

# Bill 206 not in public's best interest

Currently, the Ontario Municipal Employees Retirement System (OMERS) is jointly managed by a 13-member board appointed by the Ontario government. The provincial government currently serves as the fund's sponsor, ensuring its viability.

Bill 206 (the Ontario Municipal Employees Retirement System Act, 2005), would eliminate the Province's role as sponsor of OMERS. Multiple employer and employee representatives would be appointed to two corporations (a Sponsors Corporation and a Plan Administration Corporation). These corporations would replace the Province as sponsor and final decision-maker. Bill 206 has already gone through its second reading in the Legislative Assembly, and will be proceeding for the third reading debate shortly.

Halton Region does not support the Bill in its current form. Fundamental features of this Bill appear to serve the interests of emergency service employee groups only and not the interest of other employee groups or the general public.

On January 26, I made a presentation to the Standing Committee on General Government. During my presentation, I advised that potential costs to employers (and ultimately, Halton taxpayers), could result in an estimated increase in the residential tax rate of 2.1 per cent.

Ontario residents already pay the highest property taxes in Canada as a result of downloaded Provincial programs and service costs. If Bill 206 is



THE  
REGION  
REPORT

Joyce Savoline

passed, Ontario property taxpayers would shoulder approximately \$380 million in new labour costs with no improvements to programs and services.

With \$360-billion in net investment assets, OMERS serves approximately 900 employers with 355,000 current and former employees in municipalities, school boards, libraries, police and fire departments, paramedics, children's aid societies, etc. Municipal employers, including Halton Region, believe the Province has to further examine the financial implications on its stakeholders, both employers and employees, as well as the Province's taxpayers.

I encourage you to contact your local MPP to voice your concerns with Bill 206. Remember, this Bill doesn't only affect those who are members of OMERS, but will affect all Halton taxpayers.

—Joyce Savoline is the chairperson of Halton Region

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