

# EXEMPT EXPRESS

UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH

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## MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

Joan Knox



### AS TIME GOES BY...

As the academic year comes to an end and we move into the Summer months, it provides us with an opportunity to engage in a period of self-reflection.

Taking the time to consider areas of accomplishment, improvements, or areas for change, is a healthy exercise to participate in.

Under the umbrella of the Exempt Group, we function in diverse job responsibilities and roles. So...posing the question, "What is it that unites us as members of the Exempt Group?" - is it the fact that the Executive is constantly working on our behalf with the University's administration? Is it belonging to a professional group that provides us with an Enrichment Fund for professional development, and access to two Grievance Officers? Is it a need to be supportive of each other in our various locations? When we understand what unites us in our membership, we become a far more influential group.

As you reflect on what it is that unites us, I would appreciate hearing your thoughts. I can be reached at 519-824-4120, Ext. 58292, or at [jknox@uoguelph.ca](mailto:jknox@uoguelph.ca).

Now read on to see what is new from your Executive!



*If you have comments or concerns about anything, please send them to the Exempt Executive—we would like to hear from you.*



### Special points of interest:

- Bargaining Benefits — "Flexible Benefits" (enclosure)
- Letter from the Chair
- Our Pension Plan...
- Pension Plan Improvement (enclosure)

# MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

*Julie Hutchins*



Hello, everyone,



Here it is, almost the end of April. Soon it will be semester-end, fiscal year-end, Spring (when will it arrive?). A time to reflect back on yet another very fast semester and a busy year - waiting for warmer weather, getting a parking space, Summer holidays and, hopefully, a slight break in the workload. Time to spend outdoors!

Your Executive has been working hard behind the scenes and will continue to do so over the next few months. In early Fall, a questionnaire/survey will be coming out regarding negotiations as next year is a bargaining year. Think about things that you would like to see happen/remain the same. Are you happy with your benefits the way they are? Would you like improvements to your pension plan? How about a pay increase? Can you live without any improvements? This survey will help us at the negotiating table, so please think about this over the Summer months. Hopefully, you were able to attend the Town Hall Meeting regarding flex benefits. Enclosed is a document that CUPE 1334 sent out to their membership regarding this. Please read this document and ignore the fact that it says "CUPE", as this affects all of us. These are facts that you need to know about flex benefits - something that the University is looking at during the next round of negotiations. There will be more Town Hall Meetings, starting in the Fall, and we will let you know when they are to be held.

You may remember that we negotiated an improvement to our pension plan formula starting May 1, 2007. This will cost us more money right now, but the benefits during retirement will surpass the increase. There will be a pay increase of 2.75%, effective May 1, 2007. This is the third and final year of the current three-year agreement.

One major accomplishment this year has been the re-establishment of the Stakeholders Group. This Group is a compilation of all the bargaining groups on campus and it has monthly meetings to discuss things of common interest, such as salary, pension and benefits. In case you are not aware, there are 11 different bargaining groups on this campus: USW4120, CUPE 1334, CUPE 3913, Faculty Association, Professional Staff Association, Police, Ontario Nurses Association, Canadian Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada (CEP), Food Services, CARG, and the Exempt Group. There are also members of CSA and GSA in the Stakeholders Group. All of these groups helped to put together the Town Hall meeting held last February. We will continue to work together and provide more meetings to help educate the faculty, staff and students of the University of Guelph about things that are important to all of the groups.

Please enjoy reading this issue of your Newsletter and have a safe, healthy and happy Summer season. We will be in touch with you again in the Fall.



# LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

*Julie Hutchins*

Dear Exempt Staff,

First of all, on behalf of Pat and Mahejabeen from HRIO, we would like to thank all of the Exempt staff who promptly returned their Employment Equity Survey. The statistics for the on-campus Regular Full Time staff exceeded the requirements. Way to go!

Unfortunately, the same is not true for the off-campus staff in the same status—this meaning the staff at the research stations and the colleges. This is also true for the Temporary full-time staff, both on- and off-campus.

We strongly urge you to send your survey to the Human Rights and Equity Office as soon as possible, as they receive crucial funding from the Government by having the rate of return necessary to make this information worthwhile.

You may return the survey blank but you **MUST** return it. Thank you.

Julie Hutchins

Chair, Exempt Group



# OUR PENSION PLAN, IN NEED OF MORE REFORM

Mike Hollingshead

I'm not sure what it is about an employee pension discussion that causes eyes to glaze over when the topic comes up. I suppose that it may have something to do with the difficulty involved with calculating a result that is based on so many changing variables, most of which are beyond our control. Somewhat out of necessity, it is governed by laws which make changing its terms difficult. Our pension plan was designed at a time when it was assumed that you would work until age 65 and that your pension would be supplemented by Old Age Security and Canada Pension Plan monthly payments. Many will recall that they "didn't have to start to contribute until age 30". This is because our plan has a cap on the number of years that you can contribute – 35 years. Our pension plan is what is called a "defined benefit" plan, which simply means we have a formula used to define what your pension will be when you retire. The other popular plan used in Canada is the "defined contribution" plan, whereby you contribute a defined amount and it is invested; your end result is not known, but you may be able to pick and choose your retirement date based on when your plan is "healthier".

Our current plan, as I see it, needs more improvement than what we have just achieved. Clearly, we need to work together to amend the formula used to calculate our pension to a full 2% for the portion of our salary below the YMPE. While the current increase from 1.5% to 1.6% will help to provide more comfort in your retirement years, it lags behind a university like Trent that has the full 2% formula below the YMPE. This is especially important since *most Exempt Group employees earn BELOW YMPE!* The number of employees at or below YMPE is 127 out of 283 or 45% of current membership. We acknowledge that there will certainly be cost sharing and our more junior members may feel that they are living close to the edge with what they need to contribute now. But, common sense will tell you that if your contribution is matched by an employer, it is hard to find a downside.

History is showing us that the net pension earnings currently being received by retired members of the Exempt Group is LESS THAN \$9000 annually. Do you find that a little shocking? Remember that we do not have fully guaranteed inflation protection and your pension may erode over time. Call it saving, investing or whatever you want, but it is increasingly important that Exempt Group members engage in financial planning for their future. If you are competent to handle your own investments and keep abreast of all the rules and latest information available to maximize your returns, congratulations! If, like most people, you have too much on your schedule to be a do-it-yourselfer, seek out assistance from an independent financial planner. The sooner you act on this, the more time your savings have to grow. Use the excellent on-line "Pay and Pension Link" set up by our Compensation and Benefits department at the University of Guelph. If you don't have access to it currently, call Lillian Wilson x52849, [liwilson@uoguelph.ca](mailto:liwilson@uoguelph.ca) for your access code.



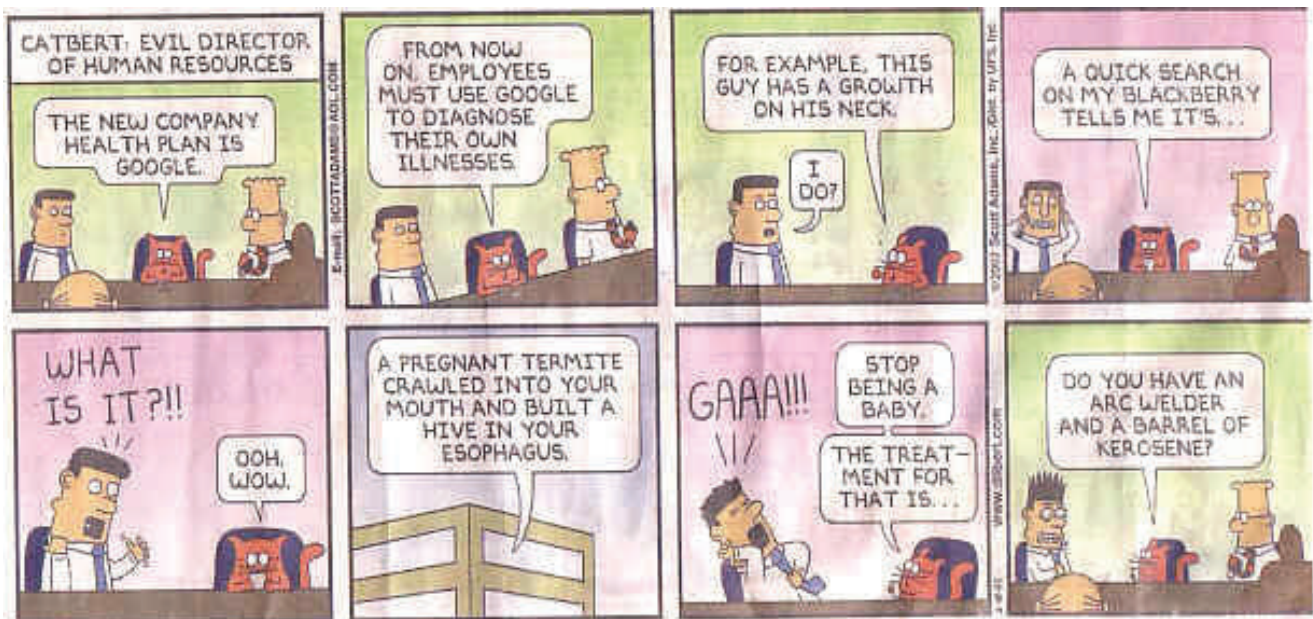
# WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS!

Off-campus Employees

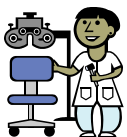
On-campus Employees

Laurel Marshall, Advanced Foods &  
Materials Network  
Sharon Sinclair, Dept. of Business

## JOKE OF THE DAY



*...this googles the mind!!!*



**8 MAY 2007**

**UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH**

**Exempt Office  
Room 208, Federal Building,  
620 Gordon Street  
Ext. 52982**

**E-mail: [exempt@uoguelph.ca](mailto:exempt@uoguelph.ca)**

If you have any concerns or comments that you would like brought forward, please contact one of the Executive members.

Exempt members are invited to attend and view any Executive meeting but they will not have speaking privileges.

**Check out our website at:**

**<http://www.uoguelph.ca/~exempt/>**

**Our Memorandum of Agreement (January 2006), Constitution (February 2006)**

**and**

**Enrichment Fund details/Application Form are located on this website.**

## **EXEMPT EXECUTIVE FOR 2006-2007**

### **Secretarial:**

- Betty Clyde Ext. 56211  
[bclyde@uoguelph.ca](mailto:bclyde@uoguelph.ca)  
- Toni Pellizzari Ext. 53343  
[tonip@uoguelph.ca](mailto:tonip@uoguelph.ca)  
- Vikki Tremblay Ext. 56544  
[vtrembla@uoguelph.ca](mailto:vtrembla@uoguelph.ca)

### **Clerical:**

- Pek Lee Ext. 52205  
[plee@uoguelph.ca](mailto:plee@uoguelph.ca)  
- Julie Hutchins Ext. 52108  
[jhutchin@uoguelph.ca](mailto:jhutchin@uoguelph.ca)

### **Agricultural:**

- Mike Hollingshead 519-822-2910  
[cholling@uoguelph.ca](mailto:cholling@uoguelph.ca)  
- Joseph Parkinson  
[joseph@uoguelph.ca](mailto:joseph@uoguelph.ca) 519-836-2649

### **Technical and Other:**

- Joan Knox Ext. 58292  
[jknox@uoguelph.ca](mailto:jknox@uoguelph.ca)

### **Newsletter Editor:**

- Joan Knox Ext. 58292  
[jknox@uoguelph.ca](mailto:jknox@uoguelph.ca)  
FAX: 519-836-7168

### **Grievance Officers:**

- Mike Hollingshead 519-822-2910  
[cholling@uoguelph.ca](mailto:cholling@uoguelph.ca)  
- Vikki Tremblay Ext. 56544  
[vtrembla@uoguelph.ca](mailto:vtrembla@uoguelph.ca)

### **Colleges/Stations:**

- Candy Keith (New Lisheard)  
(705) 647-8525, Ext. 230  
<[cakeith@uoguelph.ca](mailto:cakeith@uoguelph.ca)>  
TBA (Vineland)  
- Brian Fitzpatrick (Kemptville)  
(613) 258-8336, Ext. 679  
[bfitzpat@kemptvillec.uoguelph.ca](mailto:bfitzpat@kemptvillec.uoguelph.ca)  
- Mike Zink (Ridgetown)  
519-674-1607  
[mzink@ridgetownc.uoguelph.ca](mailto:mzink@ridgetownc.uoguelph.ca)  
TBA (Alfred)

### **NEWSLETTER**

Only dues-paying members receive a copy of the Newsletter. Important messages will be sent out via e-mail/mail to all of our members.



**Ext. 52982**

*Your calls are important to us!*