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Mini-Review

RETIREMENT INCOME PLAN MAY POTENTIALLY OFFER A GOOD LEVEL OF FUTURE CONFIDENCE

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Introduction

The sources of your retirement income and your strategy for withdrawing your savings can have a significant impact on your cash flow and tax consequences. We can help you calculate your current expenses, project them over your retirement, and develop the customized withdrawal strategy that works best for you. There are seven major government sources, which include Canada Pension Plan / Quebec Pension Plan (CPP/QPP), Old Age Security (OAS), Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS), employment related sources, company pension plans, group RRSPs and deferred profit sharing plans. In addition, there are five potential personal sources, which are registered investments (RRSPs, RRIFs, LIRAs, LIFs, PRIFs, and TFSA), non-registered investments, and Guaranteed Investment Fund (GIF) policies with Lifetime Income Benefit (LIB) options, annuities and home equity. There are five other miscellaneous resources that may exist and they are part-time employment or income from a second career, rental property income, business assets, vacation property equity and other savings.

Moreover the multiple retirement income sources can multiply the complexity of its management by each individual. Throughout your career, you may receive a paycheque from your employer or business. When you retire, you could instead receive multiple paycheques made up of government benefits, employer-sponsored plans and personal savings.

Financial or Wealth Management

Financial management can be challenging when your income is from multiple sources. Wealth management is a skillful job that needs special attention and expertise from a licensed professional. Retirement income planning can be divided into four steps to help you get a firm grip on your retirement income and ensure you live your retirement on your terms and remain financially comfortable.

Step 1: Understand Canada's retirement income system

Canada's retirement income system consists of three tiers. Understanding them can help ensure a financially secure retirement. The 1st Tier of Government Benefits or Old Age Security (OAS) is available to everyone who has resided in Canada for at least 10 years after the age of 18. OAS benefits can begin at age 65, although the government allows for the voluntary deferral of OAS benefits for up to five years to receive a higher annual benefit. OAS is "clawed back" in increasing amounts as your individual net income climbs above a threshold amount, until it disappears entirely at an upper income level. This level is adjusted annually, so speak with us for more details. The Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) is available to those who have little or no income apart from OAS. GIS benefits are typically based on income for the previous year and are not taxable. An allowance is available to low-income earners between the ages of 60 and 64 who are widowed, or the spouses or common-law partners of low-income seniors.

The Canada Pension Plan / Quebec Pension Plan (CPP / QPP) is available to every employee or self-employed person who contributed to the plan while working. You may choose to start receiving CPP / QPP benefits any time between the ages of 60 and 65, but your benefit is reduced; if you start to receive CPP or QPP benefits between ages 65 and 70, the amounts are increased. CPP / QPP is currently intended to provide about 25 per cent of your average annual employment earnings during

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your working life, up to certain limits. Starting in 2019, the 25 per cent will gradually increase to 33 per cent over a number of years.

The 2nd Tier of private pension plans and group RRSPs is important for many Canadians belong to employer pension plans and/or group RRSPs. The retirement income from these sources will depend on the type of plan(s) you have and many other factors, such as the amount you and/or your employer have paid into the plan(s) and the years of service.

The 3rd Tier of personal savings is government benefits and employer pension plans. These are meant to provide a foundation to your personal savings. But, your personal savings are the essential building blocks that can help provide financial security through your retirement years, and these usually include RRSPs, TFSAs, other investments or savings accounts, cash value life insurance plans and real estate that can generate income during retirement.

All of these investments can provide various amounts of money on a variety of schedules and will often demand that you make informed decisions to keep them producing the income you need.

Step 2: Develop a retirement income plan

It is imperative that you have an effective investment strategy and solid financial plan that is customized to your lifestyle goals. It's equally important to have a detailed plan for withdrawing retirement income from the investments you've nurtured over the years. Otherwise, your retirement income could be considerably less than you expected and will not sustain your necessary lifestyle.

Establish the level of income you will need in retirement. Some people use a rule of thumb of about 70 to 80 percent of the current household income to maintain your lifestyle in retirement. But you may need more or less, depending on your personal retirement vision. To see how much income you will need, we merge your retirement vision with the financial realities of your retirement life.

We will help you identify expenses that can be decreased or eliminated – things like commuting costs and, perhaps, moving from two cars to one. Your budget will break out essential expenses (the money you need to live) and discretionary expenses (the money for your fun, activities such as travel).

We can calculate the income from government benefits plus employer sponsored plan(s) benefits you expect to receive in retirement. The gap between your expenses and this income will need to be filled by income from your personal savings.

Let us design your plan for retirement. In retirement, your personal savings will still need to grow and to outpace inflation and inevitable cost-of-living increases.

At the same time, your plan needs to guard against market volatility, especially a market decline early in retirement that could significantly reduce how much income can be generated from your investments. This doesn't mean relying only on fixed income investments such as guaranteed income certificates (GICs) that are "safe", but deliver low returns. We can help design your portfolio to include a mix of investments that help protect against the downturns while also delivering a cash flow that will sustain your retirement lifestyle.

Your plan should create a steady income stream. Keep in mind that you may require an income for 30 years or more. Our process includes an assessment of the potential longevity of your retirement income. It is commonly referred to as the Monte Carlo Analysis. We then recommend retirement income solutions to help ensure you will have a steady income stream throughout your retirement.

When meeting with us, be sure you identify all your sources of retirement income and when you can expect to receive money from each source (weekly, monthly, yearly). You will want to ensure your guaranteed income sources meet your essential expenses where possible, giving you peace of mind that your retirement is secure.

Step 3: Be tax-efficient

An effective retirement savings withdrawal plan can allow you to take full advantage of tax benefits, such as the age credit, the pension income credit and other tax credits, while possibly avoiding OAS clawback.

Here are a few of your options:

- Splitting income with your spouse when possible can help not only increase tax credits, but may also shift income to a lower tax bracket.
- Investing in mutual funds that allow you to receive a portion of the income stream from fund earnings and a portion from a return on your initial investment. Your capital is not considered income and is not subject to tax in the year it is received.
- Withdrawing only the minimum for your RIF and other fully taxable investments or, depending on your age, withdrawing just enough to maximize the value of the pension income credit.
- Non-registered investment choices that offer preferential tax treatment.
- Knowing how to use TFSA withdrawals to provide a tax-free source of cash flow in retirement.
- Working part-time or consulting past your official retirement date.
- Step 4: Consolidate and simplify

As you move toward retirement, start thinking about simplifying the administration of your assets by consolidating your various investments, savings accounts, registered plans, and insurance plans. When you have a number of investments and income sources, it's easy to lose track and miss opportunities to enhance your retirement income or reduce taxes. It's often possible to achieve consolidation without financial penalties or incurring tax on capital gains.

We can help you simplify your various sources of retirement income, minimize taxes and develop the right retirement savings withdrawal plan for your unique situation and retirement goals. We will also revisit your plan regularly to account for potential life transitions such as caring for parents or your own health care needs. And if you'd like to continue planning your life in retirement around a regular paycheck – just as you did during your career – we can do that for you, too.

Conclusion

There are different stages of life when our clients begin to plan out their retirement and what it will look like. Even when an individual retires many important decisions around financial managements will need to be made. Our approach to helping you achieve financial peace of mind includes a complete review of your financial life and then we custom design the IG Living Plan to fit your cash flow needs through all the years of your retirement. Helping you turn your life vision into your life reality – that's what we do best.

I strongly suggest starting to save a consistent amount of money every two weeks and align the contributions with your regular salary. This will provide you will a pool of funds for some time in the future. Make certain that you speak with a licensed professional to discuss the options and benefits of using a combination of RRSPs and TFSAs for retirement income purposes.

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