Dear OMERS Plan members,

CUPE Ontario is profoundly disappointed to report to you that the OMERS Sponsor Corporation Board of Directors has voted in favour of eliminating the guaranteed indexing of your pension for service worked after December 31, 2022.

The “Shared Risk indexing” proposal passed. This means that for service worked after December 31, 2022, annual indexing for that portion of your OMERS pension could be reduced or even eliminated. It is especially bad for younger workers or new hires who will have to work most or all their career without getting the guaranteed indexing of their pension in retirement. Plan members who are already retired are not impacted by this change.

Indexing is the annual increase to your pension to keep up with the cost-of-living. Just like your union fights for wage increases, we must also fight for pension increases. Our living standards should improve, not decline. After a lifetime of work, workers expect to have a decent and secure retirement. That means having a pension that increases with the cost-of-living, so we don’t get farther and farther behind. Indexing is especially important for workers who don’t earn as much as they should. For example, the average pension for a CUPE school board worker after 30 years of service is only about $15,000/year.

Ending the certainty that your pension will increase by the cost-of-living every year is a major blow to your retirement security. Instead of having that guarantee, it will be left to the Board to decide every year, with no real rules to follow. We will now have to fight every year to pressure the same Board that just eliminated guaranteed indexing to grant full conditional indexing.

A two-thirds vote of the Board was needed for “Shared Risk indexing” to pass. If all the Worker/Retiree Representatives stood united and voted against it, it could have been defeated. Instead, it’s clear that some voted with Employers on this proposal. CUPE, OPSEU, ATU, CIPP and several other unions who collectively represent a majority of Plan members were opposed to this proposal. Through CUPE Ontario’s [defendyouromers.ca](https://cupe.us7.list-manage.com/track/click?u=156003c53a9d3962e31946813&id=501210a9b5&e=1009046371) website, almost 60,000 e-mails were sent to the Board urging the Representatives to vote no. But the Board of Directors has ignored the voices of unions and Plan members and has eliminated guaranteed indexing in the middle of a global pandemic.

Other plan changes were passed. The Board voted in favour of 3 technical changes that make OMERS service buybacks easier for workers on layoff or reduced earnings in light of disruption caused by COVID-19. These changes should have been implemented far sooner, but we believe OMERS decided to package them today with “Shared Risk indexing” in an attempt for a positive spin. The Board also passed an amendment that makes it easier for part-time, casual and contract workers to join OMERS – which CUPE Ontario fully supports. These other plan changes in no way make up for the fact that the Board has passed “Shared Risk indexing”, a major concession for Plan members.

The past 9 months have exposed grave concerns about the leadership of OMERS and the direction the Plan is headed. [A concerted effort](https://cupe.us7.list-manage.com/track/click?u=156003c53a9d3962e31946813&id=91e7cddea6&e=1009046371) has been made to distance the Board of Directors from the Sponsor Organizations and Plan members they represent. CUPE Ontario is extremely worried that the Board of Directors and key decision-makers have lost sight of the Plan’s fundamental purpose.

We know this news is difficult during this already incredibly challenging time working and living amid a global pandemic. Members have been rightly focused on keeping our families and communities safe and healthy.

I promise you that our campaign does not end here. CUPE Ontario members, the single largest group of members in OMERS, will never stop fighting for the indexing of our pensions. Working with other unions, we will campaign to take back the Plan from those who listen more to the bankers and Bay Street types than Plan members, and make sure OMERS is working in the interest of workers. We will never stop fighting to fix OMERS.

Stay tuned for future actions.

In solidarity,

Fred Hahn
President of CUPE Ontario