

*Foundation for Superannuation
of the
Canadian Reformed Churches*

c/o C. Baarda, Secretary
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Mr.Chairman; brothers.

Today the Foundation gathers for its sixteenth tri-annual meeting of members of the organization. As secretary it is the third time that I am able to provide you with an update on some of the activities of the Foundation.

Three years ago, in Ancaster, Ontario, we were able to report that none of the ministers, wives or widows were taken away by death in the previous three years. This time, however, that is not the case; we realize that our time in this world is fleeting, and that in time each one of us will be called home to be with the Lord. Prof. J. Faber died in September 2004, and Rev. M. Vanderwel in May 2005. Two widows were also taken away by death; Mrs. Scholtens in March 2005, and Mrs. VanPopta was promoted to glory in January 2007.

There were also a number of retirements in the past three years. Prof. J. DeJong retired just before the last tri-annual meeting on January 31, 2004; Rev. C. VanSpronsen retired at the end of April 2004; Rev. C. Stam retired at the end of September 2004; Rev. B. J. Berends retired in July of 2005, and last of all Rev. K. Jonker retired at the end of January 2007.

At the tri-annual meeting in Ancaster, the following motion was adopted unanimously: “ The tri-annual meeting directs the board to review existing benefits and assessments and also directs the Board to prepare a study of a few scenarios on the impact of increasing benefit payments to the churches. A report would be sent to the churches within six months.” The study was carried out and the Board decided to present three options to the membership. The 3 options would increase benefits by 20%, 35% and 50%. The last option would be that benefits would be left as currently structured. The churches were asked to respond with their preferred option by Sept. 30, 2004. The Board met again on November 29, 2004, to review the ballots returned by the churches. It should be noted that almost every church responded and that of the responses received 70% were in favour of increasing the benefits by 50 %. A few churches added notes expressing concerns about depleting the asset base, and these concerns were discussed at length before a decision was made to increase the benefits effective in January 2005. It was decided to fund the benefit increase by using 50% of the investment income, and the balance by an increase in the assessments.

At the Ancaster meeting another matter that received attention was the matter of ministers leaving as the result of being dismissed or before normal retirement age. The Board was instructed by a narrow margin to investigate how such a minister could be supported. The Board did investigate

the issue, but decided not to bring a proposal to the churches, since each situation is different and it would be almost impossible to come up with a plan that would address all circumstances. It should also be noted that a proposal would require a constitutional amendment, and in the past such an amendment has always been turned down by the membership.

The issue of a reciprocal agreement with the VSE (Vereniging Samenwerking Emeritering) of our Dutch sister churches, was brought up in our report six years ago, and it was then hoped that such an agreement could be reached by the next tri-annual meeting. At the meeting in Ancaster we reported that an agreement was no closer to resolution than it was in 2001, and the Board finally decided, after receiving a discouraging email just prior to the Ancaster meeting, that an attempt to reach a reciprocal agreement would be abandoned and that churches wishing to call a minister from Holland would have to make provision for ensuring that their minister would not lose VSE benefits in the event that the minister returned to Holland.

During the past three years we have also maintained contact with the Australian sister churches and a number of proposals and counter-proposals have been exchanged during that period of time with br. J. Bonker, the treasurer of the Emeritus Fund of the Australian churches. Ultimately, Australia's proposal was that we would provide funding towards the retirement benefits of ministers retiring in Australia who had, at one time or another, served in our churches. After a careful analysis of the final Australian proposal, it was concluded that we also have a number of ministers who have served elsewhere and for whom we do not have an opportunity to obtain contributions towards their eventual retirement. Entering into a reciprocal agreement only with Australia would add to our own contribution shortfall. Under the circumstances the Board, at its meeting held at the end of March 2007, decided that nothing would be gained by pursuing an agreement, and that the movement of ministers to and from Australia would best be handled on a case by case basis.

To sum up, we give thanks to our Heavenly Father who has provided for our needs in so many ways and Who has also provided the Foundation with the means to carry out its mandate, *which is to assist its members in fulfilling their financial responsibilities with respect to ministers, missionaries, professors, and toward their widows, children or orphans, as the case may be, insofar they result from the provisions of Article 13 of the Church Order.*

Respectfully submitted

Chester Baarda, Secretary