

# THE EDITORIAL PAGE

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## EDITORIAL

### Time to boost CPP

There was a time when many Canadians resented being forced to participate in the Canada Pension Plan (CPP), believing they could do better on their own. Two stock market crashes later, that notion is as outdated as Freedom 55.

Since the financial meltdown began in 2007, an increasing number of seniors are living in poverty, underlining the urgency to expand the CPP. As Canadians watch their private savings dramatically fail, reforms to the CPP in the late '90s have proven to work. The plan is well funded at \$125 billion, well invested, reliable and sustainable.

The only problem is the payout of 25 per cent for top earners — up to a maximum of pensionable earnings of \$47,200 per year — is inadequate. That means the most anyone can make on CPP is a little less than \$1,000 a month or about \$11,800 a year. It's not a lot.

As the baby boomers retire, the stress on the system will only grow, and the discrepancy between those who have properly planned for retirement, and those who have not, will become more pronounced.

Increasing the CPP premiums and payouts is the fairest way of easing the burden on tax-funded subsidies for low-income retirees, such as the guaranteed income supplement. Make no mistake, the CPP is not a payroll tax. It is mandatory savings. You only get what you put into the plan. Any reforms to increase contributions and benefits would be phased in over 40 years, so that only those who have fully paid the increased premium would fully benefit from the payout.

Expanding the CPP is not a new idea, and was first recommended by a task force in 1979. It is now back on the table, after Federal Finance Minister Jim Flaherty and all provincial finance ministers except for Alberta's Ted Morton, agreed in June to a "modest, phased-in and fully funded enhancement to defined benefits under the Canada Pension Plan."

By contrast, a major increase in the benefit — up to 50 per

cent — is being proposed by a number of people and organizations.

They include former CPP chief actuary Bernard Dussault, Simon Fraser public policy researcher Jon Kesselman, the author of Expanding Canada Pension Plan Retirement Benefits: Assessing Big CPP Proposals; and Gil McGowan, the president of the Alberta Federation of Labour.

The three met with the Herald editorial board recently and presented a compelling argument for doubling the CPP benefit, which we endorse. The CPP already covers almost all Canadian workers and thus spreads the risk and management fees. It is fully portable, offers guaranteed income to all retirees, and is the only risk-free investment broadly available to workers. Private RRSPs and employer pension plans have proven much riskier than initially billed. Those who are in company pension plans are likely in a defined contribution scheme, where the amount that goes in is predetermined, but the payout is based on how well the fund is invested and ultimately performs. Nortel workers know only too well how that worked.

Employers and employees would both be better served by paying more into CPP and less into a company plan. Employees could leave after a few years without losing their pension benefits, reflecting the more transient reality of today's workforce, where it's the exception instead of the norm that a career begins and ends at the same place.

Alberta's opposition is a throwback to outdated thinking, with regards to individual choice and financial flexibility. Those Canadians who want to retire in comfort will still need more to live on than the CPP.

But by raising the standard of living for all retirees, today's taxpayers are saved from shouldering the burden of tomorrow's seniors living in poverty. In the long run, it ensures people pay their own way; a truly Conservative value that should be embraced by the Alberta government.

### Bully for him

He was, as usual, gruff, and he probably shouldn't have put it in writing. But one can't blame Alberta Energy Minister Ron Liepert for being miffed at the Canadian Association of Oilwell Drilling Contractors for inviting him to listen to a speech earlier this year by Danielle Smith. The invite also included an offer to attend a reception to meet the leader of the Wildrose Alliance.

Asking a sitting minister to attend an event headlined by the unelected leader of a party whose stated objective is to dethrone him was bound to make Liepert's blood boil.

Perhaps that was the wickedly delicious intent of the well drillers — to let the Tories know that they have options.

Liepert's letter to the well drillers questioning their political acumen and asking "if this is a joke" could be construed as a veiled threat when he wrote in one part that he was "concerned that you will not treat our future dialogues constructively." Nevertheless, his initial reaction of incredulity makes perfect sense. It was a stupid and rude invitation. Note to minister: next time, pick up the phone.

#### JAMES MORTON

Stacy Bonds, a young makeup artist with no criminal history, was arrested by Ottawa police, apparently for asking why police had stopped her for questioning. A video of her treatment in police custody is now available on the Calgary Herald's website, calgaryherald.com.

The facts of Bonds' treatment bear repeating. She was walking on Rideau Street in downtown Ottawa. She was neither drunk nor behaving inappropriately. The police stopped her and asked her name; she provided it.

After checking her name and finding nothing, the police told her she could go on her way. Bonds, as is her perfect right, asked why she had been stopped in the first place.

In response, the police arrested her for public intoxication and handcuffed her. As Ontario Court Judge Richard Lajoie later held, Bonds was not drunk. Once Bonds was taken to Ottawa Police headquarters, the judge noted that she was anything but "violent or aggressive."

As can be clearly seen in the video, Bonds is much smaller than the police officers who confronted her.

In spite of the lack of violence or aggression, Bonds was assaulted by police. Judge Lajoie found she was the victim of "two extremely violent knee hits in the back ... and has her hair pulled back and her face shoved forward."

Although it is hard to

see exactly what happened afterwards because one police officer is blocking the video camera, it appears that a female police officer hurt her leg; she is seen limping in a later part of the video. Perhaps that injury explains what appears to be increasing hostility as the video continues.

Bonds was forced to the ground with a riot shield — though she was "not resisting with hands flailing or feet flailing," the judge said — and subjected to a strip search. The video shows four male officers and one female officer taking part in, or watching, as Bonds was forced to the ground.

Judge Lajoie severely criticized police actions at the station, saying it was "an indignity toward a human being and should be denounced."

As a prosecutor and as a defence lawyer I have heard numerous complaints about police misconduct.

I have argued cases where an accused, charged with assaulting police, claims to have been the victim of police violence. Such claims have until now, I am afraid to admit, usually rung hollow with me. To be blunt, I did not believe them. I know that police have a difficult job. Police are often faced with violent, intoxicated individuals who have no regard for the truth and who

will say whatever they think will get them out of trouble.

It is all too easy to assume that complaints about police

brutality are false claims made to avoid the consequences of criminal wrongdoing.

However, the Stacy Bonds case shows a Canadian being mistreated by police in the nation's capital. Compounding the wrongful behaviour was the laying of charges for the apparent purpose of covering up misconduct.

How many "assault police" charges are merely trumped up for the purpose of concealing official wrongdoing? Put otherwise, absent a video recording, would Bonds have had a fair hearing?

The likely answer is depressing. There is a malaise in the system. How could five police officers have taken part in the brutalization of Stacy Bonds and then allowed charges for "assault police" to go ahead? How could a Crown attorney have failed to stay charges on seeing the video? More generally, how is it that people whose job it is to see justice done acted so unjustly? The system as a whole takes a beating when abuse occurs. Trust in the system is eroded.

To fix the problems the Bonds case uncovered will be difficult. Yes, videotaping all police/citizen interactions will help and should be



Stacy Bonds

“As a former prosecutor and defence lawyer, I was dubious of police brutality claims. Not anymore.”



Stacy Bonds is pinned to the floor after her shirt and bra strap were cut with scissors at Ottawa police headquarters. The image is from an Ottawa police video released to the Ottawa Citizen.

mandated. More broadly, a new professionalism is required in the justice system.

A free nation does not fear intimidation by police or the state. A free people can ask "why" when stopped by police. An honourable police force is not afraid to explain its actions to the people it is there to protect.

Nelson Mandela rightly said, "I am not truly free if I am taking away someone else's freedom, just as surely as I am not free when my freedom is taken from me. The oppressed and the oppressor alike are robbed of their humanity." For the sake of all Canadians a case like that of Stacy Bonds must never be allowed to happen again.

JAMES MORTON IS A TORONTO LAWYER AND PAST PRESIDENT OF THE ONTARIO BAR ASSOCIATION. HE TEACHES EVIDENCE AT OSGOODE HALL LAW SCHOOL OF YORK UNIVERSITY.

## 14th Street 'bullet bus' plan makes great sense



#### ROBERT REMINGTON

Having long been an advocate of other people taking the bus, it's exciting to see Ald. Brian Pincott's forward-thinking plan to run "bullet buses" up and down 14th Street S.W. to move people efficiently out of the southwest.

The cost of his proposed bus rapid transit (BRT) route could be as high as \$50 million. That's a mind-boggling figure, but not when you consider that \$50 million is basically the cost of building one interchange — and this proposal includes a short, bus-only underpass at 90th Avenue.

The plan involves building two north-south bus-

only lanes running along the east side of 14th Street, separated from traffic by barriers. There is space to do so in the existing right-of-way and no houses would be demolished.

The route would run along 14th Street S.W. from Anderson Road north to Glenmore Trail and tie in to existing bus-only lanes on Crowchild Trail and then into downtown. There would be stops at key points, including Rockyview Hospital, Mount Royal University and Heritage Park. Included in the plan are "better than standard" bus shelters, says Neil McKendrick, manager of transportation planning for the city.

Pincott will push the proposal — he's been working on it for two years — at council in the New Year. It seems like a no-brainer.

Pincott believes the bullet buses would get people from Cedarbrae and Woodlands "to downtown in half an hour every single day."

City planners estimate that the 14th Street BRT lanes could move between 15,000 and 20,000 people a day using articulated buses. Eleven other bus routes could also use portions of the 14th Street BRT line, speeding up service on those routes.

John Morrall, a consultant and professor emeritus of engineering at the University of Calgary, told the Herald's Sean Myers a few weeks back that he applauds the plan, with the proviso that it must not be a substitute for a southwest ring road. He's right. The long-term solution for the southwest must still involve the missing southwest ring road link. Morrall believes,

and I can't argue, that the best route for the southwest ring road remains through the Tsuu T'ina reserve.

There are only a handful of Canadian cities with dedicated BRT lines. Calgary has three BRT routes, but all are mixed in with regular traffic. The 14th Street line would be the city's first dedicated BRT lane.

"This is taking it to the next level," Pincott says. "What we've been doing so far is 'baby BRT' — we use bigger buses but they are still in traffic."

Bus rapid transit "is a simple concept," Vancouver transportation planner and consultant Eric Doherty wrote in a post earlier this year at thecanadian.org.

"You give buses a dramatic makeover that makes the rider experience much like rapid transit on rails but

with a much lower capital cost. The main elements are dedicated lanes with enforcement to keep cars out, signal priority so buses seldom have to stop at traffic lights, and all-door boarding to reduce the time spent at stops. In Europe, many transit agencies no longer differentiate between bus rapid transit and light rail lines."

Bus rapid transit with dedicated lanes "is typically a bit faster than light rail, and has about the same maximum capacity. It can also greatly reduce operating costs as faster and larger buses carry more passengers per hour."

The first full-featured BRT line was built in Curitiba, Brazil, in the late 1970s. Calgary launched BRT service in 2004 with Route 301. It carries 17,000 people a day from Country Hills Boulevard down

Centre Street and onto Bow Trail and 17th Avenue West. Even without fully separated lanes, buses on the 301 average 22 km/h, compared to 30 km/h for the LRT.

"That's not a bad level of service," says McKendrick. He admits the 301 was no Curitiba, or even Ottawa's Transitway, but it was a good start.

About 82 per cent of vehicles on Calgary roads have single occupants. If 15,000 people a day use the 14th Street BRT route, every motorist should be behind it. If you love your car and want more room on the road, you've got to applaud any plan where other people take the bus.

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