

Canadians face 'retirement income crisis': Liberal critic

More and more Canadians are worried about their retirement, yet Stephen Harper is offering them little more than lip-service for the problem.

A new CIBC report shows that millions of Canadians face a 'steep decline in living standards' in retirement. Personal debt in Canada is at a record high. Meanwhile, three-quarters of private sector workers don't have a workplace pension plan. The average 35-year-old puts aside less than half of what their parents did at the same age. On average, baby boomers' retirement savings are short \$400,000.

If we don't find a solution to this problem now, Canadians will pay with higher costs later on.

Instead of helping, Mr. Harper has made things worse. He eliminated Income Trusts, destroying about \$25-billion in value from Canadians' savings. He also broke his word by delaying Old Age Security and the Guaranteed Income Supplement until the age of 67, taking over \$30,000 away from each vulnerable senior.

His only 'solutions' have been a collection of tax breaks for wealthier households. None of these changes have helped ease the pending crisis for Canadians anxious about their future.

What we need is a modest, phased-in expansion of the Canada Pension Plan (CPP).

The CPP, along with the Quebec Pension Plan, is a defined-benefit pension plan that covers every Canadian worker, in every job, in every province. Actuaries have declared it sound for 75 years—the furthest they will go for any plan. But its benefits are too low. The average CPP monthly benefit is only about \$640.

Mr. Harper has blocked every effort from the provinces to enhance the CPP. His infamous 'firewall' letter even called on Alberta to withdraw from the pension plan entirely. Now, on the eve of an election, he's promising a study on changes to the CPP. But a study won't protect Canadians in their golden years.

Canadians work hard. They deserve a pension plan that they can depend on for a dignified retirement.

Liberals are committed to working with the provinces and territories to expand the CPP and lift the retirement savings of all Canadians.

A Liberal government will also restore the starting age for OAS and GIS to 65.

Scott Brison, MP

Liberal Finance Critic