

# Canadian government quick to act for us

by Sheila Telford, CABP Director

The surprise September 5 article in the *Telegraph* stating that the British Government is to open discussions with Australia regarding the frozen pensions policy, resulted in a flurry of emails and telephone conversations as I alerted our senior contacts in Human Resources and Skills Development Canada to this development. HRSDC immediately contacted their Australian counterparts, who confirmed the authenticity of the article. Canada has expressed a wish to be part of any new discussions on frozen pensions.

The *Telegraph* article had resulted from a statement by Australian Minister Jenny Macklin that she had received this commitment from Iain Duncan Smith, Britain's Minister of State for Work and Pensions, and also that he had agreed to open discussions with frozen pensioners in Australia about options they have put forward regarding the scrapping of the policy.

Next, on hearing that Britain's Foreign Secretary William Hague would be in Ottawa on September 24 to meet with Canada's Foreign Minister, John Baird, I again got in touch with our senior government contacts and also with Minister Baird to request that frozen pensions be formally included in their discussions. I was assured that Mr. Baird had been provided with speaking points on the issue. The truth of this was made evident in the official news release issued by Foreign Affairs following the meeting, which had been set up for the purpose of announcing the establishing of joint UK-Canadian diplomatic missions abroad.

The news release included the following statement: "The Minister and Secretary of State also discussed the situation of British pensioners in Canada, whose U.K. government pensions are not indexed to inflation."

The UK Government must now know beyond a doubt that the Canadian Government is not going to let this issue go!

We have also learned that Prime Minister Stephen Harper had anticipated raising the topic again with the Prime Minister of Australia, Julia Gillard, while at the APEC conference in Vladivostok in early September, however Ms. Gillard had to leave the conference suddenly because of her father's sudden death.

I subsequently received a letter from Prime Minister Harper's office confirming, once again, that the "Government of Canada strongly supports the cause of British pensioners and... remains prepared to engage the UK should its government ever indicate a willingness to index its pensions paid in Canada.... Canadian officials will continue to formally approach their UK counterparts so that they understand that the non-indexation issue remains a priority."

My letter-writing campaign will continue. I know that many members of CABP have also been writing to their representatives and to Government ministers on this issue. Please don't stop! It is important that elected politicians know how important this issue is to their constituents and our letters help to keep the issue of frozen pensions 'hot' on their agenda.

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## Oz PM supports campaigning pensioners



PM Julia Gillard:

"The Australian Government...strongly supports the efforts of UK pensioners seeking equal treatment on the indexation issue. All UK pensioners paid their contributions under the same rules and should be paid their pensions under equal conditions...Minister (Jenny) Macklin recently met with her UK counterpart, the Rt Hon Iain Duncan Smith MP and reiterated the Government's views on the indexation issue. In this context, the UK Government has agreed to an officials dialogue with Australia, including examination of options for indexation."

"I note that there have been requests that Canada and Australia work together on this issue. The Government will consider the possibility of joint action with other affected countries, such as Canada, if an opportunity arises. In the meantime, the Government will continue to press the UK Government on this issue, whenever appropriate."

*Lifted from Hansard dated Tuesday 9 October 2012 for Australia's House of Representatives*