



Wayne Marston, MP



Leadership you can trust

February 9, 2012

Dear CARP Members

I'd like to start by stating how impressed we here in Ottawa have been with the CARP membership's "Hands Off OAS" campaign. In fact, in a conversation with a young activist recently I cited your campaign as a text-book example of what needs to happen when you want to get the attention of politicians.

This past Wednesday, as you may know, the Parliamentary Budget Office released its report, *Federal Fiscal Sustainability and Elderly Benefits*. In it, the Parliamentary Budget Officer Kevin Page comes to the same conclusions that many other economists and pension experts around the country have already made—namely, that despite what the government is saying, OAS is sustainable.

Even the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Pension Team has recently weighed in on the issue:

"Canada does not face major challenges of financial sustainability with its public pension schemes...Long-term projections show that public retirement-income provision is financially sustainable. Population ageing will naturally increase public pension spending, but the rate of growth is lower and the starting point better than many OECD countries."

According to the government's own figures, the OAS-GIS is easily sustainable and is actually projected to decrease in cost, relative to the size of the economy, in the long-run.

Yet the government continues to talk crisis. But the only crisis here is the one manufactured by the government itself.

Those of you who live in Ontario may remember back in 1995, when the then-Minister of Education, John Snobelin, was caught on video arguing about how the PC government needed to bankrupt the education system, so as to create a "useful" crisis in order to justify further "reforms." Like the Harris government then, Harper's Conservatives are manufacturing a crisis in OAS to justify gutting a program that they don't like.

We in the NDP believe that instead of creating crises where there are none, we should be taking practical, affordable measures to lift every senior out of poverty, by expanding the GIS – not making matters worse by slashing Old Age Security.

While Stephen Harper may have hid his plans to slash support for seniors during the election campaign, New Democrats have always been clear. We want to strengthen pensions – not weaken them.

That's why we've been meeting with seniors groups like CARP to talk about how seniors will be affected, and have been working with them to oppose the proposed Conservative cuts.

This weekend, in fact, the NDP will launch its "Protect OAS" tour. As the NDP's Pension Critic, I will be fanning out across the country with my colleagues, Irene Mathysen and Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (our Seniors Critic and Deputy Seniors Critics, respectively).

We'll be coming to you, to hear from you, about your thoughts on OAS, and on any related retirement issue. Meeting with you face to face, is for us, the right thing to do. Staging important pronouncements affecting the lives of Canadians in faraway (and safe) locations like, say, Davos, Switzerland, just isn't our style.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Wayne Marston". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Wayne Marston, MP
Hamilton East-Stoney Creek
NDP Critic for Human Rights and Pensions