2026 Canadian Employer Pension Survey

There is renewed focus and growing momentum in Canada on positioning the country to drive growth, boost productivity and build for the future. Now is the time to lay the foundation for lasting prosperity. At the same time, Canada has an aging population. Building a stronger Canada requires not only investment and innovation, but also a healthy workforce supported by a sustainable healthcare system.

For the sixth consecutive year, The Healthcare of Ontario Pension Plan's (HOOPP) Canadian Employer Pension Survey (CEPS) asked employers about their workforce priorities and the role of workplace retirement benefits. New this year, HOOPP partnered with The Logit Group to conduct the national survey, and added a dedicated healthcare employer oversample, delivering deeper insight into the healthcare workforce, one of Canada's most critical sectors.

The 2026 CEPS points to a consistent theme: employers recognize retirement security, workforce sustainability and organizational outcomes as closely connected. It also surfaces two important insights. First, healthcare employers rank workforce stability as the top workforce outcome for their organization, above recruitment and retention of staff. The findings suggest healthcare employers see value in maintaining a balance of experienced professionals and emerging talent, helping preserve experience and support workforce renewal. Second, employers report that retirement benefits, and defined benefit (DB) pensions especially, are increasingly important to younger workers, reinforcing their value in an evolving labour market.

DB pensions help healthcare employers build the stable workforce they need

For healthcare employers, workforce stability is an important organizational priority, with 63% ranking it as a top workforce outcome ahead of retention and recruitment (53% and 39% respectively) and DB pensions are seen as a key tool for achieving such stability. The consensus is near-universal with 95% saying workplace pensions are important to maintaining a sustainable healthcare workforce in Canada. The same share agree DB pensions help attract and retain healthcare workers and provide a competitive advantage when competing for talent. Nearly all (94%) say DB pensions help retain experienced healthcare staff, a view shared by nine in 10 healthcare workers themselves according to HOOPP's 2026 Canadian Retirement Survey (CRS).

Having the right mix of experienced professionals and younger workers matters. Almost all healthcare employers say their employees require specialized skills that make employee tenure important to organizational success (96%), while 97% link retaining experienced workers to maintaining quality and continuity of patient care. At the same time, 94% say helping employees retire when financially ready supports workforce renewal and succession planning.

Healthcare employers also anticipate longer-term workforce demands facing the sector. Nearly all (94%) agree Canada's healthcare system will need to grow significantly to support an aging population, with almost all of healthcare workers surveyed for CRS sharing that view. At the same time, 78% of healthcare employers report concerns for next year about retention, absenteeism and labour shortages. These concerns are underscored by the fact that 92% agree understaffing in healthcare leads to worse health outcomes for Canadians.

DB pensions are core to compensation, especially in healthcare

While retirement benefits are highly valued by all employers, healthcare employers rate retirement benefits above the national benchmark on every measure. Nine in 10 (91%) say retirement benefits are very or extremely important to employees, compared with 80% of Canadian employers overall. Nearly half of healthcare employers (47%) say pensions matter as much as pay, and 94% call pensions among the most important benefits they can offer. Among all employers, the figures are 42% and 89%, respectively.

Healthcare employers also see retirement security as a powerful driver of career decisions. Two-thirds (67%) believe employees would take a lower salary for a better pension, compared with 57% of employers overall. More than half (55%) believe workers would relocate to a remote or underserved community for a DB pension, compared with 48% overall. More than half (58%) believe employees would choose a lifetime DB pension even if it meant never owning a home, compared with 53%.

Healthcare workers agree. HOOPP's 2026 CRS found 89% of workers with a DB pension rank pensions as the most important or among the most important workplace benefits, and 94% see them as a key part of overall compensation. Similarly, a majority of healthcare workers say they would rather have a guaranteed lifetime pension even if it meant never owning a home or would consider relocating to a remote or underserved community for a DB pension (57% and 64%, respectively).

DB pensions help healthcare employers compete for younger talent

Healthcare employers see attracting younger workers as an important part of building their future workforce, and retirement benefits as a tool to help compete for younger talent. Healthcare employers see retirement benefits as a lever to compete for younger talent. Eighty-five per cent say retirement benefits are important for attracting younger workers, while 86% say they positively impact retention. In addition, 91% of healthcare employers agree that offering a DB pension helps make healthcare careers more attractive to younger workers and 87% believe retirement benefits have become more important to younger workers over the past five years.

Recruiting the next generation is a priority for employers and pensions are seen as a key part of the answer. Generally, employers with younger workforces are more likely to view pensions as a core component of compensation (49% of organizations with employees mostly aged 18 to 39 versus 32% of organizations with employees mostly aged 40 and older) and to identify a workplace pension as the most important employee benefit (38% versus 25%).

Retirement security fuels workforce performance

Canadians are being asked to build a stronger, more resilient country at a time when the population is aging and competition for skilled workers is intensifying. Employers know that attracting younger talent is not enough. Employers also connect workforce sustainability with employee well-being and productivity, which is important to building capacity and improving quality of care.

Employers increasingly recognize that retirement security is not just a financial issue, but a workforce issue. Nearly nine in 10 (87%) believe Canada is facing an emerging retirement income challenge, while 93% agree business productivity depends on employee productivity. Employers also see a direct connection between financial security and employee well-being. Ninety-two per cent say workers with less financial stress enjoy better mental health and overall wellness.

For employers with mostly younger workforces (ages 18 to 39), the benefits are especially clear. Alleviating financial stress (46%) and improving productivity (45%) are seen as the leading advantages of workplace retirement benefits.

Support for retirement savings solutions is nearly universal. Ninety-three per cent of employers believe every worker should have access to an affordable retirement savings arrangement, and 94% agree governments can save money by supporting more efficient and affordable pension plans.

Conclusion

The 2026 provides a clear direction on how employers view retirement security as a workforce strategy. Employers link strong retirement benefits with financial well-being, productivity, attraction, retention and stability. In healthcare, where specialized skills, continuity of care and experience define quality, that link is even stronger. DB pensions help healthcare employers hold on to seasoned professionals, attract the next generation and maintain workforce stability.

The findings show that healthcare employers are thinking about both their immediate and longer-term workforce needs. Employers see DB pensions as a tool to help build the stable, resilient workforce needed to deliver care today, build capacity for tomorrow, which is important for supporting a healthy, productive economy Canada needs for the future.

Methodology:

An online survey was conducted from August 21 to September 8, 2026, among Canadian employers sourced through a random B2B sample. The research included 803 employers. New this year, the research included an expanded healthcare oversample of 350 organizations, allowing for deeper healthcare specific insights. Respondents were company owners or senior leaders who influence or make HR-related decisions; healthcare respondents were required to make pension or employee benefit-related decisions. Participating organizations had at least 20 employees, or 10 employees for the healthcare oversample, and included a mix of organizations offering and not offering defined benefit (DB) pensions. Results are accurate to ±3.5% for all employers and ±5.2% for the healthcare oversample, 19 times out of 20.