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Meet Sari Taha, a Human Resources professional and OMERS administrator

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OMERS is proud to serve members who work and support citizens in communities across Ontario - including municipal, school board and children's aid and hydro workers. Sari Taha is one of these members. He is also an OMERS administrator.

"I truly love what I do, and I'm grateful for the job that I have and the OMERS membership that my employer affords me," says Sari Taha, Acting Senior Manager of Human Resources at the Halton District School Board. Sari has worked at the school board, which serves more than 60,000 students, since 2002.

In addition to its teaching staff, who are members of the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan, the Halton District School Board has about 2,000 non-teaching and support staff who are members of the OMERS Plan.

"One of the reasons we are able to attract and retain employees is a competitive and diverse compensation package, and part of that is the stability OMERS provides," Sari says. "We take great comfort in the fact that OMERS is a pension plan that is on a solid financial footing."

Sari says that, generally, he's an engaged citizen. "Part of the motivation to be engaged with OMERS is that I understand what this pension means. I understand its importance. I understand its cost. Most importantly, I understand the dividends the Plan will pay come retirement; therefore, there's that heightened engagement with the Plan.

"Also, the fact that I'm responsible for Plan administration adds an extra layer of engagement," Sari says. "I feel connected to the OMERS family, and the relationships I've built over the years with the OMERS team are of great value to me."

As an administrator Sari helps with e-Form 119 annual reporting and buy-backs. He says the "support from the OMERS team throughout the 119 process has been invaluable." As far as areas of focus, he would like to see OMERS move to payroll-based reporting and improve the buy-back process which can be labor-intensive for employers.

We will continue to partner with administrators, like Sari, to continually improve our processes and ensure our Plan is easy to administer now, and into the future.

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Highlights from OMERS 2015 Spring Information Meeting

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One of the highlights of the year at OMERS is our annual Spring Information Meeting. It's an opportunity for employers, stakeholders and members to meet, share ideas and talk about our Plan. This year, the meeting was held on April 13th at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre. OMERS senior leaders reviewed 2014 accomplishments and outlined the challenges and the opportunities that lie ahead.

Featured presenters were:

- George Cooke, Board Chair, OMERS Administration Corporation
- Michael Latimer, CEO and President, OMERS Administration Corporation
- Jonathan Simmons, Chief Financial Officer, OMERS Administration Corporation
- Marianne Love and Brian O'Keefe, Co-Chairs, OMERS Sponsors Corporation
- Warren Bell, Chief Operating Officer and Pension Services, OMERS Administration Corporation

Highlights of the presentations included:

- **Improved funded ratio for the Primary Plan** – from **88.2%** in 2013 to **90.8%**
- **Solid performance in 2014** – a 10.0% net rate of return
- **CEO priorities** – building investment results to earn consistent long-term returns, and aligning resources to get the right people with the right skills in the right jobs
- **OMERS Administration Corporation and Sponsors Corporation's joint strategic plan** –working together to set out key priorities and deliver a joint strategic plan in 2015
- **The importance of diversification to enhance returns and balance risk** – OMERS investments are diversified by geography, economic sector, risk exposure, asset class and income stream
- **OMERS Sponsors Corporation's update** – no contribution rate or benefit changes in 2015 and a continued focus on Plan sustainability with its Funding Management Strategy
- **OMERS focus on serving our members** – investing in technology, partnering with our employers and serving our members through all stages of their life.

A panel discussion featured OMERS Chief Investment Officers: Blake Hutcheson, Real Estate and Strategic Investments; Michael Rolland, Private Markets; and Satish Rai, Public Markets. The panel spoke about the importance of diversification, working together and investing where we have the expertise, large-scale infrastructure and smaller-scale private market investments (both types of investments play a part in delivering on the pension promise), and Oxford's strong track record in real estate with property development.

When asked what the most important thing the audience could take away from the meeting, Michael Rolland replied "I understand what my job really is. It is to pay pensions" Satish Rai quickly added "My mother is an OMERS recipient, and she's one tough customer."

The meeting concluded with an open forum question and answer period. Members, employers and stakeholders asked a variety of questions. Topics covered everything from OMERS investment performance and strategic investments to the participation of part-time workers in the OMERS Plan. One member asked about OMERS approach to green investments. In response, Blake Hutchinson noted the commitment of our real estate business, Oxford Properties, to the environment. Oxford Properties has a track record of numerous awards for sustainability, including first place for sustainability performance in the North American diversified office-retail category for the second year in a row.

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Warren Bell, OMERS COO reaches out to employers

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At OMERS, we are very fortunate that our purpose is both straightforward and worthwhile – to provide secure and sustainable pensions to Ontario workers who serve our communities. It is incredibly rewarding to come to work every day to a place where there is a tangible sense of connection to helping provide financial security to hundreds of thousands of people.

To be successful with this mandate, we must actively support our 1,000 employers. I recognize that each employer has their own deadlines, priorities and technical limitations, and that administering the OMERS Plan is just one piece of a busy workload. That is why it is so important for us to be connected, and listen to employers, and work together to simplify processes and improve service levels.

I have made it a priority to regularly meet with employers, stakeholders and members, and I am committed to continuing to do so. Over the past months, I have had the pleasure of meeting some of you and have engaged in very frank discussions about what OMERS is doing well and where we can improve. Through these discussions, I have gained firsthand feedback from you; insights which will be used to help create a roadmap for the future.

I am keenly aware that the administrative decisions we make at OMERS impact you, and the work that you do each day. To me, it is all about having focus, discipline and accountability in everything that we do, and about listening to our employers, stakeholders and members along the way.

One of the ways that we are improving is through investing in our technology. It is critical to ensure that we have the right tools in place to serve our members into the future. Our current system is 18 years old and it is time for us to modernize. This is a multi-year project, which will not have any impact on employers until the end of 2017. As we move forward, we will be engaging directly with employers on this initiative – partnering with each of you – to develop a system that sets the stage for the future.

In addition to face-to-face meetings, this employer newsletter is an important forum for us to share information and I will use it to communicate directly with you. I want to hear from you. Please contact me at client@omers.com to provide feedback.

Warren Bell was appointed OMERS Chief Operating Officer and Pension Services (COO) in September 2014. He previously served as OMERS Executive Vice President and Chief Human Resources Officer. Prior to joining OMERS in 2010, he held a variety of senior management positions in human resources and operations over his progressive, 25-plus-year career at TD Bank Group.

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Help us help your OMERS members

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Encourage your OMERS members to activate their myOMERS account. Together, we can enhance service levels, provide your employees with easy-to-access information on their pension, and save pension dollars.

myOMERS is a personalized, online pension management tool, with secure online access to information.

On myOMERS members can:

- View pension information.
- Update contact information.
- Switch to e-subscription and receive timely information about the pension plan, while reducing the use of paper.
- Estimate retirement income (OMERS pension, government benefits and income from personal savings).
- Calculate a buy-back purchase.
- Manage an AVC account.

Later this year, we will be partnering with employers to help drive up myOMERS registrations. We'll keep you posted through e-alerts and the newsletter.

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Working together to protect members' personal information

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OMERS and employers work together to administer the OMERS Plan and meet the pension promise and must also work together and take steps to always safeguard members' personal information.

Employers should always keep in mind that:

- Membership information OMERS provides through e-access, member reports or other channels is for the purposes of **OMERS Plan administration only**; and
- If you are going to use this information for any other purpose, you must have the member's consent.

We routinely hear from employers regarding the need for robust tools and access to aggregate information to assist with administering the Plan and to proactively prepare for the future.

We are currently reviewing existing security controls, processes and best practices to help us to continue to provide employers with the information they need while always ensuring the protection of members' personal information. This may include changes to e-access security controls and other processes. Any changes will be communicated through e-alerts and *Employer News* as well as ongoing discussions with employers.

We take privacy seriously, as we know you do – working together can help us to ensure that we treat all information with the proper level of transparency in order to administer the Plan effectively.

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Secondments: the basics

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You asked us how a secondment affects a member's pension and your OMERS reporting.

What is a secondment?

A secondment occurs in the following situation:

- You (an OMERS employer) make an arrangement (typically in writing) with another employer for one of your employees to work for that employer for a defined period of time.
- At the end of the defined period of time, the employee will return to work for you.
- During the period, you continue to pay the employee's regular earnings and you are reimbursed by the other employer.
- You also continue to deduct CPP contributions and Employment Insurance premiums, and issue all income tax reporting.

Essentially, the employee's employment relationship remains with you during the secondment.

What happens to a member's OMERS pension during a secondment?

If the employee is an OMERS member:

- The member continues to accrue credited service in the OMERS Plan; and
- You continue to deduct and remit OMERS contributions, and report earnings and service – as if the member were still working for you.

Any salary the member receives directly from the other employer is excluded from the member's contributory earnings.

Example

- Simon is one of your continuous full-time employees and an OMERS member. His annual contributory earnings are $75,000.
- Simon is seconded to another employer for one year. The terms of a written agreement confirm that he is considered your employee and you will pay Simon's regular contributory earnings for the year.

During the secondment, you will continue to:

- Deduct OMERS contributions based on his annual contributory earnings of $75,000.
- Report membership information to OMERS, e.g., earnings, service, pension adjustments.

What if the other employer participates in OMERS?
The other employer must not enroll Simon in the OMERS Plan, since you are the employer of record covering Simon's OMERS Plan membership.

What if the arrangement requires the other employer to pay Simon; i.e., Simon's salary is not paid by you?
In this case, the arrangement is a leave of absence – it's not a secondment for OMERS purposes. See Section 11, Leave periods in the Employer Administration Manual and, if the other employer is an OMERS employer, see Section 2.1.4 Dual Membership.

Questions about secondments, including variations of the above scenario?

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Offering OMERS membership to employees

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Do you have other-than-continuous full-time employees who are not enrolled in the OMERS Plan as a condition of employment? Did you know that you must offer membership to these employees when you know they *first* become eligible?

Failure to offer membership can result in an omission period, which can be expensive for employers. The employer pays the employer's share of the missed contributions plus the interest accrued on *both* employer and employee contributions.

Previous employment or a part-time job with another OMERS employer could help these employees become eligible – they may even be eligible when hired. As part of your hiring process, you should ask new hires about any previous employer or part-time work with another OMERS employer and document their response.

We've created some new tools including a handout and poster to encourage your new employees to tell you about employment with another OMERS employer. We need your help to ensure these communications are easily available to your employees.

- **Handout for new hires** Eng [674 KB] | Fr [1.4 MB]
- **Poster for ongoing education and awareness** Eng [1 MB] | Fr [1 MB]

Find out more at Offering OMERS Membership – you can print copies of the poster and handout for new hires, and there's a link to a list of OMERS employers if the employee needs to confirm their previous employer was an OMERS employer.

If you have questions about offering membership, see Section 6 of the OMERS Employer Administration Manual or contact Client Services.

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