

Your Voice

MUN Pensioners' Association (MUNPA) • Vol. 221, No. 1, February 2024
Editor: Paul Chancey

President's Message

Sheila Singleton

The holiday season has come and gone all too quickly and we are now in the throes of winter. I hope you all had a chance to get together with friends and loved ones and enjoy the season. On behalf of the Board I wish you a healthy and happy 2024.

MUNPA has been very active these past few months as you will see as you browse through this edition of "Your Voice". One of the highlights for me was the commencement of our campaign to enhance our support of the campus food banks. I am most gratified by the positive feedback that has been received since the message went out a couple of weeks ago. I am hopeful that our efforts will translate into a significant increase in support for our students. Information on how to contribute can be found in this edition of "Your Voice" and on the MUNPA website.

MUNPA's mandate was revised in the spring of 2023 and approved at our last AGM. Since that time, the board has been discussing MUNPA's priorities and future direction. Two immediate priorities have been identified – a review of how we communicate with our members and the enhancement of our database to ensure we have the information we need to run MUNPA effectively. The database project is nearing completion. The communications review is still in the early stages, but it is our hope that we will be able to provide a substantive update at our AGM in June. Stay tuned.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the many volunteers who make MUNPA a success... those who serve on the Board, those who serve on the various committees, and those who organize and run the many events and groups that are critical to our success as an organization. Please consider getting involved.

MUNPA Supporting Students

2023 MUNPA Scholarship Awarded – MUNPA has an endowed entrance scholarship that is awarded annually. The amount awarded each year varies as determined by the interest earned on the endowment. In October, we were informed that the 2023-24 winner of the \$2,095 scholarship was Brianna Crocker. Congratulations Brianna!

Donation to GivingTuesdays - On Nov. 28, Memorial participated in GivingTuesday which is the global day of giving. In support of this initiative, MUNPA made a \$1,000 donation to

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support the University's Thriving Student Fund. This is a fund created to provide funding as needed, where needed, for students. Whether by providing short-term emergency support or by empowering their success through scholarships and bursaries, this fund helps students to achieve academic and personal success during their time at Memorial. These funds were also eligible for matching funding which enhances the benefit of our contribution. We received a voicemail message from student 'Aviva', calling from MUN's Development Office. She called to say 'thank you' for our contribution which she said "is helpful to students like me".

Food bank – MUNPA makes an annual contribution to the campus food banks in Corner Brook and St. John's and has also solicited donations on their behalf at events like the Christmas Social. While these annual donations are appreciated and helpful, the food banks need support throughout the year, support they can rely on. In the Fall, stories in the local media told of the campus food bank in St. John's having to turn away students in need. At a recent meeting, the MUNPA Board discussed how MUNPA could help provide sustained support to both campus food banks. We decided to ask our members to help by making a monthly donation.

You can make a donation to the St John's campus food bank, which is a registered charity, through monthly payroll deduction. To donate, visit <https://www.mun.ca/campusfoodbank/donations/>.

If you have any questions about the St. John's food bank or how to make a donation, please call the St. John's Food Bank at 709-864-3467 or email foodbank@mun.ca. Giving through payroll deduction is not currently available for the Grenfell campus food bank.

Donations can be arranged by contacting Jana Walsh, Manager, Health and Diversity at f9jw@mun.ca

It is our hope that, in time, our collective donations will help ensure that the food banks on both campuses are well-supplied and students in need are not turned away. Please help.

MUNPA Christmas Socials

Christmas Dinner at the Blow Me Down Cross Country Ski Club is becoming a tradition for MUNPA members in the Corner Brook area. On December 6, 2023, sixty retirees and guests enjoyed a social hour followed by a sit-down roast turkey dinner. Five door prizes of gift certificates to the local Coleman's Grocery Store were appreciated by the lucky winners.



Corner Brook MUNPA Social Committee at the Christmas Social. Left to Right: Sharon Walsh, Olaf Janzen, Carol Gilbert, Mary Sparkes, Madonna Day, Lois Bateman.

In St. John's, the annual Christmas social was held on December 7th at the new Bally Haly Country Club. About 150 pensioners and guests attended, which was the most we have since the onset of Covid. The event also serves as a fundraiser for the food bank on the St. John's campus. Donations and the proceeds from a silent auction raised \$1,195 for this worthy cause.

2023 MUNPA Tribute Award

Catherine Dutton – As published in the Gazette.

What does a political science professor do when he retires? On December 5, 2023, at an event hosted by Dr. Neil Bose, we found out. It was at that event that Dr. Steven Wolinetz was awarded the MUNPA Tribute Award for 2023. The MUNPA Tribute Awards were established to recognize the importance of the ongoing contributions of Memorial's retirees to the University or the Community.

Dr. Steven Wolinetz has an impressive resume as a scholar, an engaged citizen of the community, and as a member of MUNPA. Steven joined the Political Science Department at Memorial University in 1971 and served the Department for 38 years before retiring in 2009. Dr. Wolinetz was awarded the title of Professor Emeritus in 2013.

In his retirement, Dr. Wolinetz has been especially generous with his time, organizing and serving with a host of community organizations and events. Steven and his wife Karen Lippold, who is also a MUN retiree, have been contributors to several community organizations including the Newfoundland Symphony Orchestra, the Tuckamore Festival, the LSPU Hall Seat Campaign, and the Home Again Furniture Bank.

Steve has played an especially important and longtime leadership role in the Jewish community in NL. Dr. Wolinetz was Vice President of the Jewish Community Havurah from 2015 to 2017 and President from 2017 until 2023. In this role he worked for a rapprochement between Havurah and Beth El Synagogue. Steve has been a co-director of the Religious Social Action Coalition (RSAC), a coalition of faith communities working for the introduction of a Guaranteed Basic Income and the eventual elimination of poverty.

As President of Havurah, Dr. Wolinetz helped

organize the yearly commemoration of the Shoah (Holocaust) every April, attended by hundreds from the community including members of municipal and provincial governments. In May 2023 Steve helped organize a memorial service where the invited speaker and Holocaust survivor, Pinchas Gutter, recalled some of the atrocities he witnessed during the Nazi reign. Interviewed by CBC news, Dr. Wolinetz was quoted, "It is a way of remembering the victims of the Holocaust and saying they haven't been forgotten. But above all, it's a way of saying never again."

Dr. Wolinetz has been very active in MUNPA. He served on its programme committee from 2013 to 2017, a period in which the association ramped up the number of groups and clubs. Steve joined the MUNPA Board of Directors where he served as both Vice President and then later as President from 2019 – 2021. He guided MUNPA through the first years of the pandemic, insisting that we take whatever activities we could online. Dr. Wolinetz has also served as editor of MUNPA's "Your Voice" newsletter for two years, turning it into a mini-magazine. Steve has also been an active member of several MUNPA clubs. He has been a member of the Memoir Group and is also an active member of the Outing Club, the Health and Aging group, and the Shutterbug Club.

Dr. Steven Wolinetz is truly a very deserving recipient of a MUNPA Tribute Award. We all congratulate him on this latest achievement. We would like to thank Adrian Tanner, Ann Ryan, Elena Hannah and Ingrid Pardoe for taking the time to submit the nomination. We look forward to hearing about other of Memorial retirees who are deserving of this award. For more information on the MUNPA Tribute Awards, please check <https://www.mun.ca/munpa/about-us/tribute-awards/>.



(l-r) Cathy Dutton, Steve Wolinetz, Karen Lippold, Neil Bose and Sheila Singleton



Dr. Neil Bose announcing the 2023 MUNPA Tribute Award

Report on MUN Pension fund

Grant Gardner

The Memorial University Pension Fund, currently valued at about \$2B, is managed by the Board of Regents. The main goal of the Board is to ensure that the Fund will be able to meet all of its obligations into the future. In pursuing that goal, the Board takes advice from the MUN Pension Committee, which has members from all sectors of the university. However, Committee members must act in the interest of the University, and in particular of the plan members, and not act in their own individual interests or in the interests of another person or organization.

The Committee meets regularly to review actuarial valuations, pension plan concepts and trends in Canadian pension plans. It assesses the health of the plan and makes recommendations on future contribution requirements and changes to the composition of the Fund's investments. In carrying out its work, the Committee is advised by Ekler Ltd.,

Memorial's Actuarial and Investments Consultant. In the process of ensuring the sustainability of the Fund, the Committee and Ekler also take into account the wishes of the Plan members as well as environmental, social and governance principles (ESG). The MUN Pension Plan has been well-managed over the years, consistently performing better than comparable funds in Newfoundland (e.g. the Public Service Pension Fund and the Teachers' Pension Fund).

Currently, the Eckler and the Committee are implementing strategies to diversify the Fund's investments to improve return on investment while minimizing risk. This process was approved by the Board of Regents in response to projections that such changes were necessary to ensure the sustainability of the Fund.

Sessions Planned for the Winter/Special Interest Groups

Carolyn Emerson

After a busy fall and successful holiday social, your committee has lined up another interesting array of presentations and site visits this winter. From conserving your family heirlooms, legacy gifts, sleep, community food production, NL's total eclipse of the sun, and travel reflections, to stunning photographic imagery, there is something for everyone. MUNPA's nine Special Interest groups also meet regularly, so check out their activities.

<https://www.mun.ca/munpa/activities/st-johns-events-and-groups/>

And save the date of Wed. June 5 for MUNPA's AGM with a morning presentation on "Polypharmacy (managing your medications) and Pharmacists' Expanded Scope of Practice", luncheon, and afternoon

business meeting.

As always, we welcome your participation on the Programme Committee and your suggestions for future topics.



Lloydetta Quaicoe speaking on "Sharing Our Cultures: Engaging Culturally Diverse School Children and Youth"

Contributed Article – Encounters with the 2023 Barrington Lake Wildfire

Chris Sharpe, MUNPA Member

The largest forest fire in Nova Scotia's history was started on May 27, 2023, the result of deliberate human activity, at a time when the Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources and Renewables (DNRR) reported that the dryness rating for all of south-west Nova Scotia was at the highest level since 1944. By the time the fire was declared under control on 16 June it had burned 24,000 hectares (235 sq. km.) and destroyed 150 buildings including 60 homes. It forced the evacuation of 6,700 people – about half of the population of Shelburne County. Some were out of their homes for more than two weeks.

The forces arrayed against the fire included 139 forestry firefighters: 70 from DNRR and the remainder from elsewhere in Canada and the United States. Within a few days they were joined by 33 members of the Gagetown-based 2nd Battalion, Royal Canadian Regiment. Except for the locally-based DNRR personnel, all were housed in the Shelburne County Arena for the duration of their stay in the town.

The Shelburne volunteer fire department was dispatched to Clyde River on 29 May to join the Lockeport, Island and Barrington Passage, Jordan, Harbour, Woods Harbour/Shag Harbour, and Roseway Ingomar departments. By the time the fire was over, a total of 67 Nova Scotia departments from eight counties were involved. The first day or so was a bit chaotic because the EMO and DNR officials were not only dealing with a rapidly-expanding fire and an increasing number of firefighters in Shelburne County, but also the disastrous fire in Hammonds Plains south of Halifax which monopolized a lot of resources over that weekend. But they quickly got everything organized and operations ran smoothly from then on. This was a remarkable accomplishment when you

consider that the ground operations had to be coordinated with the aerial attack by 3 DNRR helicopters, 8 fire-retardant-dropping aircraft from New Brunswick, and 2 water bombers from Newfoundland.

The Shelburne Volunteer Fire Department has five trucks: two pumpers, one tanker/attack truck, one attack truck and the command/rescue truck. We had to keep at least one truck in the fire hall at all times in case we had to deal with a local fire which was the case when the ox barn manure pile at the Exhibition ground caught fire on June 3rd! The remaining trucks rotated through locations and duties.

During the first couple of days, two of our trucks were involved in the successful effort to save the houses along Highway 103 just east of the Clyde River. But our department's primary role was to supply water. DNRR crews handled most of the active firefighting in the forest. They laid thousands of metres of 1 ½ inch forestry hose into the forest, feeding them from 1,000 gallon portatanks that are essentially collapsible swimming pools. In cooperation with trucks from other departments, we ran a shuttle service from whatever water source we could access to keep the tanks full. From 31 May to 5 June, we worked from 11 to 13 hours a day doing this unexciting, but essential work.

I'll give you two examples of what we did during these unprecedented days. The Anchor's Away Restaurant (yes – that's the way it's spelled!) is a landmark along Highway 103 in Clyde River. On 29 May, I was on the crew of a pumper dispatched to the dry hydrant (a permanently-mounted pipe that allows us to draw water from a river or pond where there is no other source of water) across the highway from the restaurant. Our job was to fill the attack trucks that were trying to save houses along

the Clyde River and Quinn's Falls roads just to the west of us. There was active crowning fire immediately behind the restaurant and all morning we watched anxiously as a DNRR helicopter picked up water in its 500 gallon bucket on the north side of the highway and dropped it on the fire across the road. The amount of water dropped by the intrepid pilot seemed to be little more than a token, but his efforts saved the building, a popular restaurant and an important employer.



Image 1: The fire behind Anchor's Away. The white plume in the upper-left corner is water being released by a helicopter.

As we watched the fire spread along the south side of the highway, less than 100 metres from our position, we knew that the Quinn's Falls Road fire to the west of us was out of control, but we figured we were safe. The winds appeared to be pushing the fire north, away from us and we weren't entirely defenseless. Once a pumper has achieved good suction from the drafting source, it is standard operating procedure to maintain it by keeping the pump running. So you have to do something to distribute the 150 gallons per minute that the idling pump is pushing. We decided to discharge it through the monitor (or deck gun if you like) on the top of the truck, spraying it on and around the house immediately beside us. That house is still there and we'd like to think that's partly as a result of our efforts. Until the mid-afternoon, we sprayed water on the house, re-filled the parade of empty trucks, and watched the helicopter work. And then the wind shifted to the north-west, changing the

direction of the fire, pushing it towards us and putting the highway in potential danger. So we were ordered to "bail" i.e. shut off the pump, uncouple the 6 inch hard suction hose and the 4 inch and 2 ½ inch supply hoses, leave them behind, and retreat east along the highway. The fire crews west of us on the Clyde River and Quinn's Falls Roads were pulled out as well. This picture shows why.



Image 2: Trucks from the Shag Harbour/Wood's Harbour Fire Department on Highway 103. The sign advertising that Anchor's Away is 4 km farther west down the highway is just over the head of the firefighter standing in at the right front corner of the truck.

Two days later, we were back drafting water from a small creek beside Highway 103, several kilometers east of our previous position, and pumping it through an almost kilometer-long lay of 2 ½ inch hose, to a portatank on the top of a hill to the west. A large telecommunications antenna farm is located on the top of the hill and DNRR had surrounded it with a system of sprinklers in what turned out to be a successful attempt to prevent it being burned. Then, for a second time, we were ordered to bail. Not just us. All the trucks along Highway 103 and most of the roads leading off it were ordered to relocate immediately to Lake Road which runs across the peninsula about 2 kilometers south of the town Shelburne. All the helicopters in the area and the Newfoundland water bombers were redeployed as well. We were puzzled by the decision and convinced there had to have been a dispatching mistake because the reported fire was on the east side of Shelburne Harbour. We were working

the fire well west of the Harbour and nobody could imagine any way that flankers or sparks could have jumped that far. What we hadn't counted on was that this new fire had been started deliberately. Although both these fires are classified as "wildfires" it's worth noting that both of them were the direct result of willful human recklessness.

Many of the residents along the Sandy Point/Jordan Ferry/Jordan Bay Roads were placed under an immediate evacuation order. Shelburne wasn't. Because the winds continued to be primarily westerly, although very strong, the fire moved to the east and didn't directly threaten the town. But the Roseway Hospital, Roseway Manor long-term care facility, and the Lake Road apartments- all located adjacent to each other at the end of Lake Road- were all evacuated and remained empty for several days. The hospital patients were distributed to other facilities in south-western Nova Scotia, wherever there were available beds, the residents of the Manor were all relocated to residences at Acadia University in Wolfville, and those from the apartments had to find temporary accommodation wherever they could, with family and friends. Meanwhile, a Shelburne and a Lockeport truck spent the next two days supplying water to the DNRR crews working the Lake Road fire. The most enduring, and quite eerie memory I have of those days was driving to and from a fire hydrant in front of the Nova Scotia Community College, passing the completely empty hospital parking lots on the other side of the road. Thanks to the direction and strength of the wind and the location of Rodney Lake, Shelburne's water supply, this fire only burned 114 hectares and no buildings were destroyed. But the need to deem this new fire the top priority meant that all the aerial and most of the ground-based resources were redeployed away from the Barrington Lake fire which was left to burn largely unrestrained for most of a day.



Image 3: The Lake Road fire, viewed from Islands Park on the west side of Shelburne Harbour.

Once the two fires were declared to be under control, the volunteer fire departments, the RCR personnel, and the forestry firefighters criss-crossed the fire area looking for hot spots. A forest fire is insidious. Even in areas where there appears to be little above-ground fire damage there is always the danger that the fire is travelling along roots under the surface. Smoldering fires can last for days, even weeks, and live flames can suddenly appear hundred of meters away from the last visible surface damage. The only reliable way to find hotspots is to put boots on the ground. Once a hot spot has been found it has to be exposed, using a Pulaski tool, a pick hoe, or a rogue hoe, and then extinguished with a 5 gallon backpack or a hose from a truck or portatank. If the hotspot flares up after being exposed and the fire starts to expand, a helicopter or bulldozer may have to be called in to finish the job.

After every wildfire, residents are anxious to return home and are often angry at what appears to unnecessary delays in being allowed to do so. But hot spots can all too easily reignite into a significant fire, so until all of them have been found and dealt with, the prudent course of action is to keep as

many people as far away from danger zones as possible, for as long as possible, to obviate the necessitate for a second emergency evacuation order, and to allow firefighting crews on the ground and in the air to complete their work unfettered.

Patrolling the fire zone, searching for hot spots, was a sobering experience. When you are actively involved in one particular task it is difficult to gain any perception of how large and devastating a wildfire fire is. Our limited experience in dealing with this type of event doesn't allow us to say whether the behavior of the Barrington Lake fire was more erratic than an average fire. But the aftermath was difficult for all of us to comprehend. It is hard to imagine what it's like to drive down a road and pass a house completely destroyed, then see that the next house had lost all its outbuildings, but the main house was intact, perhaps with melted aluminum siding or scorched clapboard or wooden shingles. Then to see that the next house was completely unscathed and the lawn was still green and now in need of being cut. Then the next property had only a burnt-out shell to remind you that a few days ago a family lived here. It was very common to find that one side of the road would be completely blackened, right down to the soil, while the other side was completely untouched. In other places, even where the forest looked completely unscathed, a closer inspection revealed a surface completely covered with thick layer of ash, and the bottom inch or two of the brush burned.

Unfortunately, we can personally attest to the capriciousness of this fire. Struan is a summer cottage at the confluence of Bloody Creek and the Clyde River. My wife MaryJane's great-great grandfather, a prosperous Halifax ship chandler built it circa. 1903. The property is located on the extreme northern edge of the fire zone, and for almost a week we watched anxiously as the fire perimeter moved steadily north. We hoped that the river and the creek would protect the

house, and it seemed that the fire did stop there. Alas, it did not. Somehow it jumped across the river and reduced the boathouse, the five watercraft stored inside, and one of two outhouses to ashes. These were the most northerly structures claimed by the fire in the Clyde River area. However, miraculously, the cottage survived intact. The fire came within three feet of it, on two sides, but there wasn't even a scorch mark to be seen. Firefighters who were working along the Clyde River Road, told us that they never got closer than about two kilometers from the house and, as far as we know, there was no aerial activity in the vicinity either. So, as in so many other cases, we were fortunate to have a happy, but inexplicable, outcome.



Image 4: Looking east from the verandah at Struan towards the former boathouse site.

The most recent post-fire news reports (as of 6 September) indicated that DNRR has prepared cause and origin reports and the "investigation is still ongoing." No charges have yet been laid under the Forests Act nor has the Conservation Service determined if criminal acts were committed. Only if they were will the RCMP become involved. To those who lost property – fortunately not a single life was lost – this is an entirely unsatisfactory situation. There is widespread anger at the lack of any evident progress after an event that is known to have been caused by individuals well-known to many residents of the County, individuals who, in the case of the Barrington Lake fire, posted movies of themselves rolling the burning tires

into the tinder-dry brush. The anger doesn't just reflect the loss of buildings, severe as that was. It is based on the knowledge that there are incalculable losses that aren't included in the official estimates of damage: the loss of revenue and wages because the main highway through the affected area and so many businesses were closed for more than a week; the cancellation of medical appointments; serious delays in the provision

of ambulance service; the loss of large quantities of farming and fishing equipment; the missing and presumed dead pets and livestock; the wildlife that was undeniable extinguished, and the tens of thousands of dollars worth of food that was spoiled. Those two traumatic weeks will leave enduring scars throughout Shelburne County.



Image 5: The Barrington Lake Fire. Shelburne is in the upper-right corner of the image.

MUNPA Directors (2023-2024)

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