

The British Pensioner in Canada

Highlights from issue # 45 (March 2007) newsletter of *The British Pensioners'* *Association of Western Canada*

There was a concerted effort in getting members of the various frozen pensioner lobby groups write to their last UK MP asking them to sign [EDM 856](#) which was tabled on February 6th 2007:

That this House notes with concern that 520,000 British pensioners living abroad have their pensions frozen in value and thus not increased when the pensions in the United Kingdom receive annual increases; believes the practice of freezing these pensions is wholly unfair, discriminatory and irrational especially when some pensioners living overseas do have their pensions increased annually; believes that all pensioners living abroad, many of whom have made lifelong mandatory payments to their state pensions, are deserving of this annual increase; and urges the Government to bring forward proposals to end the evident unfairness in the current arrangements.

[This EDM ended up attracting 186 signatories]

A new EDM was tabled on 22nd March 2007 – EDM 1203:

That this House asks the Social Security Advisory Committee to consider Statutory Instrument 2007 No. 775, the Social Security Benefits Up-rating Regulations 2007; calls on the Government to provide a remedy to the unjustified and unjustifiable discrimination against the 50 per cent. of overseas UK state pensioners in certain countries including Australia, Canada, South Africa and New Zealand; and requires the Government to present any future Instrument,

Regulation or Order that purports to continue the application of disqualification in respect of inflation or other uprating of benefit as an independent Instrument, Regulation or Order instead of tucking it away in Clause 3 of a Regulation misleadingly titled Uprating.

[This EDM ending up gaining 130 signatures]

Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Uganda in November 2017. We have been trying to have a meaningful conversation with this group prior to their meeting in November 2017. Something like 47 of Commonwealth countries are frozen.

This was the response that we received:

I am responding on behalf of the Commonwealth Secretary-General to your email below. I am sorry that it has taken some time to respond, but you will have received my interim acknowledgment. You will also know from that message that the question of frozen UK pensions is one that has been brought to the attention of the Commonwealth Secretariat and has been the subject of intergovernmental discussion between some Commonwealth member governments in the past.

I enclose below a series of bullet points representing the position on the United Kingdom frozen pensions of the UK Department of Work and Pensions. I am sure that you are familiar with the points made.

You have asked that the Secretary-General consider inscribing this matter on the agenda of the next Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) which is to take place in Kampala in November this year. I should perhaps explain that there are discussions held by senior officials of Commonwealth governments during the year in preparation for the CHOGM when issues for possible consideration are considered and narrowed down. Decisions on the issues to be addressed at CHOGM are then a matter for decision by

the Heads of Government themselves once they gather. There are also of course informal discussions held between Commonwealth leaders at CHOGM on issues of common interest and concern.

In the circumstances, I suggest that your best option would be to discuss this matter further with representatives of the United Kingdom as well as other affected governments in order to identify whether this is a matter that is likely to benefit from discussion, either formally on the agenda or informally at this year's CHOGM

Yours sincerely

Simon Grimson

John Markham's mission in the UK comes to an end

John Markham returned to Canada at the beginning of February having completed his time as a lobbyist on behalf of the [International Consortium of British Pensioners](#). During his time in London, John has been able to win friends and influence a great number of people who are in a position to assist our cause. A question was asked in the House of Commons:

"Has the Minister for Pensions Reform (James Purnell) met yet with John Markham of the International Alliance of British Pensioners?"

The Minister's office called the next day and John later met with James Purnell with whom he had a constructive meeting although unsurprisingly he was not able to obtain any concessions. Purnell was concerned about the cost to the British Taxpayer of any increase of our pensions, which is an argument that we have heard before.