

**York University Faculty Association  
Trustees Annual Report  
2007-08**

Submitted by:  
John Blazina, Faculty of Arts  
Adriano Solis, Atkinson Faculty of Liberal & Professional Studies  
September 2008

*Introduction*

Under Article 3.5 of the York University Faculty Association (YUFA) Constitution two Trustees are to be elected at the Annual General Meeting to prepare a report reviewing the union's previous year's activities, policies and operations and are asked to make recommendations to improve YUFA's methods of operation.

Following our review of the YUFA Constitution, By-Laws, Auditor's Report and Annual Financial Statements (2007-08), the Budget 2008-09 and Executive Minutes 2007-08, we conclude that the union is fulfilling its obligations to its members, operating responsibly and participating in important labour activities (e.g. labour conferences) and solidarity efforts internal and external to York University.

*Review of Activities*

In addition to the day to day administration of the collective agreement and service to members such as grievance processing, in 2007-08, YUFA considered a variety of new and continuing issues - for example, restructuring, workload reduction, electronic CVs, relations with CAUT, security and safety, the Pension Plan, Race/Equity, retirees, and how to expand YUFA's reach to the membership. It also appointed members to several committees, struck new committees, sent members to several conferences, sent funds and flying pickets in support of faculty on strike in other jurisdictions, hosted lunches for new faculty, librarians, stewards, and others, and supported CUPE's decision to work to rule during negotiations with the employer. Finally, the Contract Review Committee held information sessions on workload, salary and benefits, and equity, and created a membership questionnaire to be distributed later in the year.

*Methods of Operation*

Last year's report made five recommendations pertaining to release time for officers, communications, electing trustees, and the timing of the AGM. Some of these have been addressed:

**(i) Course release for Union Officers** In October 2007, Executive responded in some detail to recommendations in the previous year's report. To quote the relevant portions of the minutes. First, "The Executive has agreed that normally course releases

should be taken as course release rather than as cash stipend, and that who received what in release time in a given year should be public information. Indeed Executive had earlier last year passed such a motion." Second, "In the past, we have awarded stipends and release time on an *ad hoc* basis, enabling us to meet needs in particular areas, but taking the Trustees' recommendations seriously, we will try to establish a standardized release time policy." Third, "We have established a Compensation Committee to look at practices, but we must respect the Constitution." However, the Compensation committee has not met yet. [[Responding to the auditor's report for 2006-07, the Executive has been "careful to give extra consideration to issues of officers taking course releases as course releases, and to ensure wherever possible that members not currently active in YUFA positions were encouraged to apply for such positions" (Hilliker, YUFA Workplan).

### **Recommendation**

Given that existing constraints prevent someone from taking their full quota of release time, the options now seem to be: 1. to take it as banked courses; 2. to be paid at an overload rate. We recommend that Executive consider the option (used for example by CAUT) to take the equivalent of overload pay as a generic research grant.

#### **(ii) Dispute resolution and course release**

There is a provision in Article 9 for a Dispute Resolution Committee. YUFA appoints several members, and these people actually receive release time. However, recent practice is to only appoint those people well into the fall, and they appear to stop serving around June. Consequently, we are 'wasting' release time by giving the full quota but not having them serve for a substantial part of the year. Since the executive goes into summer mode at the end of May there is no real orientation of new officers at that point, no retreat / reflection on what needs to be done, no gearing up for the coming year. Some issues also drag out, all with no real benefit for YUFA members. In addition, the Executive minutes contain a series of references to failures to have timely resolution of complaints both through JCOAA and through the Chief Stewards. Indeed, some members are concerned that the current dispute resolution process to resolve grievances is breaking down, and "that the employer apparently is not really willing to engage through this forum." Even when "there appears to be an agreement on what we should do to resolve a complaint, it can take many months to find out whether it is going to be implemented!"

### **Recommendations**

1. That YUFA appoint these officers in May, for the following year, so that the dispute resolution option is available in the summer.
2. That there be a discussion at YUFA about the usefulness of this method of resolution and a decision made either to continue using it or to drop it as well as the course release given for it.
3. That YUFA consider adding substantially to the list of agreed upon arbitrators in order to promote timeliness of resolution.

### **(iii) Communications**

Communications remained a problem throughout 2007-2008, leading to the relative invisibility of the union and its work, as well as difficulty in sometimes attaining a quorum. Responding to recommendations in last year's Trustee Report, the Communications officer has established a Communications Committee, thus far consisting of members of Executive. Calls for other volunteers from the membership have been unsuccessful. New also is an Editorial Board for the Communications office, but neither Committee nor Editorial Board has taken any actions. In 2008-2009 the Communications Officer plans to send monthly updates by email to the membership, along with bi-monthly editions of Reactivated Voice. But for these to succeed, she needs help from other members of the Executive.

### **Recommendations**

1. That, as part of their duties, members of the Executive write pieces suitable to go on to the membership in the newsletter or monthly emails – for example, regular reporting of central committees such as JCOAA and other union activity, reports on education initiatives, book reviews on subjects of interest to the membership, memoirs of life at York, columns, among others.
2. That YUFA engage more broadly through a range of initiatives, for example, a public lecture series on the issues of the day, social events for the membership in general, celebrating teaching, research, the union movement in general, and so on.

### **(iv) Timing of Annual Membership Meeting**

Last year's report pointed out that holding the AGM in the Fall rather than in the spring has meant that the members of the union are voting on a budget that cannot be altered in practice.

**Recommendation:** again, that the AGM be held in the Spring

*Review of Financial Statements and Auditor's Report*

We have reviewed the financial statements and Auditor's Report for 2007-2008 and note the following:

The Auditor observes that YUFA derives its revenues from membership fees "the completeness of which is not susceptible to satisfactory audit verification. Verification of membership fees was limited to the amounts recorded in the records of YUFA."

### **Observation**

While we are uncertain as to the necessity of Auditor's independent verification of membership fees, it may be prudent to identify/devise some way to enable such independent verification.

As of April 30, 2008, the balance in YUFA's Cash account was \$736,791 – representing a 92% increase over the corresponding 2006-2007 ending balance. This amount appears excessive in relation to the \$1,416,225 in total costs for 2007-2008. In particular, after netting out direct costs (CAUT, OCUFA, others), operating expenditures average only slightly more than \$80,000 per month.

### **Recommendation**

That the Cash account balance be reduced to a more appropriate level and the unnecessary amounts be invested to add to YUFA's fairly small investment income. (We do recognize that Executive has already taken note of the excessive amount in the Cash account, and has called for the preparation of cash flow projections so that excess funds may be invested.)