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Employer Newsletter



Employer News 57 - April 2012

OMERS Fund Grows to \$55.1 Billion

The OMERS Plan generated a positive investment return of 3.17% in 2011, and the net assets of all OMERS Plans reached an all-time high of \$55.1 billion. This represents an increase of almost \$12 billion since the 2008 global credit crisis.

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Pensions in the News

OMERS members and employers have questions about what they're hearing in the news these days about Canada's pension system. We provide information to help answer those questions.

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E-Form 119 Workshops Empower Employers

Each year, all OMERS employers and OMERS Pension Operations work together to complete "e-Form 119s." This process is crucial to obtaining accurate service, earnings and contributions data for all members.

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AVCs: Transfer Window Open for 2012

The 2012 window for transferring funds to an AVC account is open until April 30, 2012. Remind your members that they can transfer funds from a registered retirement savings vehicle to an AVC account during the transfer window.

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Changes in Canada Pension Plan Rules

Changes to the Canada Pension Plan became effective in 2012. These changes do not affect OMERS members' pensions or bridge benefits.

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New Rules Apply in Marriage Breakdown

Related Links

[Sign-up for Employer Administration Workshops](#)

Spring Meeting

[OMERS 2012 Spring Information Meeting Webcast - April 17, 10:30 a.m.](#)

Effective January 1, 2012, new legislation sets out how the pension is valued and divided on marriage breakdown. OMERS, as a pension plan administrator, must comply with these rules.

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Change Clarifies Eligible Spouse

The OMERS Sponsors Corporation (SC) approved a Plan amendment that clarifies and provides consistent rules regarding entitlement to a spousal benefit on the death of a Plan member. The change is effective May 1, 2012.

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Administration Manual Helps With...

When a retiree is re-employed by an OMERS employer, important questions need to be answered. Should they be re-enrolled? When should they be re-enrolled? Who decides?

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New Legislation Sets Standard for Service to People with Disabilities

OMERS has made a commitment to ensure that Plan members with mobility, hearing, vision or cognitive disabilities can access our services.

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Member Affiliation Update

OMERS recently updated our website to include breakdowns of Member Affiliations and Employer Categories for 2010, and for 2011.

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OMERS Fund Grows to \$55.1 Billion

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Diversification leads OMERS to a positive investment return in 2011. The OMERS Plan generated a positive investment return of 3.17% in 2011, and the net assets of all OMERS Plans reached an all-time high of \$55.1 billion. This represents an increase of almost \$12 billion since the 2008 global credit crisis.

“Our focus is on producing stable investment results that enable us to deliver on the pension promise over the long term,” said Michael Nobrega, OMERS President and CEO.

“Our view of risk is shaped by prudent use of debt, stringent investment criteria and rigorous discipline in all our investment decisions. This view is in line with protecting capital and ensuring liquidity for our Plan members in turbulent market conditions. We are proud of our track record of solid investment returns, our triple ‘A’ credit rating, and our reputation as a responsible, long-term investor.”

Asset Mix Strategy

The success of the strategy that OMERS adopted in 2004 – to shift capital from public to private markets – is demonstrated in this year’s returns. Our private market assets include our real estate, infrastructure and private equity investments. Our diversified asset mix strategy helps protect the Plan against public market volatility.

“Regarding the public markets, 2011 was truly a tale of two halves. The markets started the year strong, building on the momentum of 2009 and 2010. This changed dramatically in the latter half of the year where we saw daily market volatility reminiscent of the last recession,” said Mr. Nobrega.

OMERS Plan Rate of Return

	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007
Annual rate of return	3.17%	12.01%	10.6%	-15.3%	8.7%

	1-year return	3-year	8-year	10-year
Average annual rate of return	3.17%	8.51%	7.48%	6.43%

Funding Deficit

The Plan’s 2011 funding deficit was \$7.3 billion, versus \$4.5 billion a year earlier. Like many other pension plans, the funding deficit position reflects the impact of the 2008 global economic downturn, the ongoing European debt crisis, and the increasing actuarial liabilities.

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2011 Report to Members



[Learn more](#) >>

Based on our expected investment returns, combined with temporary contribution increases and benefit reductions, we expect the Plan will return to surplus within 10 to 15 years.

More details of OMERS financial results are in [OMERS in Focus](#).

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Pensions in the News

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Canada’s pension system seems to be in the news every day. As the population ages, governments are trying to find affordable, long-term solutions to ensure Canadians are adequately supported in retirement.

These issues have generated commentary on many fronts, and lately, the discussion has focused on large, defined benefit pension plans for government employees. OMERS is one of those plans, and members and employers sometimes have questions about what they are hearing. We’ve provided the following information to help answer those questions.

Paying Pensions

OMERS Plan members and participating employers make required contributions to the OMERS Plan in equal amounts. Since OMERS inception in 1962, these contributions have been invested on behalf of OMERS members, and to date, the investment returns have contributed the lion’s share of the capital added to the OMERS Fund. For example, over the past 20 years, contributions (equally shared by employees and employers) have accounted for about one-third (34%) of the capital added to the Fund, while investment returns accounted for about two-thirds, or 66%.

Funding

In 2011, the OMERS Primary Plan defined benefit component collected \$2.7 billion in contributions, paid out about \$2.4 billion in benefits, and still owns \$54.9 billion in net assets. However, OMERS currently has an actuarial deficit. This is the gap between what the Plan expects to pay in pension benefits over the next several decades and what the Plan currently has in assets. The deficit has resulted from the 2008 global economic downturn, the European debt crisis, an aging membership, the strengthening of actuarial assumptions, and other factors.

Contribution rate increases and temporary benefit reductions are being phased in and, based on our long-term projections, they will help the Plan out of the deficit in 10 to 15 years. You can be assured that the Plan’s cash flows on a year-over-year basis remain healthy. When considering funding, it is also important to keep in mind that OMERS also has had periods of surplus. From 1998 to 2003, the surplus was significant enough that federal tax legislation required OMERS to declare a contribution holiday, during which members and employers contributed nothing or a reduced amount, but members still earned service the Plan.

Risks and rewards are shared

Although many people think OMERS is managed directly by the Ontario Government, it is actually jointly governed by members and employers, which helps to keep risks and rewards in balance. OMERS members contribute a significant amount of their salary every payday to help pay the cost of pensions. Employers match their members’ contributions as part of the members’ total compensation. There is no government “safety net.” The OMERS Sponsors Corporation (SC) regularly considers the Plan’s funding requirements and makes decisions about proposals related to changes in contributions and benefits.

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Strength in numbers

The strength of your multi-employer pension plan lies in its size. OMERS had almost 420,000 members at January 31, 2012. About one in every 20 people employed in Ontario is an OMERS member. This is a significant portion of Ontario's population who are on the path toward having a steady retirement income. Their OMERS pension will reduce the burden on social assistance programs by providing retirement income in a cost-effective manner.

The size of the Plan allows OMERS to provide best-in-class pension service solutions to members and their employers. Size also influences the type of investments the OMERS Fund is able to access. Certain investments, such as railways, toll roads, office towers, shopping malls, power plants, and airports, have a pattern of long-term stable returns that closely match the long-term stream of pension payments the Plan must pay. Purchasing these investments requires the large pools of capital that are only available to large-scale investors like OMERS. By being large, OMERS can make the types of investments that make the Plan sustainable, where many smaller pension plans cannot.

Ownership in Canada

For almost 50 years, OMERS has been and continues to be a significant contributor to the health of the Ontario and Canadian economies through its many investments in Canada, generating significant tax revenue through the employees who work in those companies. About two-thirds of the Plan's assets, totalling over \$37 billion, are invested in Ontario or the rest of Canada. A significant portion of these investments have been made in companies where OMERS has a major ownership stake. Well over 10,000 people are employed in these companies – all of whom pay taxes in Canada. By continuing to invest in Canada, OMERS will help to keep Canadians employed and even increase employment opportunities in Ontario and across the country.

If you have questions about OMERS, our [Client Services](#) representatives are available to answer your calls.



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E-Form 119 Workshops Empower Employers

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Each year, all OMERS employers and OMERS Pension Operations work together to complete a detailed process called the Annual Reporting of Membership Information, also known as the "e-Form 119". This process is crucial to obtaining accurate service, earnings and contributions data for all members.

This past year, e-Form 119 had new meaning for those employers who attended one of the 13 e-Form 119 training workshops that began in mid-October and wrapped up in early January 2012. The new training format builds on employer's knowledge on the e-Form 119 process and walks them through the intricacies of e-access, an online reporting tool for employers. The goal was to help employers overcome challenges they face when reporting annual member information to OMERS.

Close to 400 employers attended the full-day workshops. Out of OMERS 25 largest employers, 19 sent representatives, including the Toronto Police Services Board - ranked the fourth largest with over 8,000 members.



L to R: Farida Farzadi; Nadene Mohammed; Urmilla Persaud; Patricia Samuels

Photo courtesy of Karen Maraj, OMERS

"I attend every year as a refresher," says Farida Farzadi, Pension Administrator, Toronto Police Services Board. "I find that every year OMERS makes improvements on how sessions are delivered - I always learn something that will help us improve our own internal efficiencies and streamline our processes."

"We encourage all administrators involved in the e-Form 119 process to attend," says Urmilla Persaud, Supervisor, Pension and Benefits Administration, Toronto Police Services Board. "The sessions give us an opportunity to get up close and personal and a chance to meet other OMERS employers and share ideas."

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Parts of the workshops are very interactive. They encourage employers to brainstorm and work together to help develop their knowledge and become more efficient, ultimately making the annual reporting process a lot smoother.

In addition to the e-access and e-Form 119 workshops, OMERS offers year-round Employer Workshops that provide general information on topics like enrolments, credited service, and leave periods.

Although Employer Workshops are different from e-access and e-Form 119 workshops, they do, however discuss how e-access can help you administer OMERS benefits.

Attending a workshop in advance helps prepare for the 119 season and gives employers a general overview of the processes involved.

"As someone new to the 119 process, I immediately signed up for one of the sessions. It gave a good administrative 'bird's eye view' of the process, and that is why we make sure that all new administrators attend an Employer Workshop," says Urmilla.

Help is a click away

In addition to e-access, the [Employer Administration Manual](#), that is updated quarterly, and the online PA calculator are other tools that these two colleagues find helpful year-round.

Farida says, "I find the PA calculator especially helpful when reporting leave periods and other complex scenarios that arise throughout the year." She finds the Employer Administration Manual informative – a tool she refers to often. "I especially like the 'What's new' section; it keeps us up-to-date with recent changes."

"The employer is not the only one that benefits from OMERS online tools," says Urmilla. She finds that members are keen on using the Retirement Income Estimator that is available on the OMERS website. "This is one service that our long-term employees appreciate, especially as they get closer to retirement," says Farida.

Teamwork equals success

The annual reporting process is a joint effort between employers and OMERS. This two-way communication channel is vital when reporting and confirming member data. With over 8,000 members the Toronto Police Services Board provides the utmost customer service care to its membership.

"This means reporting accurate 119 data and member information to OMERS on time," says Farida.

"We run our departments like well-oiled machines – this makes it easier when preparing for the 119 season."

Urmilla says, "It really is a 'team effort' – OMERS is an integral part of helping us achieve our goal this year with reporting well ahead of schedule."

With the proper tools and resources, employers have become more empowered than ever to meet any Form 119 issues head on.

OMERS congratulates those employers, like the Toronto Police Services Board, that have already completed their 2011 annual reporting. Together, we can provide best-in-class service to members.

OMERS-employer teamwork nets e-Form 119 results

Employers who use e-access to report their e-Form 119 – Annual Reporting of Membership Information are instrumental in helping us to get members Pension Reports to their members on time (before the legislated deadline of June 30 each year). This is our progress so far.

(as at March 31, 2012)

Employer group e-Form 119s completed and reconciled:	486 (52%)
Employer group e-Form 119s started but not completed:	321 (34%)
Employer group e-Form 119s yet to begin:	94 (10%)
Largest employer processed:	Toronto Police Services Board (approx. 8,000 members)
Members processed:	205,508 (81%)
Members yet to be processed:	48,523 (19%)
Pension Reports generated:	128,319

To those employers who have already completed and reconciled their e-Form 119, we offer our thanks. To those who are working on theirs, please know that our experienced [Client Services](#) staff is available to help you with any e-Form 119 questions you may have.

adviser.)

How do they get started?

To set up an AVC account, your members use the [AVC registration forms](#) to transfer funds or to start automatic contributions. If they are registered myOMERS users, they can set up their AVC account directly online. [More information is available in the AVC section.](#)

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Changes in Canada Pension Plan Rules

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Changes to the Canada Pension Plan became effective in 2012. These changes do not affect OMERS members' pensions or bridge benefits. Briefly, under the new CPP rules:

The "work cessation test" is eliminated; this means that members are no longer required to demonstrate that they have little or no earnings for the two months before their CPP retirement pension begins.

- For members aged 60 to 70: if the member continues to work and is receiving a CPP retirement pension, you and the member will continue to pay CPP contributions. These contributions will be credited to a "post-retirement benefit" and added to the member's CPP pension the following year. Between the ages of 65 and 70, however, members can opt out of paying CPP contributions.
- For members when they reach age 70: contributions to CPP fully stop.

Read more about the CPP changes at www.cra-arc.gc.ca.

OMERS Plan rules are different:

- OMERS members cannot receive an OMERS retirement pension and pay contributions to the Plan at the same time. A bona fide retirement must occur for members to begin their OMERS pension.
- OMERS bridge benefit is paid to retired members to age 65, regardless of whether they are receiving their CPP pension.
- If members continue to work when they are eligible to retire, OMERS contributions will continue until November 30 of the year they reach age 71. Members will receive a benefit options form to start their OMERS pension on December 1, even if they continue working.

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New Rules Apply in Marriage Breakdown

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A pension earned by a registered pension plan member during their marriage or common-law relationship is considered part of family property in the event of a “marriage breakdown.”

Effective January 1, 2012, new legislation sets out how the pension is valued and divided on marriage breakdown. OMERS, as a pension plan administrator, must comply with these rules under Ontario’s *Family Law Act* and *Pension Benefits Act*. The Financial Services Commission of Ontario (FSCO) has developed the forms to be used for the valuation and division process.

The new rules apply to a court order, family arbitration award, or domestic contract (e.g., separation agreement) that is signed or executed on or after January 1, 2012. The rules are different for a document that was signed prior to 2012.

Read more at www.omers.com/marriagebreakdown or FSCO’s website at www.fSCO.gov.on.ca.

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Change Clarifies Eligible Spouse

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The OMERS Sponsors Corporation (SC) approved a Plan amendment that clarifies and provides consistent rules regarding entitlement to a spousal benefit on the death of a Plan member. The change is effective May 1, 2012.

The change affects the survivor benefit for a member's post-retirement-date spouse (see chart). This spouse would no longer qualify for a survivor benefit if the two parties were living separate and apart at the date of the member's death. There is no other change.

Read more about survivor benefits and terms in OMERS [Employer Administration Manual](#) (Section 16 – Death).

If you have any questions or comments about this Plan change, please write to OMERS, and also to the Superintendent of Financial Services at FSCO, 5160 Yonge Street, P.O. Box 85, Toronto, ON M2N 6C9.

Spouse		Eligible spouse criteria	This spouse is not eligible...
Member's death occurs before retirement	Pre-retirement spouse	Married or common-law at date of member's death	If living separate and apart at date of member's death (no change)
	Retirement-date spouse	Married or common-law at member's retirement date*	If living separate and apart at member's retirement date* (no change)
Member's death occurs after retirement	Post-retirement-date spouse	Married or common-law at date of member's death (if there is no retirement-date spouse)	New rule: If living separate and apart at date of member's death

*"Retirement date" is the date that the first pension payment is due.

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OMERS retirees returning to work for an OMERS employer

Usually, when an OMERS member retires, they have decided to leave the workforce permanently. However, when a retiree is re-employed by an OMERS employer, important questions need to be answered. Should they be re-enrolled? When should they be re-enrolled? Who decides? The OMERS [Employer Administration Manual](#) knows...

The three Rs: Retiree? Re-employed? Re-enrolled!

The brief answer is that if a member receiving an OMERS pension returns to work full-time for an OMERS employer, they must be enrolled on the date they are hired – unless they elect not to enrol. (If the retired member is returning to work part-time, OTCFT eligibility rules apply.) A member cannot receive a pension from OMERS and re-enrol at the same time.

What you should do

If you know person you are hiring is an OMERS retired member, tell them their options:

1. Re-enrol and stop receiving their OMERS pension (default option)
Notify OMERS immediately, so we can stop the retired member's pension. Complete and send us the [Form 102 – Enrolling an OMERS member](#).

The retired member must repay any 50% Rule refund they received (plus interest) if they want their previous and current service periods to be merged. We'll check directly with the retired member to make sure they understand this option.

2. Not re-enrol and continue to receive their OMERS pension (requires a signed waiver)
Have the retired member complete and the [Employed OMERS retiree election form](#) to decline re-enrolment, and return it to you. Keep this form for your records.

Although retired members have 60 days to make their decision, any delay will result in a retired member who chooses to re-enrol having to repay any pension payments they've received since their hire date.

More information

Check the online OMERS [Employer Administration Manual](#) (Section 2.1.5 – Re-employed retired members).

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New Legislation Sets Standard for Service to People with Disabilities

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OMERS has made a commitment to ensure that Plan members with mobility, hearing, vision or cognitive disabilities can access our services.

The customer service standard under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (the AODA), applies to OMERS effective January 1, 2012. This standard requires companies to provide services in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of people with disabilities, and to take into account a person's disability when communicating with them.

There are many ways OMERS provides leading service in this area:

- Communicating with members using Bell TTY service (for hearing impaired members), by email, or large font communications;
- Member meetings are wheelchair-accessible; a member's support person, such as a family member or sign-language interpreter, is welcome (as are service animals, such as a guide dog);
- The majority of content on www.omers.com is compatible with screen-reader software for visually impaired members.

OMERS has established a [Corporate Accessibility Policy](#)  [51 KB], setting out our commitment to service for people with disabilities.

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Member Affiliation Update

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Members of the OMERS Plan work for a wide range of employers. As well, most OMERS members belong to a union or association.

OMERS recently updated our website to include breakdowns of [Member Affiliations and Employer Categories for 2010, and for 2011](#).

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