



The Honourable Bill Morneau
Minister of Finance
Department of Finance Canada
90 Elgin Street
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0G5

May 21, 2017

Dear Sir:

SUBJECT: Government of Canada Budget 2017

On behalf of our 20,000 members, I would like to comment on those aspects of the 2017 Budget that pertain specifically to retirement and retirement income.

1. The Budget contains a focus on facilitating entry, re-entry, and retention of Canadians in the workforce. Many seniors – whether through interest or necessity – wish to remain active in the workforce or venture into self-employment.

We were pleased to note that the Budget includes older workers in its focus and will support Provincial programs for this purpose.

In particular, we noted with enthusiasm the Budget's recognition of the importance of flexible work arrangements: *"Budget 2017 proposes to give federally regulated workers the right to request flexible work arrangements from their employer, such as flexible start and finish times and the ability to work from home"*.

While this right will pertain only to federally regulated sectors, we trust it will become the model for your Provincial colleagues and a critical benefit for older workers.

2. Given our interest in the OMERS Pension Plan, we applaud the concept of the Canada Infrastructure Bank, and the opportunities it could provide not only for critical, job-

Protecting the pensions and enhancing the quality of life for all OMERS pensioners.

producing infrastructure but also for solid pension plan investments in Canada.

One key feature for pension plan investors, as you are well aware from your experience and your role in the incipient Ontario Investment Management Corporation, is the independence of investment decisions. Some of the commentary following the budget has left some doubt as to whether the Government of Canada would have leverage to direct or veto the Infrastructure Bank's investment decisions.

The proof of this excellent concept will be in the details. We trust that your expertise in these matters will preserve the independence of the Bank's decisions, at least insofar as they invest pension funds. We will be proud that our pension plan's investments are not only contributing to the security of our pensions but also enhancing the power of public funds to build Canada's future.

3. Pharmaceutical prices are a big issue for retirees, either when purchasing directly or through health insurance premiums. Similarly, appropriate prescribing is a serious concern as we increasingly face multiple ailments. As a result, we note the commitment in Budget 2017:

"Improving access to prescription medications, lowering drug prices and supporting appropriate prescribing through an investment of \$140 million over five years...."

As laudable as is this initiative, however, we – and apparently a majority of Canadians – remain deeply disappointed in the failure of the Government to instigate a national Pharmacare program in concert with willing Provinces. It is this road-not-yet-taken that will most effectively save lives and save billions for all Canadians, most particularly retirees. Let's complete Medicare.

4. The Government has heard the longstanding calls for more home and community care for seniors and more affordable housing options for seniors:

"Budget 2017 proposes to provide approximately \$3.2 billion over the next 11 years to provinces and territories to support key priorities for affordable housing. These priorities may include ... the renovation and repair of existing housing; rent subsidies and other measures to make housing more affordable; and other initiatives to support safe, independent living for Canada's seniors...."

“Many patients currently receiving care in Canadian hospitals could be better supported at home or in the community. To help more Canadians receive the care they need outside of hospital settings, the Government has offered \$1 billion over four years to provinces and territories, starting in 2018–19, for home care infrastructure.”

5. We applaud your Government’s support for Canada’s veterans and the Budget’s announcement of enhanced access to veterans’ pensions.

We remain at your service for future consultation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "William J. Harford". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

William J. Harford, President, MROO



MROO

Municipal Retirees
ORGANIZATION ONTARIO

www.mroo.org

About MROO

The Municipal Retirees Organization Ontario (MROO) was created as a not-for-profit corporation in 1977. We speak on behalf of 150,000 Ontario Municipal Employees Retirement System (OMERS) pensioners and provide services to 20,000 members.

MROO is the largest OMERS retiree organization and the only one with membership open to retirees from all walks of local government life – former union, non-union and management employees of municipalities, police and fire services, libraries, hydro commissions, school boards, health units, and other employers in the OMERS pension plan.

We are an independent, non-partisan organization formed to voice the interests of OMERS retirees to OMERS and governments of all levels, represent our membership in legislative matters that affect retirees, and provide services that benefit our members.

Our advocacy focuses on the OMERS pension plan and retirement income adequacy. MROO offers its members health, dental, home and auto insurance coverage; scholarships for members' relatives; and ongoing communication on retirement issues. We communicate regularly with our 20,000 members.

*For more information, please visit our website,
www.mroo.org.*

Protecting the pensions and enhancing the quality of life for all OMERS pensioners.

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