



**ADVOCACY**

**ANNUAL  
REPORT  
2010**





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# ADVOCACY

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**Politicians are never so rude as to ask: “You and whose army?”** but you know they are thinking it whenever a public interest advocacy group makes its pitch. We can answer: “300,000 plus members across the country and the tens of thousands more we reach through national media coverage”. But the key is to be able to prove to the politicians that it can make a difference at the ballot box.

Effective advocacy entails aggregating the priorities of the membership and the demographic we represent, marshalling the arguments to give voice to them and using the tools at our disposal to make that voice powerful enough to not only be heard but felt sufficiently to motivate the policy makers to act.

**Retirement insecurity dominated** the concerns of our members and the public discourse. Throughout 2009-2010, CARP continued to press for pension reform and used the clear opinion and advice of members to refute government arguments that fears about our retirement income system were overblown. To be clear, it is not that the view of our members is evidence that the system is flawed but rather that our members did not accept the government’s assurances. And that disconnect mattered because our members,

a bellwether political constituency, also said that they would exercise their franchise to back up their demand for reform.

**Our local chapters were instrumental** in helping us raise pension reform with provincial finance ministers across the country - starting with Jerome Kennedy in Newfoundland, then Graham Steele in Nova Scotia, Rosann Wowchuk in Manitoba, Colin Hansen in British Columbia and finally Dwight Duncan in Ontario. At each stop, we advised them of the deep felt concerns of our members as well as the number of CARP members in their province and we got their commitment to press the issue with their colleagues.

CARP attended the Opposition roundtables that were held in Ottawa as well as the Finance subcommittee hearings. We were invited to present our message to union sponsored gatherings and pension industry conferences. The sustained media interest raised public awareness and ultimately got the attention of industry insiders who spotted a business opportunity and added their voice for reform.

**The result was a full 180 degree turn in the political rhetoric** coming from the federal and provincial finance ministers. After their June meeting in Prince Edward Island, they acknowledged the serious need to fix Canada’s retirement income system and that government had a role to play.

**Media coverage broadened and deepened** this year. In an interesting twist, the media actually appreciated knowing that our members largely would not benefit from such future reforms but were offering the guidance of their experience and wisdom. This sense of concern for the greater good matched by a readiness to defend our parliamentary institutions was evident in

member response to a number of issues like prorogation and more recently, the long form census. Despite a general trend of supporting the government, members were ready to switch their vote over issues that offended their sense of propriety and political culture.

Our CARP *ActionOnline* polls have become one of our most important advocacy tools. The reliability of the data together with its timeliness make for a powerful combination that we have used to good effect – whether at parliamentary committees or in drawing media attention, without which, advocacy groups would toil away in splendid isolation.

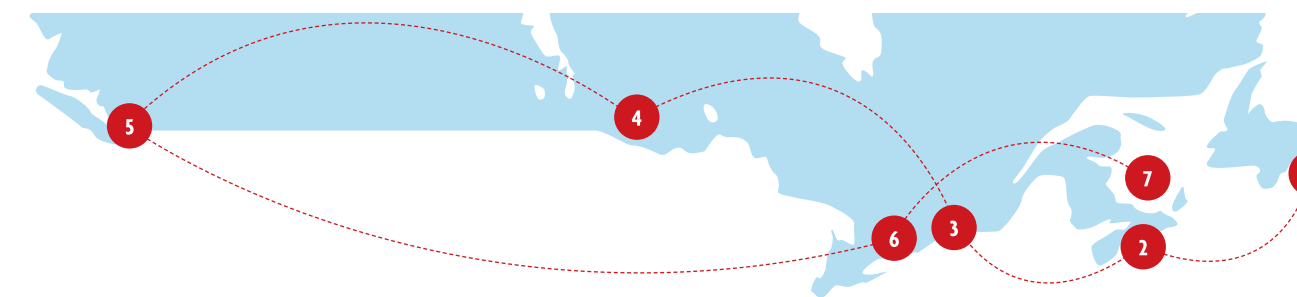
**Our job is to convince the politicians** that addressing our issues could pay off at the ballot box. We hosted the first ever CARP Debate™ with the goal of making it a necessary stop in any election campaign across the country. And we will continue to mobilize our membership and tap into their insights and energy to keep the pressure on for the changes that improve the quality of life for all Canadians as we age.

**Susan Eng**  
Vice President, Advocacy

### On the advocacy trail

CARP travelled coast to coast, lobbying politicians on the need to reform Canada’s pension system. We track the route to success.

<p><b>1</b> <b>SEPTEMBER 2009</b> St. John’s, N.L. CARP meets with then provincial Minister of Finance <b>Jerome Kennedy</b>.</p>	<p><b>3</b> <b>MARCH 2010</b> Ottawa CARP appears before Federal Finance Committee.</p>	<p><b>4</b> Jim Flaherty and <b>Diane Ablonczy</b>, minister of state (seniors), also attend.</p>	<p><b>6</b> <b>JUNE 2010</b> Kitchener, Ont. CARP meets provincial Minister of Finance <b>Dwight Duncan</b>.</p>
<p><b>2</b> <b>SEPTEMBER 2009</b> Halifax CARP meets provincial Minister of Finance <b>Graham Steele</b>.</p>	<p><b>4</b> <b>APRIL 2010</b> Winnipeg CARP meets Manitoba’s Minister of Finance <b>Rosann Wowchuk</b>.</p>	<p><b>5</b> <b>MAY 2010</b> Victoria CARP meets with <b>Colin Hansen</b>, provincial minister of finance.</p>	<p><b>7</b> <b>JUNE 2010</b> Lakeside, P.E.I. <b>Jim Flaherty</b> announces plans to change CPP.</p>



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## Seizing the Moment

2010 was the year that older Canadians took centre stage in the public discourse. National pension reform topped the political agenda and Ontario and British Columbia both introduced generic drug pricing reforms and a new Harmonized Sales Tax (HST) – all issues with particular resonance for CARP members. At the same time, many politicians and segments of the media raised the ‘grey tsunami’ alarm. The apparent message was that the aging population was a challenge to policy makers but the subtext was to blame older Canadians for the budgetary woes – thus managing to find a negative in longevity. Canadians are indeed living longer but they are also healthier, more involved, and productive than ever before, even if too many still struggle to make ends meet, access essential health services, or validate their basic rights.



**CARP Advocacy seized the moment,** building on past efforts and initiatives to capture

our hard-earned place at national, provincial, and local tables of political deliberation. We got media attention because we convinced them that our members’ issues matter and their voices count more than ever.

## Mobilizing CARP Membership

The collective voice of CARP members reverberated through the corridors of power. CARP mobilized its membership to help effect timely policy changes and set the tone of political discourse on a number of key issues. Member polls conducted on CARP ActionOnline and the power of grass roots activism helped CARP define older Canadians as the political constituency to watch.

While politicians often hear compelling arguments in support of public policy ideas, few proposals make a real and lasting impact unless legislators are convinced that they’re supported by a critical mass of politically engaged citizens. Fortunately, CARP members are not only significant in number, but represent the single most politically engaged demographic in Canada.



## Member Support puts CARP at the Centre of the Action

The active engagement of CARP members is a critical strength of CARP Advocacy. In late March, CARP returned to Parliament Hill to renew its call for a Universal Pension Plan (UPP) to provide a much-needed retirement savings vehicle for millions of Canadians who retire with inadequate savings. CARP presented its

proposals to the Finance Subcommittee backed up with poll numbers showing that thousands of members supported our recommendations. That got the attention of the MPs of all political stripes. CARP members know what they want, how they want it, and who can deliver. All CARP had to do was remind politicians that 70 percent of older Canadians vote regularly and that the opinions they express through CARP Polls™ cannot be ignored.

During its presentation to the Ontario Finance Committee on HST, legislators listened carefully when CARP shared its members’ focused and considered opinions on the new tax. Based on those results, CARP called on the Ontario Government to offset the added energy costs associated with the HST and to grant Ontarians over 65 with income-tested HST rebates, both of which reflect the primary concerns of our members.

CARP members’ views are in the legislative record:

*“The vast majority of CARP members disapprove of the HST in Ontario; 86 percent disapprove and 65 percent very strongly disapprove ... Of course the government itself readily admits that, they are depending on the [business] pass-through. Now, a full 86 percent of our members do not believe that business will pass on their savings ... It might happen, they just don’t believe it and that often drives how they vote.”*

The political engagement of CARP members was reiterated in CARP’s written submission:

*“Thirty-five per cent of the Ontario Liberal supporters said they would deny the Liberals their vote over the HST.”*

*John Tory would be premier today. This is not Monday morning quarterbacking. Older voters are a bellwether group; 70 percent vote regularly. They are often party loyalists but on issues that particularly resonate with them, they will exercise their franchise assertively.”*

**CARP’s persistence paid off.** In late September, the Ontario government announced \$70 million in tax relief targeting modest income seniors. A Energy Credit was added to the Property Tax Credit which specifically addressed CARP’s call for relief for escalating home energy costs magnified by the HST. CARP issued a news release commending the move and the Ministry posted it on their website.

The political significance of CARP members was also called on to support government initiatives that benefit everyone, especially older Canadians. CARP actively supported provincial initiatives to dramatically reduce the price of generic drugs, expand the patient services provided by pharmacists, and eliminate rebates paid to pharmacists by generic drug companies, all of which was founded on the expressed views of our members.



CARP members supported overhauling the generic drug pricing system especially to outlaw

rebates. In a CARP Poll™, 91 percent of 3,200 respondents fully supported the proposed changes. Such overwhelming support for the reforms put CARP front and centre on the issue when the Minister of Health and Long-Term care announced the poll results during Question Period in the Legislature and it was put to good use by the MPPs as they returned to face the opposition from the pharmacy chains in their constituencies.



**The priorities of CARP members** at the municipal level underpinned the inaugural CARP Debate™. CARP members, the general public, and media filled a 350 seat auditorium to hear from the five leading candidates for mayor of Canada's largest city. CARP focused the debate on Age-Friendly City issues, asking that all the candidates define their vision for ensuring that older residents are able live in the city, get to the services they need and stay engaged in civic life.

The mere fact that the CARP Debate™ was being held prompted some of the candidates to announce promises directed at seniors. CARP Chapters across the country also hosted debates during the municipal elections. CARP Debates™ will increasingly remind candidates to account to older Canadians before heading to the polls.

### Grassroots Organization and Activism

**CARP tapped into the energy and organizing power of CARP chapters** across Canada.

CARP kicked off its 2010 chapter tour with a stop in Windsor where CARP hosted a spirited discussion about public pensions and the politics of improving the financial security of older Canadians. The lively discussions ranged from the gaps in the public pension system, such as the exclusion of single women from the OAS spousal allowance, to the urgency of CARP's call for political action to fix Canada's retirement income system.



**In British Columbia**, public meetings were hosted by CARP's Victoria, Coquitlam and White Rock-Surrey chapters and CARP met with the provincial Ministers of Finance and Healthy Living to press our advocacy priorities. Pension and drug system reforms were the hot-button issues and the BC chapters added local and provincial dynamics to our advocacy issues.

**CARP Sudbury hosted the visit to Northern Ontario** where the effects of the economic downturn made pension reform and energy rebate proposals especially relevant. The severity of the Alternate-Level of Care crisis in the Greater Sudbury area generated renewed support for CARP's call for financial and social supports and workplace protections for informal caregivers. At the meeting Susan Eng emphasized the importance of grassroots advocacy, making it clear that CARP needs its chapters to be "our

eyes and ears on the ground (who) have much more weight with the local politicians." Eng also emphasized the necessity for CARP members to hold politicians to account, reminding local members that their consistent voting habits and engagement are powerful tools for prodding change.



**CARP chapters have proven invaluable** in providing rapid responses to local policy developments. In Alberta, the Finance Minister reversed his government's original support for pension reform and resisted CARP's call for immediate change, suggesting instead that pension reform should proceed slowly over a decade. CARP's Calgary and Edmonton chapters immediately called on the Alberta government to move forward with pension reform. Through its Alberta chapters, CARP also shared its UPP proposal with the Wild Rose Alliance, a provincial party that has advocated a national pension plan that caters to private-sector workers and the self-employed. Such grass-roots organization and activism has repeatedly allowed CARP to respond immediately to local policy developments.

The combination of CARP members' voter turn-out, the clarity of their views, and their

willingness to organize and act on the ground, has helped CARP earn its seat at the consultation tables at all levels of government across Canada.

### Strategic Legislative Intervention

**Much of CARP's success this year** is owed to its tactical engagement with parliamentary forums, such as Question Period, legislative committees, and deliberations on private members' bills. By keeping in mind the mechanics of parliamentary proceedings and protocol, CARP avoided the ever-present advocacy pitfall of campaigning for public policy innovations while failing to harness legislative vehicles that lead to real change. It's one thing to know what needs changing and another thing to know how to get things changed. In 2010, CARP worked hard to shape policy debates and intervene in the machinery of government.

### Shaping Parliamentary Debate

**Problems have to be named** – even if legislation is proposed with the best of intentions. In December, Ontario legislators invited CARP to comment on a private member's bill seeking to establish a voluntary restricted driver's license for those over 65 years of age. While the Bill, developed with the support of CARP's London chapter, was commendable in enabling older Ontarians to continue driving under certain conditions, CARP issued a statement that setting an age threshold was inappropriate. During the debate, one MPP read aloud CARP's statement:

*"CARP supports a limited license for competent drivers of any age who have impairments but are otherwise able to drive safely ... [however] CARP cannot support any bill that has an age determination."*

Unpacking the ageist elements forced legislators to re-examine the Bill's original intent. Subsequently, the Bill's sponsor decided to re-introduce a modified bill, free of blatant age discrimination.

CARP joined Ontario's fire fighters to support a private member's bill to require care homes built prior to 1998 to retrofit their facilities with water sprinklers. CARP's letter of support for the Bill was referenced by one politician who also endorsed our call for comprehensive retirement home regulation. Strategic position letters and alliances with relevant issue experts and political stakeholders have allowed CARP to help frame the debate on important policy issues.



**CARP raised the political stakes** on behalf of Ontario grandparents who care for grandchildren when the parents cannot. The Ontario Social Benefits Tribunal had ruled that grandparents should be allowed to keep the financial assistance they get under the Ontario Temporary Care Assistance (TCA) program but the Minister responsible refused to apply the decision to other grandparents.

CARP worked with Opposition critics to raise the issue during Question Period and flushed out the Minister's position that each grandparent who had been cut-off would have to go through the long and arduous appeal process for re-

instatement. This provided a clear political target for CARP's ongoing advocacy to press the government to ensure that its policies are implemented in accordance with the tribunal's ruling and the original spirit and intent of the TCA program.

That same resolve was on display in May, when CARP appeared before an Ontario legislative committee to comment on Bill 21, The Retirement Homes Act, which promised to regulate the province's retirement homes. In a presentation made to the Standing Committee on Social Policy, CARP commended the government for recognizing the need for regulation in the retirement home industry while calling for improvements to the Bill's proposed model of self-regulation. As the legislation is implemented, CARP will continue to monitor the status of retirement homes in Ontario to ensure that the spirit of the new Act is respected.

### **Legislative Committees, Government Consultations, and the Throne Speech**

**CARP made effective and regular use of parliamentary committees** to advance its advocacy agenda, particularly in the area of pension reform. By identifying and intervening at critical legislative junctures, CARP kept the pressure on federal and provincial politicians to start the process of pension reform. As a result, an issue that once seemed intractable has gained momentum.

Earlier this year, CARP secured a spot at the Ontario Finance Committee hearings on Bill 236 – the Pension Benefits Amendment Act – and used the opportunity to highlight the Bill's failure to address the need for a universal, adequate savings vehicle for the millions of Canadians without access to a workplace pension plan. CARP also used its appearance before

the Ontario Finance Committee's pre-budget hearings to reiterate its proposal for a universal pension plan.

**CARP made frequent appearances** at the Federal Finance Committee hearings on the Canadian retirement income system to counteract the apparent complacency on the part of legislators, drawing attention to CARP members' sophisticated understanding of various proposals for pension reform and their strong preferences for immediate action. CARP's persistence at such parliamentary forums helped keep pension reform politically relevant.

**CARP used every available opportunity** to raise our advocacy issues. CARP called on the federal government to use the Throne Speech to tell Canadians that it would act on comprehensive pension reform. CARP attended the Throne Speech to see if the government would make any promises to do so. During the Throne Speech, CARP made note of the government's pledge to *"better protect workers when their employers go bankrupt" and to "work with the provinces and territories on options to further strengthen Canada's retirement income system."*



CARP attended the federal budget lock-up to check if the government would back up

its rhetoric with action. It did not and CARP reported this to our members in a Special Federal Budget Issue of *CARP ActionOnline* and in *ZOOMER* magazine.



CARP made its case at the Ontario Finance Minister's roundtable in June and issued an open letter to all the finance ministers calling for urgent action on pension reform.

**The breakthrough this year** came in June after the Ministers met in PEI to discuss the possibility of reform and came out of their meeting with plans to 'modestly expand the CPP' and to allow the private sector to develop options for supplementary pension plans.

After two years of political rhetoric suggesting that CARP's call for reform and that of many others were an overreaction to Canada's pension woes, the PEI announcements represent an unequivocal agreement with our position that Canada's pension system needed fixing and government had a role in reforming it.



**CARP continues to raise the issue of financial insecurity** among older Canadians in addition to pension reform. CARP's federal pre-budget submission detailed the growing financial insecurity faced by many older Canadians. Among other recommendations, we called for increases to OAS/GIS, caregiver support, support for low-income, single, divorced women and widows, and a permanent moratorium on mandated RRIF withdrawals.

CARP worked closely with the Nova Scotia Chapter to provide input on the proposed CPP expansion and on details regarding the possible creation of new multi-employer pension plans (MEPP). CARP noted that modest CPP expansion alone cannot solve retirement income problems and would not address the needs of older Canadians and those who have already retired. Further, any proposed MEPP must contain the features of a universal pension plan modelled on the CPP providing targeted or defined benefits with mandatory or auto-enrolment, utilizing the existing payroll deduction mechanism, professional management, a governance role for members, a mandate that is focused entirely on optimal performance and independence from government or any single employer. CARP Nova Scotia will continue representing CARP in the ongoing consultation process in the province.

**Measures to focus government attention** on our issues have proven especially useful in pension issues. Even if most of the much needed reform still lies ahead, governments across Canada have recognized the need for pension reform, including CPP expansion, the creation of supplementary occupational plans, and the need to protect current retirees from the threat of pension plan insolvency and retirement insecurity. In 2010, the Finance Ministers found the will to moderately expand

CPP benefits; Nova Scotia solicited advice on models for multi-employer pension plans; and Ontario sought to strengthen existing occupational pension plans.

### **Evidence-based advocacy**

**A solid foundation of research** allows CARP to help shape the political discourse and mobilize our membership. CARP continues to conduct extensive background research on a range of issues affecting Canadians as they age, from pension reform and generic drug pricing, to bankruptcy rates among older Canadians and the financial hardships of older women. This research not only informs our advocacy on policy issues, but CARP has also become a trusted source of information for other organizations, the media, and government. The legitimacy gained from current, accurate, and compelling evidence is vital to CARP's advocacy.



CARP's research capabilities prompted key decision makers to solicit our advice and support on important public policy proposals and

initiatives. This was most evident in the area of pension reform. In January, CARP supported an Opposition proposal for an Ontario retirement plan as an important first step that would provide Ontarians with a publicly run retirement savings vehicle.

CARP's strong research in the area of pension reform was also recognized in June, when CARP was invited to a roundtable with pension experts chaired by Dwight Duncan, Ontario Minister of Finance. Of the dozen or so organizations seated around that table, CARP was the only citizen-based group, surrounded by pension plan experts and administrators.

The Liberal Party of Canada also sought CARP's advice on their proposal for a voluntary supplementary pension. With teams of expert bureaucrats at their disposal, the Liberal party found that CARP's informed advocacy added a perspective they needed.

So too did the federal government when they invited CARP to a roundtable on pension reform in Winnipeg, where we presented our proposal for a Universal Pension Plan directly to James Flaherty, Federal Finance Minister, Diane Ablonczy, Minister of State (Seniors) and Ted Menzies, Parliamentary Secretary to the Finance Minister. Politicians have learned

that when CARP speaks on behalf of its issues and members, the information will be relevant, informed, and accurate. CARP has earned a reputation for credible evidence-based advocacy.

### **Directing Our Strengths Toward Issues That Matter to Older Canadians**



**CARP continues to consolidate our place in political and policy circles** in Canada with our strength in numbers, our strategic legislative interventions, and our evidenced-based approach to advocacy. Our message for a New Vision of Aging has reached all levels of government across the country. 2010 represents our pivotal shift into the corridors of power, where we now raise our issues directly with those with the mandate and capacity to change laws, enact reforms, and set agendas.

**CARP will continue to ensure that a seat at every decision making table is reserved for the issues that matter to all Canadians as we age.**



## CARP in the Media

Everyone likes to see their name in print or their face on TV. Scholars live by the adage “publish or perish”. But in the world of advocacy, the media are the gatekeepers to the public square: the politicians can hear you speak only if the media let you in. And it matters how you are portrayed in the media – not just how many times, but also what your message is, and most importantly, whether anyone in power appears to be paying attention to it. So monitoring media hits is not vanity, it is a measure of media and political traction. This year, CARP reached new thresholds in advancing our issues and increasing our profile in the media.

### Being a Player

The media may deny that they “make” the news but in their choice of whom or what to cover, and how, they set the stage for the public discourse. They choose who will add value to their story line, who can represent a different constituency, who can get past the predictable party lines and who can make the issue relevant to their audience. In other words, they choose the “players”.

A public interest advocacy group like CARP gets to be a player if we are ready with relevant information when the issue hits the news wires—not a few days later when the media has moved onto another issue.

That means constant preparation and research, but also keeping on top of the issue as it plays

out and sometimes even prodding it along. Over the past three years, we have deepened our capacity for evidence-based advocacy, and have continued to build our credibility and our influence with government, stakeholders and the media.

This year CARP has been first out of the gate to analyse and comment on developments in the major issues of relevance to older Canadians, not least because CARP had been participating in them directly such as the Pension Reform consultations or Opposition roundtables. And CARP was invited to those policy setting sessions primarily because we had pitched them with our universal pension plan in the first place. So when the Opposition released its proposal for a voluntary supplementary pension plan, we were ready with our analysis when the media started calling before we had even finished writing our media release. The day the federal government announced pension regulation changes, CARP was on the Business News Network explaining what they meant to the general public.

CARP is establishing a media profile as representing a public interest perspective with a measured response. When the Ontario Government floated the idea of generic drug pricing reform, the media sought out CARP’s stance. The issue was wide-reaching: if Ontario went ahead with an overhaul of the system, other provinces would surely follow suit as the ever-increasing health care budgets need to be balanced in all provinces. We supported measures to rein in spending, and to maximize the value for money citizens were getting from our health



care dollars. But we also expressed concern that government might contain costs by cutting back on the availability of some necessary drugs and by failing to include new ones in the plan.

As a result of this coverage, CARP was consulted on the reform policies and invited to participate in the news conference at which the Ontario government announced its generic drug pricing reforms. We were also on several broadcast media immediately afterwards. Many newspaper stories subsequently announced that “consumer groups” supported the measures, citing CARP as the example.

### Staying One Step Ahead

CARP has been at the forefront of the growing consensus that real changes need to be made to the pension system. CARP’s recommendations are based on the concerns of both working and retired Canadians across the country - backed up by numerous experts in the field of pension reform, most recently in a report from TD Economics. We have continued this work in the past year by consistently monitoring, polling and issuing open letters and media releases at key junctures in the reform process. Last December, the federal and provincial Finance Ministers were set to meet in Whitehorse to discuss pension reform. Not only did we issue an open letter urging them to come to decisive conclusions and to commit to concrete action, but we also backed it up with the unequivocal response we got overnight from our CARP Poll™ on what our members wanted to see in pension reform.

**“No more excuses. The Finance Ministers cannot say the issues are too complex. The public is way ahead of the politicians now.”**

The fact that in twelve hours we had received over 1,700 responses from

people who supported our proposed reforms allowed us to say:

**“No more excuses.** *The Finance Ministers cannot say the issues are too complex. Overnight, CARP members have given a clear and detailed perspective of what needs to be fixed. The public is way ahead of the politicians now. We know the system is broken—we see it in the faces of the thousands who had to march on Parliament Hill to make their case. The current laws need to change and there needs to be other options to help people better save for their own retirement. What really matters is that the public discourse has moved away from whether there should be a new retirement savings vehicle to what shape it should take and how much it would cost. Further delay is not an option.”*

The media have come to expect that CARP can provide useful and informed input and often alert us to upcoming announcements but just as often with less than a few hours notice. So, we have to keep on top of the issues, working our networks and seeking to be included in policy roundtables, consultations and Parliamentary Committee hearings. We continue to research and back up our positions with solid evidence. Being first out of the gate also means not relying on others to provide the information.

When the media have not thought to call us first, we call them. The CARP Polls™ give us a “hook” to enter into the fray on issues as diverse as prorogation, long form census, the longevity gene and assisted suicide. Not only have the media covered the CARP Poll™ results, they have then asked the policy-makers how they would respond to them as they did with our end-of-life poll results. Staying one step ahead of the policy makers can let CARP set the agenda for public discourse.



## Keeping an eye on the Bigger Picture

**There is a high level of idealism** among even the most apparently jaded of journalists. What rings their bell is not just whether you have a good cause, but whether you can make it happen. And with rapidly shrinking resources, they need to focus on issues and groups they think will make a difference. Journalists have tight deadlines and often look to issue-experts to provide the policy analysis. They want to tackle big news stories while capturing the human element, so they often begin a story by describing the struggles of one individual and need input on what this means on a bigger scale.

**Providing “value added” to journalists** and their stories—means that when they call for comment, we answer their direct question but also provide them with the policy repercussions and what it means in the broader context. We also propose solutions to tackle the problem at the policy level. We help them paint a bigger picture. Not only does this give CARP the opportunity to raise our advocacy issues, it also enhances our credibility with journalists, making CARP a trusted source.

Examples of this include this April’s Canadian Press story: Quebec retirement home residents faced eviction from their homes without knowing where they would go next. CARP suggested that Quebec might follow another province’s example by licensing and regulating retirement homes. Such regulation would establish residents’ rights, which could include the right not to be evicted before a suitable replacement home had been found.

In July, the media brought to light the heartbreaking situation of a war veteran and long-time Canadian diplomat who was languishing in a hospital bed, facing an

18-month wait for a long term care bed. CARP underlined the systemic implications of the issue:

*“There are huge numbers of people who are facing this precise challenge and they don’t even have a war career to help them,” said Susan Eng, vice-president of CARP. “The point is, if somebody like him can’t get the help that they need, then what hope do others have?”*

## Making the News

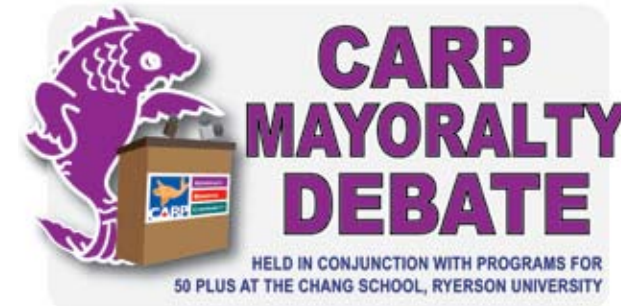
**One of this year’s most exciting developments** has been CARP’s newsmaker status. It became evident that our member engagement and polling was newsworthy last year when a Financial Post headline heralded our position on pension reform proposals (“CARP backs Universal Pension Plan”, October 29th, 2009). This year, in our regular e-newsletter CARP ActionOnline, we continued polling our members on their willingness to take political action to back their priorities.



**CARP ActionOnline’s subscriber base has grown** to more than 90,000 this year. The 3,000 to 6,000 responses to the CARP Poll™ allow us to generate timely and newsworthy perspectives. But the overarching implication is that not only are the 3,000 or more CARP members who answer the polls behind our message, but they are also reliably representative of our 300,000-plus membership. The news coverage has been impressive: many news stories have centred exclusively around our findings and our positions - on pension reform, the federal budget and throne speech, prorogation, assisted suicide, the longevity gene and the long form census - to name just a few.

In July, Jane Taber (The Globe and Mail’s national affairs columnist) published “Retirees Wary of Tory Census Move” (Globe and Mail, July 26th 2010). The fact that our polling had shown decisively that Conservative voters were willing to switch their vote over the government’s decision to scrap the long form census caused quite a stir. The story, entirely centred on the CARP Poll™, challenged the commonly-held perception that older voters are completely entrenched in their voting habits. Gone are the days where politicians could take older Canadians for granted.

The CARP Poll™ on End of Life Care was a major media story smack in the middle of the Assisted Suicide debate taking place in Quebec. The media recognized that we represented a group that was most likely to have a meaningful opinion.



**The launch of the CARP Debate™ series was another milestone.** The top five contenders in the Toronto Mayoral race pitched an overflow crowd of over 350 CARP members and others on what they would do to make the city a model Age Friendly City. The CARP Debate™ secured our newsmaker status with unprecedented media coverage (20 different print articles in national dailies, webcasting and four broadcasts on Rogers Cable). More important, the obligation of municipal leaders to ensure that

older Canadians can stay fully engaged in all aspects of city life will be central to municipal election campaigns as CARP chapters across the country hold their own CARP Debates™.



Candidates take part in a mayoral debate presented by CARP — the Canadian Association of Retired People — at Ryerson yesterday. From left are: Bob Ford, Joe Pastalone, Bruce Bassi, George Smitherman and Sarah Thomson. **ISSUES WORTH CARPING ABOUT**  
Silver hair glistened under the lights of a Ryerson University auditorium yesterday as the 45-plus crowd gathered for a mayoral debate on “age friendly” issues. It was put on by CARP, which represents Canadians 45 and over. Among the issues discussed: How to make the city more accessible, more affordable and safer for seniors. Natalie Alosha reports.

## The Key to Future Advocacy Success

**The great equalizer is the public domain.** Public interest advocacy depends almost entirely on its relevance to the broadest possible swath of the general public. Politicians take their cues from this. They want to know who else cares about pension reform or mandatory retirement, for example. CARP’s campaign for a moratorium on RRIF withdrawals during the 2008 federal election would not have been heard above the noise, if not for fact that it caught the attention of voters and local media outlets all across the country.

A successful media initiative yes, but not yet a successful advocacy campaign. After the election was won, the government had no urgent reason to fulfil a promise they never made—remember, it was first proposed by the now politically departed opposition leader. That started a fresh round of media offensive until the one year 25 percent reduction in RRIF withdrawals was announced later that year.

**The local chapters and CARP members across the country play a decisive role** in whether politicians pay attention to our issues. The media attention generated from our tour of the chapters across the country extended our reach right into the politicians’ backyards and their constituency offices. Our local chapters helped us get into the offices of the provincial finance and health ministers to press our issues and to remind them of the number of CARP members in their province. At each stop, local media, especially community newspapers - who are much more interested if you actually show up on their doorsteps – were particularly attracted by the message that our members are willing to make our advocacy issues a condition of their vote.

### Counteracting Spin

**Hundreds of interest groups are constantly pitching politicians** to change the status quo. Those lobbying for private interests prefer closed-door meetings—which is why the lobbyist registries exist: to prevent undue influence. But public interest stakeholders cannot just rely on face-to-face meetings and sympathetic noises. Like their commercial counterparts, they need to justify their recommendations with sound arguments and evidence. Unlike them, they cannot argue that this company would fold or that industry would relocate. Some think it’s enough to argue that

theirs is a good cause but they cannot confuse “the right thing to do” with what the politicians are able to do.

### A public interest advocacy group must cut through government spin



and private interests as they attempt to commandeer the public discourse. It is no exaggeration to say that CARP countered spin many times this year. For example, we gave the media the inside scoop on the “expert” hired by the government to say that the Canadian pension system didn’t need reform; and we advised the public to face down the threats of the drug store chains to slash services as a result of the government’s drug pricing reforms.

CARP is sought out to present a strong alternative voice, such as the op-ed pieces on generic drug pricing and HST for the major dailies. CARP’s editorial for the Ottawa Citizen raised the bar above the histrionics: *“Nobody likes new taxes. Some see the longer-term economic benefit from harmonizing sales taxes. Some can afford the extra consumer taxes. Others cannot. But everybody hates politicians playing games instead of negotiating fundamental changes to protect those who can least afford more taxes. For good reason: “No taxation without representation” was a rallying cry for American colonists resisting British taxes. One of the most important rights we have as citizens is not to have a tax imposed on us without our consent. And after-the-fact “enabling” legislation does not count; no government ran on imposing harmonization.”*

### Iconoclastic when Necessary

**In the absence of an electoral contest**, and therefore any immediate impact on their careers, politicians need to see why they must act on your particular issue. That’s when the media looms in importance. The local news editor and the parliamentary bureau chief have completely different beats but the question for you is the same: why should they cover your story? Sometimes, that means challenging the conventional wisdom especially like those in the avalanche of “hair on fire” stories about how the ageing of the population would break the bank of public services.



At worst, there are scenarios of demographic catastrophe and Malthusian nightmares; at best, they paint a bleak picture of eroding tax bases and increasing demands on the health care system. The problem with these scenarios is that they assume no improvements in health, in technology and they overlook the fact that the over 45 demographic already does and will continue to pay the lion’s share of taxes. CARP has responded to such coverage with a steady stream of letters to the editor and op-eds. In his May 30th 2010 editorial for the Toronto Star “Demographic Tsunami? Let’s Dance!” Moses Znaimer challenged this popular aphorism with wisdom and humour – a great combination.

Finally, some media still call us the Canadian Association of Retired Persons but we tell them we use “CARP” because so many of our members will never retire. So they resort to calling us “Canada’s leading advocacy group for seniors”, “retirees lobby group” or “Canada’s largest seniors’ advocacy group” or “the closest thing Canada has to a grey power movement” but increasingly, just “CARP”. Regardless: as the saying goes in public image-making,

**“Call me anything, but just call me!”**



### The CARP Poll™

#### The power of ideas coupled with the power of numbers

Our CARP *ActionOnline* polls have become one of our most important advocacy tools. The reliability of the data together with its timeliness make for a powerful combination that we have used to good effect – whether at parliamentary committees or in drawing media attention.

The tool itself is simple enough – a poll embedded in our twice monthly e-newsletter CARP *ActionOnline*. But it is the engagement of the members who answer the CARP Poll™ that make it such a powerful instrument.

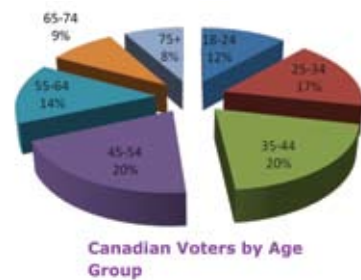
**The media publish polls all the time** – conducted by established national firms. What makes the CARP Poll™ different is that it targets a group of people that the general polls do not often isolate. Yet our demographic is the very group that turns out to vote – all the time. Seventy percent of older voters vote regularly. So it is not surprising that our polling results often exactly track the published polls and sometimes even anticipate results.

**The media are starting to give special coverage to the CARP Polls.** Certainly, the results have been referenced as part of their stories throughout the last couple of years, but lately the CARP Poll™ itself has been the story. The CARP Poll™ on the long form census decision

was highlighted because it represented a rejection of the government’s position by a group that had hitherto generally supported the government.

The CARP Poll™ on End of Life Care was not only timely because the Assisted Suicide debate was raging in Quebec but also because the findings were unequivocal even on a difficult topic.

**Parliamentarians have been even quicker to recognize the importance of the CARP Polls™**, not least because we make a point of asking whether a particular decision would affect how they would vote. Obviously our point is that addressing our issues would pay off at the ballot box.



When we first started bringing the results of our pension reform polls to the Parliamentary committees, it was an eye-opener for the MPs. Not only did we represent the views of our members but we could prove it. They already had a taste of what our members were prepared to do the previous June when some 6,000 emails were generated through CARP’s e-Voice pursuant to a call-out in CARP *ActionOnline*. So they were starting to realize that while all public interest advocacy groups state how many members they represent, CARP was able to provide tangible evidence that our members were paying close attention to what the politicians were doing in response to our submissions.

**We started to time the CARP Polls™ strategically.** As the Finance Ministers were

heading to Whitehorse for what we feared was another delay tactic in addressing the pension crisis, we issued the CARP Poll™ the day before and in less than 24 hours had a definitive set of recommendations from our members which we reported to the media with the heading: No More Delays.

**Politicians started to use CARP Polls™ themselves.** Our members’ unequivocal support for the Ontario government’s generic drug pricing reform was actually read into the legislative record and used by government members to defend against the public relations onslaught brought on by the drug store chains.

Finally, even the straw poll taken at our inaugural CARP Debate™ got media coverage – stating that one of the mayoral candidates “won” the CARP Debate™.

The media and many others are sceptical about the dark arts of polling but they cannot help looking at them. Much is made of their “reliability” and politicians will always claim that the only poll that counts is the one on Election Day.

So here’s a synopsis of how the CARP Poll™ works and what makes it one of the most reliable and powerful tools of the trade.

**The CARP Poll™ allows us to couple the power of numbers with the power of ideas to get things done for our members.**

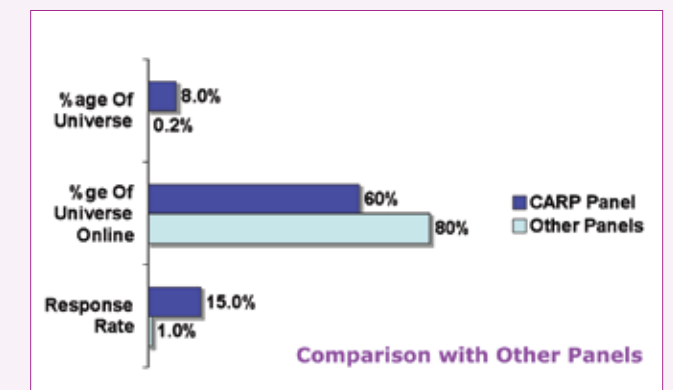
### The CARP Poll™

CARP has 300,000 plus members across Canada (about 1% of the population), and of those members, about 90,000 receive CARP *ActionOnline*, the twice monthly e-newsletter. This is our sample universe. Of these members, typically 25,000 open and read the newsletter. This is our polling panel, and it represents about 8% of our sample universe. Response rates to our polls are typically 3,000 to 4,000, or about 15%.

#### How the CARP Poll™ Panel Compares to Other Panels

These data compare very favourably with the many commercial internet polling panels available in Canada. Many claim to represent the entire population and are made up of about 30,000 to 50,000 members.

This is about 0.2% of the population or universe. Surveys conducted among members of these panels typically attract no more than 200 to 500 responses, for a response rate of about 1% compared to CARP’s 15% response rate.



#### How representative is the CARP Poll™?

We have a database of demographic data on the entire membership, collected during a large-scale random selection telephone survey in 2006. Comparison of this database to the demographic data we collect with each poll shows that our panel is representative of the entire membership apart from the following divergences:

Obviously, members who respond to the polls all have computers and an internet connection. About 35% of Canadians over 65 are online. In 2006, 60% of CARP members were online.

Poll respondents tend to skew male, while the overall CARP membership is relatively evenly balanced by gender

The CARP research panel is comprised of our most active, engaged and informed members, and as such, is a rich resource for in-depth input to the priorities of a membership based advocacy organization.

### An Engaged Respondent Base

Our members are opinionated. And they want to share it. We include a “DON’T KNOW” option in most questions and very few choose this response.

One of our polls revealed that over 90% claimed to have voted in the last municipal election, and we see no reason to doubt this.

### 24 Hour Turnaround and Impact

When an issue is current, and when it is important to get results out immediately, we frequently put up a poll one evening, gather a minimum of 1,500 responses by noon the next day, and can be prepared with a poll report and a media release by late afternoon. This allows us to press the issue while it’s in the first media cycle, and have our response make the supper hour newscast.

This kind of immediacy lends urgency to our issues, and also allows us to keep our finger on the political pulse. We often see political trends

emerge in our poll first before they appear in the national polls.

### “Where’s your data?”

The poll results let us present persuasive data to support our advocacy at Parliamentary committees because:

Our sample sizes are very large, dwarfing the national poll samples familiar to most politicians

Our members vote. It’s known that over 70% of those 45 and over vote regularly in federal elections, compared with just 45% of those under 45

Our sample can be considered a bellwether, or leading indicator of opinion. Our sample contains very few non-voters making it a very efficient sample.

### The CARP Electoral Preference Measure

We have included the political preference question (“If a federal election were held tomorrow, which party’s candidate would you vote for?”) in every poll allowing us to track the voting preferences of our members going back to the last federal election. With the exception of a few discrepancies from the national electoral polls (fewer Bloc supporters, more Conservative supporters), our results track along with, and sometimes presage the national results.

### Sampling Principles

How does a group of 3,000 represent the opinions of 300,000? First, it’s a sample of the universe, not a census (or tally of the total number). A census is simple, you count every

vote, but it’s terribly time-consuming. A sample isn’t as simple - it involves calculation, but it’s much easier.

Imagine you have a huge jar of jellybeans of all colours. You want to know what proportion of the whole are black jellybeans. You could dump the jar out and count them all, or you could count a sample. If the jar is thoroughly mixed (or randomized), you can reach in your hand, pull out a handful and count that.

You can be sure, within a certain range of probability, or margin of error, that your handful will match the composition of the entire jar. The bigger your handful, the smaller your margin of error. Also, the more extreme (high or low) the percentage you’re looking at (the observed percentage), the smaller your margin of error. So, in samples with very big handfuls, like CARP Polls™, the margin of error is very low (typically plus or minus 1.5%, 95% of the time).

### CARP Members Like Our Polls

This summer, CARP polled its panel on their attitudes and reactions to our polls. It turns out they like them, fill them out regularly and find them fun and interesting to complete.

Two thirds of our respondents say they fill out the poll “frequently” or “always” (63%) and we would have to consider this core group of 2,000 to 2,500 members the heart of our panel. Participation is higher in BC than elsewhere and lowest in Quebec. Younger males are more likely to participate than older females.

Conservative party supporters are especially enthusiastic respondents.

Just less than one third of respondents fill out the poll the night they receive it (30%), while a further quarter (26%) complete it the next day. Healthcare is the most popular polling topic, followed by pensions:

**Which subject is the most interesting to you, and would lead you to be especially likely to complete the poll?**

Healthcare	23%
Pensions	21%
Politics	14%
Retirement	11%
Finances	9%
Other social issues	5%
Aging in poverty	4%
Ageism	4%
OTHER	1%
DON’T KNOW	9%

Men are more interested in finances and pensions than women, and women are more interested in healthcare.

Fully three quarters think the CARP Poll™ is an appropriate length (73%), whereas about one fifth find it “a bit too long” (20%).

Close to eight-in-ten respondents (79%) say CARP polls them at the right rate of frequency (typically twice a month).

As for the end-use of their contributions, nearly two thirds say that CARP uses the gathered data well (61%).

#### <sup>1</sup>Polls conducted since October 2009

October 23, 2009, Majority Parliament (n=4000)  
 November 5, 2009, H1N1 (n=3800)  
 November 20, 2009, HST (n=5000)  
 December 4, 2009, Municipal Engagement (n=2800)  
 December 16, 2009, Pension (n=2500)  
 January 15, 2010, Prorogation (n=6000)  
 January 29, 2010, Aging Drivers (n=5000)

February 12, 2010, Olympics (n=3000)  
 February 26, 2010, Throne Speech (n=2500)  
 March 5, 2010, Federal Budget (n=2500)  
 March 26, 2010, Provincial Budget (n=3700)  
 April 13, 2010, Generic Drug Pricing (n=2500)  
 April 26, 2010, Pension (n=2900)  
 May 14, 2010, Elder Care (n=1900)  
 May 28, 2010, G8/G20 (n=3700)  
 June 10, 2010, Pension Activism Poll (n=2300)

June 23, 2010, Ageism (n=2700)  
 July 12, 2010, Longevity (n=3800)  
 July 23, 2010, Census (n=3500)  
 August 6, 2010, Home Care (n=2000)  
 August 20, 2010, End-Of-Life Care (n=3200)  
 September 9, 2010, Gun Registry (n=3000)/  
 September 23, 2010, Pharmacare (n=3500)

