

Many retirees end up back in workforce

Debate as to whether they want to go back or have to go back

[Tom Carney](#) / North Shore News

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I have a friend who just retired.

He's 56. He wants to make the golf course his second home. What we know about early retirees suggests that he'll have to schedule his tee times when he is off the clock.

An analysis from Stats Canada shows that more than half of the workers in Canada aged 55 and older return to the workforce within a decade. The question is: Are retirees going back to work because they want to or because they have to? CARP, a large national advocacy group for seniors and their American counterpart, the AARP both think it's the latter.

I'm not so sure about that. An analysis by Stats

Canada found that older workers with employer sponsored pension plans - particularly in the public sector - were less likely to seek post retirement employment and that those who were laid off from their career jobs were more likely to be re-employed. That makes sense. If you have a good pension you can probably retire. If you don't, it's more of a challenge.

Here's the wild card. There is a growing cadre of retirees who have both a so-called gold plated pension plan and high earnings over their career who are choosing to go back to work.

The Municipal Retirees Organization of Ontario (MROO) recently polled their members and found that 28 per cent of them continue to work after retirement, even though all of the respondents were receiving a defined-benefit pension plan and were in a position to retire.

Why do some retirees go back to work when there is no financial necessity for them to do so? It appears that we may have dramatically underestimated the desire of older Canadians to continue to work later in life.

Some people may choose to work longer to keep active and stay alert but there is more to it than that. People who are very work oriented and love their jobs don't want to give that up - especially if they are healthy. The notion that as we get older we need to slow down, take it easy, stop working and retire may be doing us more harm than good.

There is some evidence to suggest that those who work the hardest live the longest - especially if they are dedicated to things and people beyond themselves. The trend for well-to-do retirees to choose work over leisure turns our view of what it means to be older and to be retired on its head.

I'll give you that, but let's put this in perspective. There are still lots of people, like my friend, who are enjoying their retirement or who can't wait to retire. They may even be the majority.

If you're in that group, or about to be, it's the first couple of years after retirement that you have to watch out for.

Statistics tell us that those who are reemployed after retirement tend to return to the workforce rather quickly.

The trick to retiring and then staying retired is to retire later and stay out of the workforce for one, or better yet, two years. After that the probability of being re-employed falls sharply. And if you do want to go back to work, know that you are not alone.

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