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NEWS LOCAL

No mandatory retirement in Ontario means many baby boomers are working past 65, some even past 70, on the public's dime



By [Hank Daniszewski](#), The London Free Press
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At 73-years-old Dr David McGregor continues to teach at Kings College. Photo shows McGregor practicing karate at his home on Monday June 20, 2016. MORRIS LAMONT / THE LONDON FREE PRESS / POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Maybe they didn't think of this back in 2006 when the province scrapped mandatory retirement.

Ten years later, baby boomers in big numbers are blowing past the old retirement age of 65, some working into their 70s.

They can defer pensions for a while, but at 71, they're forced to collect work and government pensions along with their paycheques.

Who would want to work that long? You might be surprised.

The Free Press obtained the number of employees over age 65 in the region from seven major public-sector employers through Freedom of Information requests.

While fewer than 100 work at the city, Fanshawe College and St. Joseph's Health Care and a little more than 100 at London Health Sciences Centre, the numbers jump for local school boards, which take in Oxford, Middlesex and Elgin counties: 124 at the Catholic board, 199 at the public board.

Highest of all is Western University, with 432 paid employees over 65, including 120 over 70.

It is academia where the debate runs hottest, pitting two sociology professors against each other.

Robert Brym of the University of Toronto says Queen's Park created a system that encourages academic baby boomers to "double-dip." He says they should be forced to choose — pension or paycheque.

No way, says King's University College sociologist David MacGregor, who campaigned against mandatory retirement back in 2005 at Western University and still teaches full-time at age 73. Choosing to work after 65 makes you an asset, not a drain, on the system and you have every right to collect your pension, he believes.

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Robert Brym

Sociology professor

University of Toronto



Robert Brym, University of Toronto

Brym is blunt. Ontario “dropped the ball” by letting academics who work past 65 collect pensions and salaries — in most cases, worth more than \$250,000 in annual income. Average salary for a full professor at Western is \$156,803,

Worse, the total take doesn’t show up on the annual provincial Sunshine List of public-sector salaries topping \$100,000 a year because the list does not include pension income, he says. That’s not good news with Ontario’s debt approaching \$300 billion and the problem goes beyond colleges and universities to municipalities, hospitals and power companies.

He says profs over 65 typically earn top salaries and the “double-dipping” flourishes at the same time universities move away from tenured — and permanent — positions to more contract and part-time faculty.

“It’s a ‘two-fer’ — for every person who doesn’t take advantage of the loophole, you could hire two young people.”

Brym says contract faculty are typically paid less than half what full-time profs get for the same course load.

“We have a large class of unemployed PhDs, who are paid a pittance to teach individual courses,” he says, and it’s not unusual for those “precariously

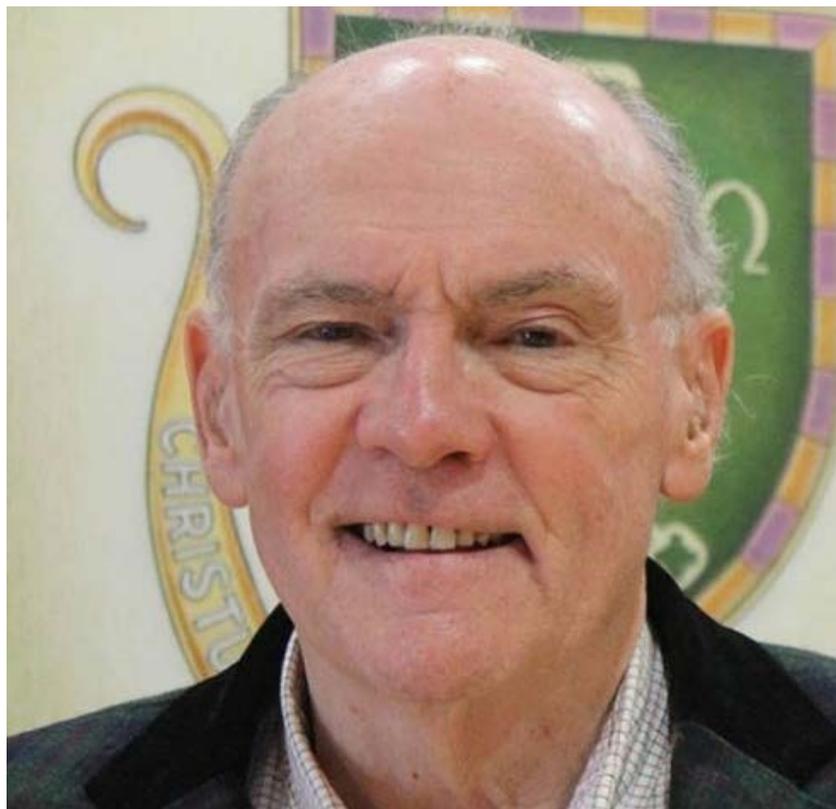
employed” profs to teach courses at several universities at the same time, never knowing if they will work the next year.

He has colleagues over 65 who are doing fine work, he says, but the rules have to change. Profs over 65 have to choose between a pension or paycheque, period, he says. “We need a no ‘double-dipping’ law. If you are going to keep working, no pension.”

David MacGregor

Sociology professor

King’s University College



David MacGregor, King's University College

David MacGregor takes karate lessons and is working toward his black belt.

Pretty impressive for a 73-year old, but it’s not a retirement project.

MacGregor still works full time at Western’s King’s University College, teaching popular courses on the sociology of film and the sociology of terrorism.

As for mandatory retirement at 65, MacGregor literally wrote the book. *Time’s Up!: Mandatory Retirement in Canada*, co-edited with two other academics, came out in 2005 and was considered influential in Ontario becoming the first province to strike down mandatory retirement.

“My life didn’t stop at 65. It’s not a magic number. I enjoy teaching,” says MacGregor, who proudly drives a red Mustang and says he still has a good rapport with students.

There was also a financial factor — at 65, his daughter was still 15 and his son had just started university.

MacGregor objects to the term “double-dipping,” because it implies he’s being paid twice for the same job.

Older workers who have spent decades paying into pension plans have a right

to collect before they die even if they choose to keep working, he says. "If your preventing someone from getting a pension, that's against what a pension is all about — getting a certain income at a certain age."

What's more, he says getting a pension and paycheque after age 71 isn't nearly as good as it sounds because of the big tax hit.

The United States banned mandatory retirement in the 1970s with the exception of most universities and, despite that, the average retirement age at American universities is not higher than in other sectors.

Nor does MacGregor believe forcing older profs out after a certain age would much benefit younger PhDs. "Would the university immediately hire? . . . I would think that's a very rosy view."

From Karen Zeleznik, financial planner at Libro Credit Union:

There are benefits to working past 65.

- Canada Pension Plan benefits jump by 42 per cent if you delay taking them until age 70, even more if you keep contributing.
- Old Age Security payments work on the same principle, but some or all is clawed back for those with high incomes.
- Many private-sector plans also offer fatter pensions if retirement is put off past 65.
- Tax bills increased by a higher tax bracket from "double-dipping" can be reduced with spousal income splitting.
- In the end, it comes down to one thing: How long are you going to live?
- "It's a question of taxation, lifestyle and life expectation, If you live to be 90, sure, delay it, because you will get more for a longer time. It's just math."

A SLIPPERY DILEMMA FOR UNIONS

Mandatory retirement is a touchy subject for unions.

At the Western University Faculty Association (UWOFA), almost a third of the 1,600 members are contract faculty likely angling for full-time tenure positions.

But president Kristin Hoffmann said the association supports the right to choose when to retire.

Older profs "have experience to contribute, and they can be good mentors and we need newer faculty to be hired for renewal."

The faculty association website has videos of two professors. Mark Yaniszewski lives in Waterloo but commutes to teach classes at Western and the University of Toronto in the same week. Sonia Halpern is an award-winning women's studies professor who still depends on short-term contract jobs after teaching 24 years at Western

Hoffmann said it's hard to know whether retirements would open up tenured jobs for younger faculty.

Teacher unions also are dealing with balancing the interests of younger members struggling to find work with those of older members not ready to call it quits. But the issue isn't splitting their membership, officials say

Thames Valley District school board's 199 employees over 65 are a mix of a classroom teachers, administrators and support staff, spokesperson Tania Testa says. Neither London-area board hires retirees for supply teaching.

Craig Smith, president of the local unit of the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, says there is no reason to force a teacher who enjoys the job to

retire, but working past 65 is unusual.

Figures from the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan back him up. The average retirement age for teachers in Ontario is 58 and the average starting pension is \$45,000 a year.

London District Catholic school board has 123 employees over 65 but board officials say only about a dozen are permanent, full-time classroom teachers.

Fern Hogan, president of the London-area local of the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association said teachers have a right to keep working. "Teaching is a very dynamic job . . . If what you love to do is teach, why should you retire?"

BOOMER WAVE

The number of people working past traditional retirement age is small so far, but the issue is bound to grow in the coming years.

- Only about 20 per cent of baby boomers (born between 1947 and '66) have reached age 65.
- Life expectancy for Canadian men has risen to 80 years for men and 84 for women. When the Canada Pension Plan was set up in 1965, life expectancy for men was about 69 for men and 75 for women.
- A recent study found Ontario retirees get by with 60 per cent of their annual earned income when working.
- Thirteen per cent of Londoners aged 65 and older had jobs in 2015, compared with 4.4 per cent a decade earlier, according to a study by King's University College sociologist Don Kerr.
- The traditional retirement age of 65 was first established in Germany back in 1916.

THE NUMBERS

Western University

Total employees 9,808

Total over age 65: 432

Total over age 70: 120

London District Catholic school board

Total employees 3,200

Total over age 65: 123

Total over age 70: 48

Thames Valley District school board

Total employees 11,293

Total over age 65: 199

Total over age 70: 58

London Health Sciences Centre

Total employees 10,100

Total over age 65: 104

Total over age 70: 20

St. Joseph's Health Care

Total employees 4,017

Total over age 65: 59

Total over age 70: 5

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Fanshawe College

n, 1 yees 1,220

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Total over age 70: 7



Total employees 2,193
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Total over age 65: 22

Total over age 70: 3

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