

CURAC 13th Annual Conference and AGM

Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, May 20-22, 2015

Report by Ihor Stebelsky, Past President, WURA

Initial arrangements were for two WURA participants, Datta Pillay (President, WURA) and Ihor Stebelsky (Past President, WURA) to attend. Inasmuch as Datta developed back pain and was unable to travel, Ihor represented WURA as the official delegate.

The conference was meticulously organized by George Brandie, Eleanor Rogers and Geraldine Thomas. They put together an excellent program with top-notch speakers.

On Wednesday evening I attended the Reception that inaugurated the conference. At the reception I heard welcoming remarks from the Retirees' Association of Queen's Vice-President, Eleanor Rogers; the Mayor of Kingston, his Worship Bryan Paterson; the Vice-Provost of Queen's, Jill Scott; and the President of CURAC, Sandra Pyke. I also took the opportunity to speak with a number of CURAC colleagues whom I had met on previous occasions and to meet new ones.

At the reception with my interlocutors I broached the subject of the Ontario Provincial Government initiatives regarding university pensions. It was observed that three universities, namely University of Toronto,

Guelph and Queen's, are interested in pooling their pension funds in order to gain greater bang for their investment buck. Other universities, however, are cautious about joining a group that has higher unfunded pension liabilities or about pooling their pension fund into a larger group only to lose their voice on investment policy.

Thursday activities involved excellent presentations on health of seniors followed by insightful questions and answers.

The first morning presentation was:

“Toward a National Seniors’ Strategy” by Dr. Chris Simpson, MD, FRCPC, RACC, FHRS, President, Canadian Medical Association, and Professor of Medicine & Chief of Cardiology, Queen’s University.

Dr. Simpson began by describing the ageing population of Canada and the chronic health issues such population faces. He then indicated that our health care infrastructure was designed half a century ago, when the population was young and its prevalent need was for acute care. Restructuring will require development of home care with emphasis on chronic care and mental health. CMA is lobbying all political parties to understand these issues and arrive at consensus for policies that would improve our health system.

The second presentation was:

“Senior Health and Mental Health: It’s Time to be Bold for the Old” by Dr. Ken Le Clair, MD, FRCPC, Professor of Psychiatry and Chair of the Division of Geriatric Psychiatry, Queen’s University, and Clinical Director, Providence Care.

Dr. Le Clair posited that mental health should not be separated from health generally. He pointed to the high incidence (80%) of chronic ailments in older population (65 to 70), that depression is the most common mental health issue and that one out of three will get dementia before death. He emphasized the need for person-oriented approach to diagnosis: ask not what ails you, but what matters to you.

The third presentation was:

“A Public Health Perspective on Elder Care” by Dr. Erica Weir, Assistant Professor, Departments of Medicine and Public Health Sciences, Queen’s University, and Public Health Physician, Geriatrics.

Dr. Weir provided a historic overview of health care development from Community Medicine in the past through Population Health at present to Public Health in the future. She outlined the legal frameworks, institutional structures and the services they offered, the shortcomings in community engagement and representations. She emphasized the need for promoting age-friendly communities and home care.

In the afternoon, the last presentation was:

“What is natural? Living downwind of the Alberta oil sands” by Dr. John Smol, OC, PhD, LL.D., FRSC, Professor of Biology, Queen’s University, Canada Research Chair in Environmental Change, 3M Teaching Fellow, Editor, Environmental Reviews.

Dr. Smol posited human impact on the environment and described some techniques for assessing environmental change. Then he focused on the Alberta oil sands, the debate over PAHs in the environment and the lack of their pre-project monitoring. Then he outlined his use of lake bed deposits as a historic record of PAHs deposition. Using this

data, he demonstrated a perfect temporal correlation with oil sands development, dispelling the argument that they were a natural occurrence. This evidence, he argued, need be incorporated in policy planning.

This presentation was followed by a nutrition break and then the **CURAC Annual General Meeting**. I participated as the official delegate from WURA.

Sandra Pyke, the CURAC **President**, welcomed the attendees and chaired the meeting. The quorum was confirmed and the **Agenda** was approved. The **Secretary, Edgar Williams**, moved and received the vote of approval of the **Minutes** of the AGM from last year. There was no business arising from the Minutes.

Reports of the **President** and of the **Secretary** were very informative and well received. **The President, Sandra Pyke**, summarized and acknowledged the work of various committees and members of the Board. **The Secretary, Edgar Williams**, reported on the meetings, teleconferences, newsletter, and other activities. Both reports were accepted in separate votes.

Report of the **Treasurer, Jim Boyd**, included four components: Report on CURAC Status; Budget Estimates for 2014-15 and 2015-16; Annual Financial Report to the 2015 AGM; Appointment of the Auditor for 2015-2016. The report demonstrated that, financially, the organization is in good standing and retains a balanced budget. The report was accepted by a unanimous vote.

Reports of Standing and *Ad Hoc* Committees were presented in a package. They included the Archives Committee (George Brandie, Edgar Williams); the Awards Secretary (Edgar Williams); the Benefits Committee (Beverley Stefureak); the Board Conference Committee (Geraldine Thomas); the Communications Committee (including the CURAC Web Manager, David Swayne, and the Newsletter Editors, Ed Unrau and Michael Tousignant); the Finance Committee (K. [Gowri] GowriSankaran); the Health Care Policy Committee (Linda Kealey); Membership (Ken Craig); CURAC Liaison Report on the Association of Retirement Organizations in Higher Education (AROHE) (Ken Craig); Travel Affinity Agreement (Ken Craig); and Strategic Plan (Sandra Pyke).

The Nominations Committee (Kenneth Craig, Michel Tousignant, Beverley Stefureak and John Stager) presented its nominees for the renewal of the CURAC Board. The first list was for directors/officers:

1. **Director and President 2015-17: Kenneth Craig** (UBC, Psychology)
2. **Director and Vice-President, 2015-17: David Swayne** (Guelph, Computer Science)

The second list was for Directors for 2015-17:

1. Linda Kealey (University of New Brunswick, History),
2. Geraldine Thomas (St. Mary's University, Classics)
3. Fred Fletcher (York, Communication Studies and Political Science)
4. Mary Johnston (McMaster University, Health Sciences).

There were no additional nominations from the floor. For each list it was moved that the candidates be declared as elected in their positions by acclamation.

The above will join the Board members whose term is 2014-16:

Treasurer: Jim Boyd (Simon Fraser University, Accounting); and Directors Kohur (Gowri) GowriSankaran (McGill), Beverley D. Stefureak (Lakehead), Michel Tousignant (Université du Québec à Montréal), and Ed Unrau (Manitoba).

The following Directors were retired: George Brandie (Queen's), and Sandra Pyke, President (York).

Conference Banquet was held that evening at the Discovery Centre of Fort Henry. At the banquet CURAC Awards were presented as follows:

The CURAC Tribute Award to Dr. John Stager (UBC). He was instrumental in founding the UBC Association of Professors Emeriti and leading it through its early years, his long term service to CURAC, UBC and Canadian Northern Studies Trust.

The CURAC Tribute Award to Dr. Orville Scott (New Brunswick). He founded at his university the all-encompassing retirees' association (UNBREA) and was its founding president in 1993 and remained on its executive until 2013.

The CURAC Tribute Award to Dr. Sandra Pyke (York). She was a leading President of York University Retirees' Association, organized one of the best CURAC conferences (held at York in 2010) and accomplished other organizing achievements at York.

The Contribution to CURAC Award to Dr. George Brandie (Queen's). Beginning as Webmaster at QU Retirees' Association, George was drawn into CURAC as its Secretary and Webmaster, was elected

President, drafted new By-laws for CURAC and in the absence of volunteers for hosting after McMaster, hosted the 2015 CURAC Annual Conference at Queens.

The Banquet Featured Speaker was Mr. Jim Leech, Chancellor, Queen’s University, Former President and CEO, Ontario Teachers’ Pension Plan. Co-author of “The Third Rail: Confronting Our Pension Failures” (2013), Mr. Leech mentioned his background and then drew on the main points of his book. He spoke of differing attitudes regarding pensions and benefits depending on the situation of the group. He described changes over time in demographics, savings, and returns on investments and their implications for pensions in the future. He discussed the merits of Defined Benefit, Defined Contribution and Hybrid plans. He offered examples from Netherlands in risk and reward sharing. He advised the removal of pensions from collective bargaining whose objectives are usually too short-term.

The conference was well attended. According to the circulated roster of attendees, 74 persons were registered. Their distribution by their university affiliation or residence by province, however, was not balanced. Of the attendees, one-half, or 37, were from Queen’s; the remaining 37 were from other institutions.

By provinces and institutions the distribution was as follows:

Atlantic Provinces	9		
Memorial	2	Dalhousie	2
St. Mary’s	1	U. of New Brunswick	4

Quebec	4		
McGill University	3	UQAM	1
Ontario	56		
Carleton	2	Guelph	2
McMaster	1	Queen's	37
Trent	1	Wilfrid Laurier	1
York	5		
St. Lawrence College	2	Seneca College	1
Western Canada	5		
U. of Manitoba	1	U. of Saskatchewan	2
U. of British Columbia	1	Simon Fraser University	1

CURAC Conferences for the next two years have been announced:

The **2016** CURAC Conference will be hosted by the **University of Saskatchewan.**

The **2017** CURAC Conference, marking the 150th anniversary of the Confederation of Canada, will be hosted by **Carleton University.**