

# History

## A Short History of the Municipal Retirees Organization Ontario

### 1977 - April 26

- Hon. Sid Handleman, Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations, signs the letters patent creating the Ontario Municipal Retirees Organization (OMRO), with its head office in London, Ontario. Initial directors are Thomas Gagen, Orton Logan, Reginald Cooper, Eva Dann, Frank Christie  
(NOTE: the name of the Organization was changed in 1991 from OMRO to the Municipal Retirees Organization Ontario, MROO)

### 1979

- Alliance established between OMRO and Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) Ontario Division, via CUPE Ontario's Pension Committee
- CUPE Ontario Division provides for an OMRO rep (must be former CUPE member) on its board

### 1980

- OMRO receives New Horizons grant

### 1981

- OMRO's first letter to all members; claims credit for OMERS making a 4% inflation increase to 1981 pensions
- Office relocated to Toronto – office support provided by CUPE Ontario
- First OMRO membership meeting - held in Owen Sound
- OMERS convenes open meetings for members across the Province, OMRO directors attend
- First discussion by OMRO Board of need for retiree extended health insurance coverage, due to high cost of retiree coverage and inability of employer plans to extend coverage to retirees. Discussion considered asking OMERS to offer retiree health plan but concluded that OMERS' focus should be on pension benefit enhancements at that point

## **1982**

- OMRO Board asked to make presentation to Ontario Legislature Committee on Pensions on review of Pension Benefits Act
- Board and Mercer HR Benefits Consulting discuss possibility of health insurance program for municipal retirees
- OMERS sends out letter to all OMERS pensioners soliciting membership in OMRO

## **1983**

- OMRO Board formally requests OMERS Board to sponsor and administer a health insurance program for OMERS retirees. OMERS Board declines, but offers to work with OMRO to promote and help develop an OMRO retiree health insurance program (see 1984)
- Citadel Insurance selected as principal of health insurance plan for OMERS retirees

## **1984**

- OMRO first asks Ontario Government to add an OMRO nominee to the OMERS Board to represent pensioners (see 1992)
- OMERS sends letter to all 13,000 OMERS pensioners outlining new OMRO insurance plan
- OMRO expresses its disappointment to federal and Ontario governments that they had failed to expand the CPP (see 2010)

## **1985**

- OMRO directors hold first series of OMRO zone meetings, beginning in Cornwall, with logistical support from CUPE locals

## **1986**

- OMRO Board again requests that an OMRO appointee be added to the OMERS Board

## **1987**

- Don MacLeod elected President
- OMRO mails out first newsletter to all its 7,000 members
- OMRO Insurance program expands its automatic acceptance period from 60 to 90 days

## **1988**

- OMRO Board considers requests to extend its retiree health insurance to hospital pensioners (non-OMERS)
- OMRO endorses home and auto insurance program; promotional material mailed to all 27,000 OMERS pensioners by OMERS

## **1989**

- OMRO presents first pensions seminar sponsored by CUPE Ontario
- OMRO meets with Minister of Municipal Affairs to request pensioner position on OMERS Board; Minister requests 3 resumes from OMRO
- First cross-province series of OMRO zone meetings held in fall
- Convalescent care insurance introduced
- Separate OMRO office established
- OMRO newsletter mailed out to all OMERS pensioners by OMERS
- OMRO Directors arrange OMERS retiree information sessions in Chatham, Port Dover and Markdale

## **1990**

- OMRO objects to federal government proposal to accelerate clawback of OAS pensions (won) and to introduction of the GST (lost)
- OMRO contacts MPPs to request a pensioner on OMERS Board
- Annual membership fee raised from \$2 to \$5, in addition to \$25 lifetime fee
- First annual budget adopted by OMRO Board

## **1991 - March 21**

- At OMERS' request, the organization amends Letters Patent to change name to "The Municipal Retirees Organization Ontario" (MROO)
- 1-800 number initiated
- MROO Newsletter mailing to all 43,000 OMERS pensioners by agreement with OMERS
- MROO reps meet with Hon. Dave Cooke re 100% OMERS inflation protection and MROO rep on OMERS Board
- Citadel Insurance business (including MROO health plan policies) bought out by North American Life Insurance Company

## 1992

- MROO-endorsed home and auto insurance switched to Mitchell Abbott Group
- Realignment of zones into 8 zones based on population
- MROO opposes Ontario Government proposal to require pension fund investment in public projects
- MROO invited to Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario (AMCTO) annual conference for first time
- MROO nominee Don Ross appointed to OMERS Board
- MROO adopts \$25 lifetime membership fee

## 1993

- MROO provides advice to OMERS regarding early retirement options under “Social Contract” public sector restraint
- MROO joins Congress of Union Retirees Canada (CURC)
- MROO adopts standardized Spring schedule of cross-province zone meetings, so that director elections take place before the annual meeting of the Board

## 1994

- MROO Newsletter gets new name, “Members Reporter”, and regular three-times-yearly schedule
- MROO June newsletter sent by OMERS to all OMERS pensioners – 800 new members join MROO
- Active MROO membership reaches 14,300 members
- MROO health plan has 8,300 policy-holders
- MROO participates in discussions about possible changes to OMERS Board structure

## 1995

- OMERS restricts access to OMERS mailings: OMERS will notify new pensioners (one info sheet about MROO and a separate info sheet about MROO health plan) and list pensioner organizations annually in OMERS newsletter. OMERS no longer permits MROO to participate in new retiree seminars without employer consent
- MROO office moves from the premises of CUPE Ontario to the premises of AMCTO

## 1996

- MROO represented at conferences of AMCTO, CURC, CUPE Ontario, Ontario Association of School Business Officials (OASBO), Police Association, Firefighters Association, OMERS stakeholder meetings
- MROO communicates to governments about Canada Pension Plan, Ontario Drug Benefit, building code requirements for handicapped access, public sector compensation restraint, auto insurance regulations, changes to OMERS pension benefits
- North American life (including MROO Health plan policies) acquired by Manufacturers Life Insurance Company (Manulife)

## 1997

- MROO submits suggestions to OMERS regarding possible retiree benefits from OMERS' actuarial surplus; presents 8-point proposal, particularly emphasizing permanent 100% indexing, increased spousal survivor pension, and reduced CPP offset
- MROO participates in discussions regarding OMERS governance (see 2006)
- MROO Convalescent Care plan initiated

## 1998

- MROO heads protest against OMERS decision to manage its surplus by means of a contribution holiday without commensurate improvements for pensioners
- 9,000 MROO members respond to "Pension Alert" from MROO about lack of pensioner benefits from OMERS surplus
- MROO forms part of "Coalition for Pension Fairness", involving all OMERS pensioner organizations, seeking:
  - Pensioner benefits from OMERS surplus
  - More pensioner appointments to OMERS Board
  - OMERS governance autonomous from Province
- MROO decides not to endorse any out-of-province travel insurance
- Board decides not to cover Viagra under MROO health plan
- MROO Treasurer Dick McIntosh appointed to OMERS Board

## 1999

- MROO advocates improvements in OMERS' CPP offset formula, and indexing using Ontario CPI
- MROO website established

## **2000**

- MROO asks Province to include PSA test under OHIP
- MROO encourages OMERS and Province to establish a stakeholder process to design autonomous OMERS structure

## **2001**

- MROO submits position paper on OMERS governance structure

## **2002**

- MROO receives reports on market downturn's impact on OMERS, end of contribution holiday, impossibility of reducing the CPP offset

## **2003**

- First MROO strategic planning day
- Board discussions about limiting the term of directors and executive members (see 2009)
- MROO expresses concerns to the Province about public/private partnerships to operate hospitals
- MROO expresses concern to Province about rumoured means-testing of Ontario Drug Benefit

## **2004**

- Board asks OMERS about any future plans to offer retiree health benefits (no action by OMERS)

## **2005**

- MROO Zone 2 Director Richard Faber appointed to OMERS Board
- MROO submits brief to the Province on Bill 206, the OMERS Act
- Don MacLeod and Dick McIntosh present MROO position to the Standing Committee of Ontario Legislature studying Bill 206

## **2006**

- MROO scholarship program initiated: one scholarship per zone @ \$1,000 per zone. Eligible students are entering first year university or college

- MROO nominates Richard Faber as retiree rep on OMERS Administration Corporation (AC) Board
- MROO nominates Glen Mills as retiree rep on OMERS Sponsors Corporation (SC) Board

## **2007**

- Zone structure reconfigured to add zone 9 (central Ontario)
- Agreement with police and fire retiree organizations on selection procedure for reps to OMERS boards
- Out-of-province travel health insurance option introduced as part of MROO health plan

## **2008**

- MROO ambassador concept initiated
- MROO Board and alternates undertake new strategic plan
- MROO brief and presentation to the Ontario Expert Commission on Pensions (Harry Arthurs)

## **2009**

- Constitution amended to provide staggered terms for directors (3 of the 9 zones have elections each year) and term limits
- Number of scholarships increased to two per zone @\$1,000
- MROO retirement planning seminars initiated for soon-to-retain employees in smaller municipalities. Phil Hollins engaged to deliver seminars. First seminars in Rideau Lakes and Napanee
- Richard Faber appointed to AC Board via new procedure
- Board identifies 3 advocacy priorities – OMERS, pensions and retirement income, seniors' homecare and independent living

## **2010**

- Scholarship program changed to one per zone @ \$2,000. Eligible students are entering second year of college or university
- Paul Bailey appointed retiree rep on OMERS SC Board
- Newsletter expands from 8 to 12 pages
- MROO submits detailed position paper to the Federal Department of Finance Consultation on the adequacy of Canada's retirement income system

- MROO submits detailed position paper to Ontario Ministry of Finance in response to “Securing Our Retirement Future” discussion paper

## **2011**

- Scholarship program changed to two per zone @ \$2,000 for students entering second year of college or university
- MROO invited to introduce the organization at OMERS retiree information sessions
- After 25 years as MROO President, our organization builder, Don MacLeod hands over the President reins to Bill Harford. Don remains on the Executive Committee as past President.

## **2012**

- Scholarship program adds \$5,000 Don MacLeod Leadership Award
- MROO Board and alternates update strategic plan; deliver rebranding task force report; confirm advocacy priorities
- Brief and presentation to Tony Dean review of OMERS governance
- MROO membership surpasses 15,000
- MROO health plan policies surpass 7800; over 1700 policy-holders also have annual travel insurance option; number of people covered by MROO health plan exceeds 10,000
- MROO annual budget surpasses \$600,000
- 25 retirement planning seminars held since 2009
- Record number of scholarship applications (92)
- Website content updated and expanded

## **2015**

- Following an interview process David Tsubouchi is appointed as the retiree rep to the OMERS AC board
- Long time MROO Treasurer Glen Mills (14 years in the role) advises he will be stepping down in 2016 allowing us time to recruit a successor

## **2016**

- Launched our new website in early 2016.
- MROO’s 2016 to 2018 strategic plan is approved by the board of directors
- After years of lobbying MROO gets an assist as members with non locked in funds in OMERS AVC can now keep them with OMERS past age 71
- Penny Allen assumes the Treasurer and Executive Committee role



## **2017**

- MROO celebrates its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary with doubling the scholarship bursary to \$4000 for 9 of the 25 recipients
- Loblaw's Optical partners with MROO to give discounts to our members
- Zone 2 tops the attendance mark for zone meetings with 275 MROO members and partners

## **2018**

- Scholarships of \$2,500 are awarded to 29 students entering 2 year of post secondary education as well as the \$5,000 Don MacLeod leadership award
- Board approves a new 3 year strategic plan for 2019-2021
- MROO hosts a record number of 31 pre retirement seminars
- MROO's first ever Executive Director Bill Winegard steps down after 14 years and is succeeded by Dan Carnegie

## **2019**

- MROO membership tops 23,000
- 3 new pre retirement seminar leaders are recruited to help expand the program and to succeed long time facilitator Phil Hollins who is stepping down
- MROO health plan policies surpass 12000; over 5000 policy-holders also have annual travel insurance option;
- New website launches in the summer of 2019