

QUFA VOICES

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PRESIDENT'S VOICE

Budget Issues are Front and Centre at QUFA

By Peter Dacin
President, QUFA



This continues to be an extremely busy year at QUFA. Beyond our normal day-to-day activities, we continue to meet regularly with various QUFA advisory

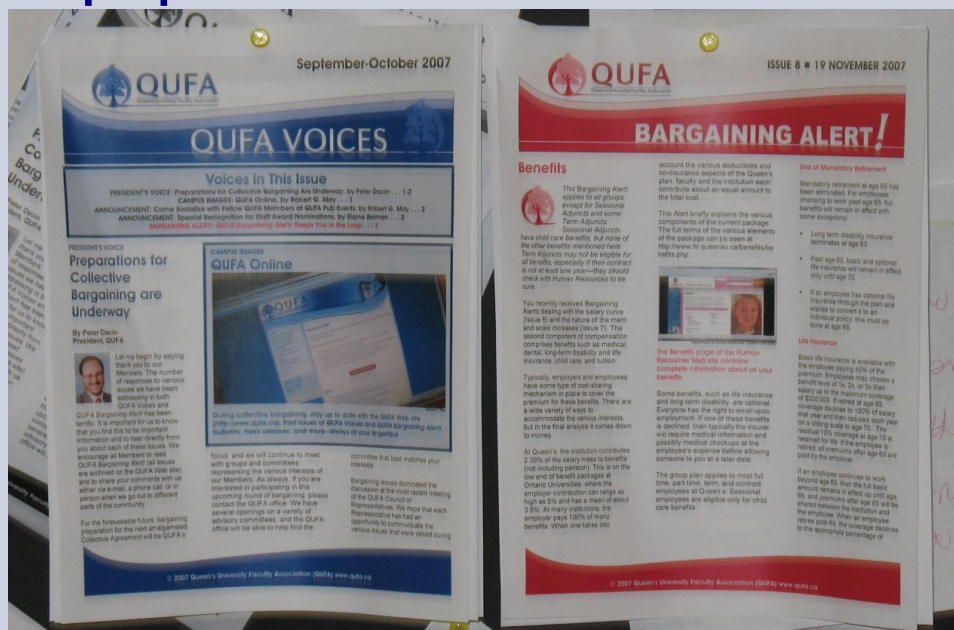
groups and caucuses as we work hard preparing our bargaining priorities. As always, if you have any issues you would like to see us address in the upcoming round of bargaining, please let us know.

Budgeting Concerns

In addition to bargaining preparations, we have also had to deal with other issues that have emerged over the course of the last few months. For example, there has been considerable discussion over the

CAMPUS IMAGES

Help Spread the Word!



Robert G. May, with thanks to Rhonda Clark-George

Especially during collective bargaining, QUFA encourages you to print out and post QUFA Voices and QUFA Bargaining Alert! in a visible place in your department or unit. Thanks, QUFA Members!

current round of budgeting, and many of you have sent in your questions and concerns about this issue. This issue was also of great concern to

Heads across campus, and discussions at our Heads' caucus indicated that there was much confusion about the issue. QUFA

raised these questions and concerns in several meetings with the Principal and Vice Principals. Whether one calls these “budget cuts” or “budget shortfall exercises” (as explained to me by the Principal) or even “budget reallocation,” it was clear to QUFA that many of our Members were extremely concerned and anxious over the activities and announcements surrounding budgeting. This was especially true for our Members in Arts and Science, who were told far in advance of any official University announcement that they had to go through a 5% budget reduction exercise with a hard deadline. Much later, the University’s official announcement called for a 4% and 2.5% budget reallocation exercise, but this was only a few days before the hard deadline set in Arts and Science for the 5% reduction exercise. As we now know, it was the Dean of Arts and Science who recommended the 5% figure for his Departments. After all the anxiety and work the 5% reduction created, Arts and Science is now being asked to prepare two additional scenarios in line with the 2.5% and 4% reallocation percentages.

In one “special” meeting on the budgeting issue involving QUFA and three Vice Principals, QUFA found the University to be somewhat surprised at the reaction of our Members to the issue. Part of their surprise was that they had not anticipated this type of reaction to what they thought was common practice. However, they were also surprised because, at the time of this meeting, although the 5% reduction exercise was announced and underway in Arts and Science, the University had not yet made their

official announcement, so they felt there was really nothing for anyone to get excited about. A few days following the meeting, the University distributed a four-page circular entitled, “Queen’s University Financial Update” as their attempt to address several issues in what appeared to QUFA to have been a major planning and communication mess on the part of the University. Furthermore, this was a situation that was causing undue stress and anxiety among our Members. The many comments received from Members so far suggest that the circular was not necessarily effective in clarifying or addressing the issues. If you have read the circular, QUFA would like to

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hear what you think. Please contact the QUFA Office, any of the QUFA Executive, or your Representative on QUFA Council to let us know.

On different occasions, QUFA invited the Principal and/or any of the Vice Principals to appear for the first hour of a QUFA Council of Representatives meeting to answer questions about budgeting, but unfortunately, no one from the University was available for any of those meetings. The Principal, however, announced at November Senate that she would be conducting a Town Hall on the issue. On 28 November, a general announcement was sent out for a Town Hall to be

held on 3 December. I hope there was enough time for everyone to make room in semester-end schedules to attend this meeting. If you did attend, please let QUFA know what you thought.

In my last meeting with the Principal, when the question of budgeting came up, she told me that I could inform Members who had questions for her that they could contact her office to set up a meeting with her. The Principal did mention that, given her schedule, while her office may not be able to fit someone in immediately, she felt that eventually all meeting requests would be accommodated. Given this, if you do have a question

for the Principal and would prefer to talk to her directly rather than directing your questions through QUFA, I would encourage you to contact her office and set up an appointment to meet with her. QUFA, however, does ask that you inform us of the questions you raise during your meeting and the Principal’s responses to your questions.

Pension Concerns

Another major issue that recently emerged is one that concerns our Pension Plan. As you may have heard by now, all three major employee groups (QUFA, CUPE, and QUSA) are deeply concerned by what appears to be happening with the Plan. Recently, Bill Cannon, the Chair of the existing Pension Committee, submitted his letter of his intent to resign to the Chair of the Board of Trustees, citing proposed changes to the governance of the pension plan as a primary reason for his resignation. In QUFA’s follow-up with the University about these governance changes, we learned that

a subcommittee of the Board of Trustees formed to look into pension governance issues has engaged a lawyer to assist in drafting documents proposing the creation of a new Board of Trustees' Advisory Committee on Pensions. Clearly, there are complex issues involved with respect to Pension Plan Sponsor and Administrator responsibilities, but the bottom line is that all the employee groups must be extremely vigilant when it comes to any proposed changes in the governance structure. From our discussions with the University, we feel we have serious cause for concern based on what we heard the University saying in some of our discussions. We have just received a draft of the constitution of the proposed new Board Advisory Committee on Pensions. After reading the draft, QUFA and the other employee groups still have many unanswered questions. Hopefully, further discussions are to take place to address what at this moment appears to QUFA possibly to be another planning and communication mess on the part of the University. I hope many of you were able to attend the annual meeting for the Pension Plan on 5 December and are willing to share your thoughts about that meeting with us.

[Please also see John Holmes's article on pension issues in this number of QUFA Voices.]

Fall General Meeting

I know that QUFA will have much more to say and would also like to answer all of your questions about these and other issues at the Fall General Meeting to be held on Wednesday 12 December 2007 at 11.45 a.m. in Room 201, Kingston Hall. We hope to see you there.

Peter Dacin can be reached at pdacin@business.queensu.ca.

FYI

Pension Matters!

By John Holmes,
Past President, QUFA



An update report on discussions regarding the Queen's Pension Plan was included in the agenda materials for the QUFA Fall General Meeting sent out last week. Also, a joint bulletin on pension matters was issued recently by the campus employee groups (QUFA, CUPE, and QUSA) and sent out to all QUFA Members. In case you didn't have a chance to read these materials, the following is a synopsis and an update on the Annual General Meeting of the Pension Plan held on Wednesday 5 December 2007.

If you are a member of the Queen's Pension Plan (and I realize that many of our Sessional Members are not currently eligible to enrol in the Pension Plan), there are two issues you should be aware of: (a) the state of the ongoing discussions of possible changes to the Pension Plan itself, and (b) the Board of Trustees' apparent desire to change the governance structure of the Pension Plan.

Proposed Changes to the Pension Plan

Following actuarial estimates showing that the Plan was in a modest deficit position (approximately \$10.7 million as of February 2004—to keep such numbers in perspective, remember that the total assets of the Plan are in excess of \$1.44 billion), the employee groups agreed to engage collectively in good faith discussions of the Plan with the University outside of our traditional collective bargaining frameworks. Discussions began in late 2005 and have continued periodically since then. Recently, the University has implied that QUFA has

been dragging its heels in these discussions. This is simply not true. Whenever the University has provided new material for discussion, the employee groups have been ready to meet. In addressing pension issues, the employee groups have developed an excellent working relationship.

Over the summer, the University filed an official valuation of the Plan that showed an unfunded liability of \$40.5 million as of the end of February 2007. Provincial pension regulations required the University to increase its contributions to the Plan to begin to pay down this unfunded liability. These additional contributions are being phased into the University's operating budget over a three-year period. The latest estimate by the University's actuarial consultants showed the unfunded liability had decreased to \$31.3 million as of the end of August 2007 (this illustrates just how sensitive the size of the unfunded liability is to small changes in the assumptions used to make the valuation—in this case, changing the assumed discount rate from 6.1% to 6.5%).

The University has now agreed that it should shoulder losses due to the fact that the pension annuities for many existing retirees were calculated in past years at rates that, with hindsight, were too high. At a meeting in late August, we had been led to believe that the proposed cap on pensionable earnings covered for purposes of the minimum pension guarantee (from the outset of the discussions, the cap has been a major stumbling block for QUFA) was no longer on the table. However, at the most recent meeting (on 20 November 2007), the University indicated that it was still proposing a cap at \$100,000 (indexed to faculty salary scale) for future service.

For several months, the University has promoted the idea of keeping the current Plan for existing employees

but introducing a strictly defined contribution plan (with no minimum guarantee component) for all new employees. In general, unions oppose so-called “two-tier” arrangements that provide different and usually lesser benefits for new employees.

Much of the November meeting was taken up with a discussion of the pension governance issue that had just surfaced (see below). This, together with the fact that the cap appears to be back on the table, has raised serious questions about the sincerity of the University’s desire to engage in meaningful and constructive discussions around the Pension.

Governance Structure of the Pension Plan: Whose Pension Fund is It, Anyway?

Currently, the University Pension Committee (UPC) has broad representation from the Board of Trustees (3), the faculty (2), the other employee groups (2), and the retirees (2), with 2 VPs (ex officio). To date, the UPC has always been chaired by one of the employee-group reps (Professor Bill Cannon (Business) for the last 7 years). The UPC recommends and reports directly to the Board of Trustees.

In early November, we learned that a small working group of the University Board of Trustees had retained a pension legal expert who, for some period of time, has been working on a proposal to change significantly the governance structure of the Pension Plan in a way that would avoid having to seek approval from QUFA.

At the 20 November 2007 meeting, we were told that a new Board Advisory Committee on Pensions (BAC) was being proposed that

would, in practice, be inserted between the existing UPC and the Board of Trustees. The initial mandate of the BAC, which would be composed only of Board members and the Chair of the UPC (ex officio), would have the authority to formulate recommendations on investment and actuarial questions that, to date, have been within the purview of the UPC. If implemented, this proposal would diminish significantly the scope of authority of our successful and representative UPC in favour of a less transparent body that would be guided primarily by the financial concerns of the employer rather than seeking to enhance the value of pensions for plan members.

The employee groups responded to this news by sending a jointly-signed

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letter to William Young, the Chair of the Queen’s Board of Trustees, which was circulated to our Members together with a one-page joint bulletin. This served to force the issue out into the public arena. At the Board of Trustees meeting on 30 November 2007, Board members were provided for the first time with the draft constitution for the proposed BAC and a copy of the letter from the employee group Presidents. The Chair announced that the issue would be a focus for the March 2008 Board meeting and that consultations would take place between now and then. A draft constitution (dated 26 November 2007) for the proposed BAC was handed out to everyone who attended the Pension AGM on 5 December.

Pension Plan AGM

There was a very large turnout for the Pension AGM. The continued sterling performance of the Pension Plan under the stewardship of the University Pension Committee is reflected in the fact that the fund returned over 11% in the year ending 31 August 2007 and current retirees will see their pensions increase by 6.5% this year as a result of the indexing formula built into the Plan.

In a full and frank presentation, Bill Cannon explained his grave concerns regarding the proposed BAC, concerns that had led him to tender his resignation from the UPC. However, he has agreed to continue as Chair of the UPC at least until the consultations regarding the BAC have

been completed. The thunderous applause at the end of Bill’s presentation indicated a strong endorsement of the work of the UPC and of the personal stand taken by Bill against the BAC. Andrew Simpson (VP Finance) sought to

explain the Board’s rationale for proposing the BAC but acknowledged that it appeared that the proposal in its current form “would not fly.”

The QUFA Pension Working Group currently consists of Constance Adamson (Library), Peter Dacin (Business), John Holmes (Geography), Barbara Kisilevsky (Nursing), Paul Young (Biology), and Susan Fitzgibbon (QUFA Staff). Ashley Crozier of Canada Benefits Consulting Group is our actuarial consultant. We continue to work collectively with the other campus employee groups (QUSA and CUPE) on pension issues.

John Holmes can be reached at holmesj@queensu.ca.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Queen's Faculty Can Rally Against Campus Racism on 16 January 2008

By the Queen's Coalition of Anti-Racist Faculty (QCARF)



On 14 November 2007, a Queen's faculty member was physically intimidated and verbally abused

with racial taunts by a group of students on campus. This event has sparked widespread condemnation.

Unfortunately, this is not an isolated incident at Queen's, and faculty members need to play a critical role in addressing systemic racism at the university. Although real change will only come about with sustained efforts on a broad front—from hiring practices to curriculum development—there is a role for public demonstration of opposition and solidarity.

Show Your Opposition to Racism on Campus

On **Wednesday 16 January 2008**, Queen's faculty are being asked to gather in front of **Stauffer Library** at **3:15 p.m.** for a **brief rally** to demonstrate our opposition to racism and to make it clear that we will not tolerate racist behaviour from students, from staff, from the university administration, or from amongst ourselves.

Please take **15 minutes** on 16 January to show your support.

Queen's staff and students are also encouraged to attend.

ON CAMPUS

Queen's Conference Put the Spotlight on Health and Human Rights

By Leda Raptis
Department of Microbiology and Immunology
Department of Pathology



On 27-28 October 2007, a conference was held at Queen's on Health and Human Rights. Different

sessions covered issues taking place in countries where the right to live is grossly violated, including Darfur, Rwanda, and China.

David Kilgour (former Canadian Secretary of State for China and the Pacific), David Matas (a human rights lawyer)—who co-authored a report entitled *Bloody Harvest*—and Dr Torsten Trey (chief executive director of an organization of doctors who are opposed to forced organ “harvesting” for transplantation) presented some very depressing evidence, to say the least.

The panellists compiled data stating that transplantation medicine in China does not only use organs from executed prisoners, but also—and systematically—from healthy and young living people, who are killed in the process. In the latter case, the organs are from prisoners of conscience, mainly from practitioners of Falun Gong, a meditation movement that was initially supported by the Chinese government because of its positive impact on health. In 1999, the government in Beijing changed its direction and outlawed it. Today, Falun Gong is practised in

more than 70 countries, but only in China it is brutally persecuted.

The panellists showed impressively how tens of thousands of healthy human beings are turned into a living “spare part storage depot” for organs. In a worldwide unique organs-on-demand system, Chinese hospitals offer on their Web sites to find and transplant any type of organ within two or three weeks—for a hefty price, of course. Transplantations are scheduled like regular surgeries.

China, a country where people traditionally are reluctant to donate organs, does not have a public organ donation program. Although the deputy Health Minister, Huang Jiefu, admitted in 2005 that 95% of the organs come from executed prisoners, there is still a discrepancy in the figures. Amnesty International estimated that approximately 2,000 executions take place in China every year, but in 2005 the *China Daily News* reported 20,000 transplants per year. In 2006, a hospital in Hunan offered twenty livers and kidneys for free. From 1999 to 2007, the transplantation centres increased by 400% (from 150 to 600), and a surgeon from Tianjin Hospital stated that his hospital alone performed 1,200 liver transplantations in 2005.

Proof of a growing transplant business was implicit in the figures of pharmaceutical companies like Roche, with Cellcept (an anti-rejection drug) being the third most sold drug in China. According to the findings of the Kilgour and Matas report, there are more than 40,000 unexplained sources of organs over the past six years.

The discrepancy in the figures became even more disconcerting when the panellists focused on the source of the organs. Convicted criminals are usually instantly executed, often right after the so-called trial. Therefore, they cannot contribute to a standing pool of

“donors” which would be necessary to serve organs on demand within two or three weeks. Furthermore, regular inmates are usually not blood tested, which raises the question of how people with the right tissue type can be identified for a scheduled transplant operation. The panellists stated that, according to various witnesses, only practitioners of the banned Falun Gong movement are systematically blood tested. It is highly unlikely this is done for health reasons, since these prisoners are subject to severe torture in detention. The evidence compiled so far points to a ghastly abuse of human rights that calls for further investigation.

There is a need to inform the medical community of these abuses (not to mention patients who might be tempted to travel to China for the purpose of transplantation). That was part of the reason why the panellists planned to present their data in a forum at Kingston General Hospital on 26 October 2007. However, the forum was cancelled by the hospital barely an hour before it was supposed to start, without any explanation or alternatives offered. I found it very surprising to see that they were not even allowed to put a sign on the door to inform people that it had been moved.

Queen’s University can and should be proud of being a place where open academic discussion can take place. Why would KGH cancel a forum that was part of the Health and Human Rights Conference the following day? Why is this topic so controversial, more than Darfour or Rwanda? Can Queen’s (or any University, for that matter) meet academic standards when such an important topic of human rights seems to be under the influence of other factors?

History never forgets. To this day, Harvard University has to defend why it collaborated with Nazi Germany before and during the Second World War. If the future proves that the

killing of living and healthy human beings for their organs is true, then Queen’s would be congratulated for having taken a stand for ethical standards. For this, Queen’s would have to be open for uncensored discussion. I hope that KGH was just misinformed when they cancelled the forum, and that the cancellation is not an expression of the influence of unrelated interests.

For more information on this issue, the Web site is www.dafoh.org.

Leda Raptis can be reached at raptis1@queensu.ca.

ANNOUNCEMENT Contribute to QUFA Voices

By Robert G. May
Editor, *QUFA Voices*



The deadline for submissions to the next number of *QUFA Voices* is

Thursday 31 January 2008

Do you have an opinion about something happening on campus? Do you have an announcement that may be of interest to QUFA Members? Let us know! Send your submissions to mayr@queensu.ca.

Robert G. May can be reached at mayr@queensu.ca.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Come Enjoy the Last QUFA Pub of the Season!

By Robert G. May
Editor, *QUFA Voices*



You are cordially invited to attend the last QUFA Pub of the term!

Every month, QUFA Members from all departments and units congregate at the Grad Club from 4.30 p.m. to 6.30 p.m. for a QUFA Pub.

Come on out for a drink, a bite to eat, and some stimulating conversation with your fellow QUFA Members.

Just look for your host, who will be wearing a QUFA button. The first twenty QUFA Members to arrive get a free drink on QUFA!

The last QUFA Pub this term will take place on

Wednesday 12 December 2007

(Please note that this date is different from the one originally published)

Stay tuned to *QUFA Voices* and to www.qufa.ca/events for the dates of QUFA Pubs next term!

Robert G. May can be reached at mayr@queensu.ca.

Spread the Word!

QUFA encourages you to print out and post *QUFA Voices* and *QUFA Bargaining Alert!* in a visible place in your department or unit.

BARGAINING ALERT!



QUFA Bargaining Alert! Keeps You in the Loop!

During collective bargaining, don't miss a single issue of *QUFA Bargaining Alert!*

QUFA Bargaining Alert! keeps QUFA Members in the loop and up to date during bargaining for the new amalgamated collective agreement.

Look for *QUFA Bargaining Alert!* in your e-mail inbox, posted in your department or unit, in *QUFA Voices*, or on the QUFA Web site.



- Issue 1: QUFA Amalgamates
- Issue 2: Action on Workload Issues
- Issue 3: Voice Your Concerns
- Issue 4: University Finances and Priorities
- Issue 5: Faculty Compensation at Queen's
- Issue 6: Librarian and Archivist Compensation at Queen's
- Issue 7: Merit Pay and You
- Issue 8: Benefits
- Issue 9: Adjunct Compensation at Queen's
- Issue 10: University Rejects Dispute Resolution Mechanism on Eve of Bargaining

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www.qufa.ca/updates/

