

# Pension plan an election issue | Your online newspaper for Waterloo, Ontario

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## **Ian McLean, Business Matters:**

A prominent concern for businesses across the province of Ontario for the past two years has emerged as an early issue in the federal election campaign.

I have provided a series of columns on the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan, or ORPP, and the position of the local and provincial business community around, among other issues, the costs and eligibility/exemption requirements of implementing this plan.

The controversy has now been elevated to the national level.

The federal involvement extends back to mid July of this year when Finance Minister Joe Oliver announced that Ottawa would not provide administrative support for the new Ontario pension scheme scheduled for 2017.

Oliver's position, according to media reports, is that the plan will take money from workers and their families, kill jobs, and damage the economy. Administration of the plan will be a provincial responsibility including the collection of contributions and any other required information.

Ontario Minister of Finance Charles Sousa responded that he will move ahead regardless of the federal position and that an offer has been made to compensate Ottawa for services provided.

Premier Kathleen Wynne has stated that the ORPP is critical for boosting retirement incomes and since the federal government assists Quebec and Saskatchewan in administering provincial plans, the same support should be extended to Ontario.

In the weeks leading up to the Aug. 2 election call, Employment Minister Pierre Poilievre promised that the Conservative party would make the pension plan a major issue in the campaign, and recent remarks indicate that strategy is being followed.

Last week, Prime Minister Harper repeated that he also does not support expanding the Canada Pension Plan (CPP) by escalating taxes for both workers and small businesses.

He also stated that increasingly workers support options like tax-free savings accounts and pooled registered pension plans that have recently been created and allow individuals to make their own decisions.

Prior to the Liberal party announcing a provincial pension plan in their 2014 election campaign, a series of Ontario finance ministers had strongly pressured Ottawa for CPP enhancements.

In the final analysis, from the perspective of the Waterloo Region and Ontario business communities, the new Ontario pension plan should not restrict job creation and economic growth, particularly for small and medium sized enterprises.

The responsibility rests with both levels of government to ensure they are assisting rather than hindering with business success.

Questions remain unanswered by both the federal and Ontario governments.

For Ottawa, they must disclose their plan for the CPP while Queen's Park has to clarify details on eligibility for the ORPP.

The business community and electorate await these answers.

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*Ian McLean is president and CEO of the Greater K-W Chamber of Commerce.*