*, New Society Publishing.) Further information is available online at [www.cohousing.ca](http://www.cohousing.ca).

The group discussed a possible role for CURAC in carrying out a co-housing initiative through publicizing the concept among member organizations, organizing local groups, gathering information on co-housing in particular the legal aspects of restricting ownership and surveying local organizations to determine the level of interest in co-housing.

#### **Topic 5 Relations with Faculty and Staff Unions and Associations (Facilitator Donald Gillies)**

Both community colleges and university retirees took part in the discussion in two sessions.

The community colleges are represented by the Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU) and all faculty and staff are members of individual union locals. OPSEU has members in seven regions of Ontario throughout the provincial and municipal work force. Members share benefits in common. Community college faculty are a small proportion of OPSEU membership and appear to be of only slight interest to the union. They have formed the Ontario College Retirees Association (OCRA) to strengthen their position

Eight universities were represented in this discussion, reporting on seven unions and one association. It seems fair to say that there are as many varieties of collective agreement as there are universities. This can be confirmed by even a quick scan of these agreements. Each collectivity at each university differs from the next to a greater or lesser degree. Interest in and support for retired faculty members ranges from generous to none. To no one's surprise, the groups came to no uniform set of conclusions.

Questions were posed as to what retirees might do to improve their largely (but not uniformly) weak relationships with their former unions and associations:

- Determine if any value-added contributions might be made to the university, e.g., tutoring and mentoring students, advising new faculty members
- Meet annually with the union executive to remind them that “we’re here and this is who we are”
- Through CURAC, enhance the awareness of retirees’ potential contributions to the university
- Through CURAC, participate in a national survey of retirees’ status at Canadian universities
- Through CURAC, extend such a survey to international universities

### **Topic 6 Future of a Regional Meeting and Relations with CURAC (Facilitator Ken Rea)**

Participants in this discussion seemed to assume that another similar meeting should be held next year as they focused much of their attention on ways of ensuring member participation in choosing suitable topics and other organizational issues. In the course of this attention was drawn to the need for some kind of organizational structure. Alternatives suggested including establishing an Ontario wing of the central CURAC/ARUCC organization, working as a committee within the existing CURAC structure, or following the Atlantic region practice of simply convening an annual conference. No consensus emerged on this matter which remains something we will all have to remain engaged with over the coming months.

### **Topic 7 Retiree Benefits, Privileges and Perks (Facilitator Joan Cunningham)**

We compared and contrasted features of the retiree benefits, privileges and perks of the institutions represented by the individuals present at each session.

Upon discovering the wide variances in coverage and cost of the plans at the various institutions represented, the group recommended that retirees should be treated more equitably with ‘universal’ type plans that apply to all retirees regardless of occupation when active, e.g. the CAAT EHC plans for Ontario community college retirees which are open to all retirees whether they were academics, support staff, or administrators when active.

Post-secondary education retirees who maintain connections with the institution they retired from must receive better recognition from their institution for their contributions (money and service).

There is a great need for an integrated community oriented approach to care for less active retirees to avoid unnecessary institutionalization before full time care is really needed.

There should be more flexibility in retiree EHC (Extended Health Care) plans so retirees may opt out of coverages they have to pay for but feel they don’t need.

More information about the benefit plans of colleges and universities should be made available to guide prospective retirees when they select their post-retirement benefits.

There was no time to do a thorough job of explaining and discussing “Clawbacks and Downloading”; only one group dealt with these points to some extent.