

Living in Retirement

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SPEAKER	TRANSCRIPTION
	<p>[00:00:00.00]</p> <p>[MUSIC PLAYING]</p>
DORETTA THOMPSON:	<p>[00:00:11.24]</p> <p>Hello, you're listening to Mastering Money, where we explore the many aspects of good financial decision-making. I'm Doretta Thompson, financial literacy leader for Chartered Professional Accountants of Canada. We provide no cost programs and free online resources that help Canadians own their finances and learn the language of money.</p> <p>[00:00:31.95]</p> <p>This season, we're looking at retirement in Canada and discussing ways to plan and save for a prosperous retirement. Because understanding your landscape and options is key to charting your path. Today's episode takes a special look at living in retirement and paints a picture of the retirement experience from the perspective of a couple who are living it well.</p> <p>[00:00:59.28]</p> <p>My guests today are Harold and Bev Hutner, a couple of retired CPAs and volunteers with the CPA financial literacy program who are living the retirement dream. Harold's lifelong learner in accounting professional who retired in 2013 after a long and varied career in industry. Beverly retired six years ago from Kraft Canada. They're now thriving in retirement, focusing on family, learning, and giving back to the community. Bev and Harold, thanks so much for joining us today.</p>
BEVERLY HUTNER:	<p>[00:01:32.86]</p> <p>Thank you.</p>
HAROLD HUTNER:	<p>[00:01:33.61]</p> <p>Thank you.</p>

SPEAKER**TRANSCRIPTION**

DORETTA THOMPSON:

[00:01:34.90]

Let's start by learning a little bit about you and how you approached your retirement decisions. Harold, you retired first, so let's you take us off the top.

HAROLD HUTNER:

[00:01:44.28]

Yes, I retired in 2013 from the position manager of insurance and regulatory compliance for Dynacare Laboratories. I've been with them for approximately 26 years. And from that time, I started off as their first controller and ended up in the position I mentioned a moment ago.

[00:02:07.06]

I was very grateful as I neared retirement that the company gave me the opportunity to reduce my workweek. So rather than working five days a week, I was able to work less than that. And it really allowed me to transition from working really steadily to working a bit less and get used to the idea of heading towards retirement. So for that, I'm really grateful to Gamma-Dynacare or Dynacare Laboratories.

DORETTA THOMPSON:

[00:02:36.30]

So really you are kind of a pioneer of that kind of easing out of retirement model that we're starting to see more of today.

HAROLD HUTNER:

[00:02:44.07]

Yes, I think you're absolutely right. I feel very grateful that I was able to approach it that way and the company was very supportive.

DORETTA THOMPSON:

[00:02:52.65]

That's great. And Bev, what about you?

BEVERLY HUTNER:

[00:02:54.87]

My story is a little bit different, but I had been threatening to retire for some time and the catalyst was the fact that the company was bought out and a lot of people were-- we reorganized out of the company. So I ended up being retired as part of this reorganization and was asked to stay on a lot longer than most of the people to help with the reorganization work.

DORETTA THOMPSON:

[00:03:26.09]

OK, so that's how you got there. And what's the experience like so far, Bev? Would you say retirement is awesome?

BEVERLY HUTNER:

[00:03:33.72]

I would say that retirement is really positive because when you cut through it all, the only thing that any of us have is time and it's really wonderful to have control over your time.

SPEAKER**TRANSCRIPTION**

DORETTA THOMPSON:

[00:03:45.72]

That is so true. And Harold, what about you?

HAROLD HUTNER:

[00:03:49.83]

I would second that because the ability to control time is really important. What I think is that the secret before retirement and after retirement as much as possible is work life balance. And that when you're retired, the ability to balance your life as you go forward I think is really important. So I agree 100% with Bev.

DORETTA THOMPSON:

[00:04:15.54]

That is really interesting the idea of balance. I mean, we hear about people who work has been their major focus for many, many, many years. And when that gets taken away in retirement, they actually can suffer a very serious vacuum that leads to retirement, not always being as positive as they might like.

HAROLD HUTNER:

[00:04:36.02]

I think that's a true statement. When I was first hired after university projects I was involved in was looking at company retirees and life expectancy. What became very obvious was that those retirees who had a purpose, they seemed to thrive and live a lot longer. So I think purpose and being involved and making a contribution to the world around you is very important.

DORETTA THOMPSON:

[00:05:07.48]

So really kind of retiring into a new phase of your life rather than retiring out of something you're kind of leaving behind as a whole.

BEVERLY HUTNER:

[00:05:16.74]

You need to plan for your financial security, which I understand what it was discussed in some of the earlier podcasts that you've put together, but you also need to plan for what your day is going to look like? What you're interested in doing? Do you have any passions? Do people still need you for something? I think that piece of it is really important as well.

HAROLD HUTNER:

[00:05:40.02]

I think what Bev saying is very important. The way I've looked at retirement is sort of like what happens when you go to your auto dealership with your car. Retirement is a little bit different than what one would expect. Let's use the example of the car. You take the car to the dealership, it's a change of seasons or you need to change the tires because they're worn out. So you change the tires, and instead of continuing on your old path, you start a new path. So that retirement gives you a chance to change direction.

DORETTA THOMPSON:

[00:06:18.63]

So retirement as retiring. [LAUGHS]

SPEAKER**TRANSCRIPTION**

HAROLD HUTNER:

[00:06:22.10]

Absolutely right. [LAUGHS]

DORETTA THOMPSON:

[00:06:25.07]

I love it. You're right, Bev, you mentioned that through the series we've talked to financial planners chartered accountants. We've talked to a couple of journalists in a leading personal finance columnist, et cetera, to talk about all those important things around financial planning expectations. We know that people for one thing are living much longer, not just that overall life expectancy in Canada has gone up substantially, but also life expectancy is not a fixed number.

[00:06:58.02]

So the older you are, the more likely actually you are to live up to a certain point to really have a very long retirement and there are different stages of retirement. I think the first period of retirement is also a period that people really are very active in doing many things and maybe their financial needs are maybe-- our expectations.

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It's the time when you get to do a lot of stuff in your bucket list. And then for a lot of people things in the next sort of period of retirement, they slow down a little bit. How are you finding you in this first exciting phase with good health and really able to do the exciting things that you couldn't do while you were working?

BEVERLY HUTNER:

[00:07:39.86]

While we were working, once our children were off at university, we began to travel, but we were constrained in the length of time. We could be away from the office. So while we went to a lot of interesting places and so many things, we couldn't go away for a really long time. So the first trip that we did after I retired was we spent a month traveling around in Australia and New Zealand, which clearly was not possible while we were both working.

[00:08:12.62]

And then we continued on that track. And one of the things that I was really thrilled to do was we were able to take our children and grandchildren on a cruise tour to Alaska the summer before COVID hit. And I'm so grateful that we managed to go at that time because obviously since that time, it would have been a non-starter.

DORETTA THOMPSON:

[00:08:37.31]

I'm wondering just from your own perspective, how you did go about planning financially for retirement the things you considered? Did you actually have a plan in place or did you organically kind of work and establish your new lives in retirement? You know, sometimes people say, the shoemaker's children go shoeless. So did you follow your own kind of general advice about being well-planned for retirement?

BEVERLY HUTNER:

[00:09:02.90]

First of all, at Kraft, we had quite a number of benefits available to us and they put on quite a number of years ago, a weekend opportunity where they brought in some financial planners and you could sit down and go through the whole process. So although, I knew the information and I thought this would be a good thing for us to do to kind of put things down on paper, and also might be an opportunity to look at teaching such a course in the future, which didn't end up happening, but that was good.

[00:09:36.02]

So once we understood in our minds that we had the resources to retire and we really-- it was unlikely that we were going to run out of money, then that could inform everything else that we were looking to do.

HAROLD HUTNER:

[00:09:53.66]

I think the idea of the seminars that we attended and there were several other short seminars that we attended as well, helped us to focus our attention on what was important. This fits very well with our attitude of nothing too extreme. So our whole approach from marriage onward has been one of conservatism. Basically, living within your means looking forward to the future. And making sure that nothing you did would jeopardize going forward.

[00:10:31.25]

I think being aware of where you're at is very important, whether you're not retired and heading towards it or whether you're retired, I think you need to be aware of what you have and where you're going.

DORETTA THOMPSON:

[00:10:44.04]

So given that you've dealt with your financial plan and you know that you're in that space, a comfortable retirement is possible. What are the other important things to consider?

BEVERLY HUTNER:

[00:10:56.12]

I think you need a purpose. You need to have something to do. I guess both of us for all of our working lives have been involved with various organizations outside of work. And some years before I retired, one of these charitable organizations asked me to sit on their board as treasurer. And at that point, my job was really busy and I declined. But when I was about to retire, I put myself forward for that role again and I've been doing that ever since.

[00:11:27.61]

The organization was going through a lot of change and it was good for me to be able to use my expertise to help them move forward, and really good for the organization to have somebody with the type of expertise that CPAs have to help them along the way. So as it stands, I'm sitting on two boards that are related to each other. The other one is a social housing project. It's very satisfying to as my kids would say to give away for free what I was getting paid for before to have the ability to be able to put something back into the community and to feel that I'm doing something good.

SPEAKER**TRANSCRIPTION**

BEVERLY HUTNER:

[00:12:12.85]

The other piece of it is that you need to find opportunities to socialize to be with friends, to be with family, et cetera. So whatever it happens to be, I took a bridge, I had never played bridge in my life. And I really enjoy it. And it's a great opportunity to meet people. One of my bridge partners calls it the mental gym so it keeps you sharp and it's a lot of fun. And also in retirement, I've been able to pick up a lot of the activities, hobbies that I did at various other times in the past that I didn't have time to be involved with when I was working.

[00:12:57.95]

So I guess one of the other joys is it's a real pleasure to be able to put a meal together when it's not 7 o'clock at night and everybody's just walked in the door and is starving and wondering when it's going to be ready.

DORETTA THOMPSON:

[00:13:13.33]

All right. Harold, what's your sense of that kind of purpose and setting things up in this stage of your life?

HAROLD HUTNER:

[00:13:21.93]

I think the most important thing and we mentioned it at the beginning is our ability to control time and to choose what we're going to do. After I retired, I had the opportunity to do something or to put to use skills I was starting to develop before I went to university, which I thought was just wonderful. When I was finishing high school, I was seriously considering going into photographic arts and developing that as a profession.

[00:13:53.46]

I had a long talk with my dad and he said, you know, you're pretty good, but in order to support a family, you're going to not only have to be really good, but you're going to have to be lucky. And his suggestion was that I keep photography as a hobby and look towards getting into a solid profession, which is why I chose accounting. And I began in the RIA program. And as a result over the years of changes in the accounting profession and now a CPA. So I think that's just wonderful.

HAROLD HUTNER:

[00:14:31.32]

Anyway, back to photography and changes in careers. After I retired, I became involved with the LIFE Institute for seniors at Ryerson University, which is now Toronto Metropolitan University. I both took various courses and regularly taught courses in photography to seniors. At the beginning of COVID and the resulting lockdown, I was asked by Ryerson to manage and host a weekly discussion group on Zoom for seniors. And this was known as a virtual coffee break. This discussion group has been going for over two years and is still continuing.

DORETTA THOMPSON:

[00:15:12.12]

It's great.

HAROLD HUTNER:

[00:15:13.08]

It was just amazing the way that evolved. So anyway, that's a little bit about me. And I think Bev and I over the years from time to time have looked at making contributions to the community. Before we retired or in the period where we retired, were involved to a small extent with the CPA financial literacy program and that was interesting. And gave us more insight into what one needs to be concerned about.

[00:15:43.56]

I've always felt that when teaching, you're not only giving information to the people in your class, but you as an instructor are also learning. So I think that particular program is very worthwhile.

DORETTA THOMPSON:

[00:15:57.99]

Well, thank you. And we, of course, are delighted to have you as part of our program. It's a wonderful way for all our members to give back. I'm wondering you've really hit both of you and some really interesting ideas the importance of family, the importance of continuing to learn, the importance of purpose of having a reason for being, et cetera. I have to say, Harold, I love this idea of getting back in touch with the things that you are passionate about sort of before you started adulting.

[00:16:30.39]

It's just such a wonderful and inspiring thing. Do you have any thoughts or advice to people who are looking at retirement and are maybe struggling with the idea of how they're going to fill their time because we know that that's true for a lot of people. How do you go about sort of reconnecting to networks if all your networks have been work based networks? How do you get that bravery up to try something new like bridge that you've never done before? Any thoughts, Bev?

BEVERLY HUTNER:

[00:17:03.87]

In terms of networks, I think it's important to have friends outside of work. And for me, I guess I always had that. It had a lot to do with the way my career unfolded. So I still keep in touch with some of my work colleagues, some of them are retired, some of them not. Because they were a big part of my life for a very long time, I was with the company for a long time. But I always had friends outside of work.

[00:17:33.82]

So I think that a lot of younger people today are not as inclined to join organizations as my generation did. I see that in the work that-- the charity work that I'm doing, we're working on trying to figure out how to attract younger people. And it's been a challenge for a long time. So I don't know whether they're coming together online or in other ways that didn't exist for us. But I think it's important to be involved in community organizations or clubs or join a gym, or whatever it is that you like to do.

DORETTA THOMPSON:

[00:18:11.67]

So Harold, you've had really great experiences getting involved in things post-retirement, bringing back to life passions that you had sort of pre-university and through the organization, the program at what's now Toronto Metropolitan University. Do you have any thoughts or advice to people who are kind of approaching retirement or even in retirement and feeling a really big hole of missing work?

HAROLD HUTNER:

[00:18:39.73]

I think that's a real concern. I think when you first look at it, you say, oh, my gosh, what am I going to do? I don't have the purpose of going to work every morning. But I think if you look a little bit more deeply, you'll find that there is an opportunity for connectivity, whether it's connectivity with people who you previously worked with or new people that you may meet, or people within organizations or activities that you're involved in.

[00:19:12.64]

What I found is looking at people I work with, people are looking for connectivity. And then finding that I am connecting on a periodic basis with people I worked with over the last say 26 years. I'm also finding that people in my class at university want to connect. And that there is a core of people who are saying to themselves, you know, it's really nice to be able to keep in touch with people that we knew say 50 years ago. So that's the second stream.

[00:19:49.06]

And the third is, keep an open mind about meeting new people because we all have the ability to make friends and to meet people and to build friendships. So I think it's all there. It just takes sort of a mindset that it's doable.

DORETTA THOMPSON:

[00:20:06.20]

I think that's really good advice. I'm wondering, hindsight's always 20/20. So if you were going to go back to the beginning of your careers, what kind of advice would you give your younger self about preparing to be where you are right now? Bev?

BEVERLY HUTNER:

[00:20:24.90]

I think the first thing was the advice that my parents gave me, which is to live within your means whatever that happens to be and to find satisfaction in what you have because there's always somebody that appears to have things better than you do from either from a financial perspective or some other perspective, but you don't know what's going on behind closed doors. And I guess the other thing would be to invest early.

SPEAKER**TRANSCRIPTION**

BEVERLY HUTNER:

[00:20:55.14]

So to take one of example of that when we were first married, we had a small nest egg and we chose to get rid of very old car and buy a brand new car and in hindsight, I wish we had used that money to put a down payment on a house.

DORETTA THOMPSON:

[00:21:12.93]

Interesting. Harold?

HAROLD HUTNER:

[00:21:15.42]

I would second that thought because I think that in some ways we were too conservative that maybe our approach was right, but maybe we should have said we're able to take a little bit more risk. And I think Bev is right that I think a good first step would have been buying a house a little bit earlier.

[00:21:37.83]

I think we've been fortunate and we've made some good decisions, but I think we've been a little bit overly cautious in what we've done. I think the decisions were right at the time, but in hindsight, I think that Bev is right that we should have bought a house earlier.

DORETTA THOMPSON:

[00:21:55.29]

I think that's a really interesting observation that just in general that maybe be that thoughtful and balanced is really important but sometimes, we need to be a little bit braver if we lean a little bit too hard to the cautious side. Quick thought, first thing in your head. Bev, what's the single best thing about being retired?

BEVERLY HUTNER:

[00:22:15.09]

I guess the single best thing is getting to choose how I want to use my time rather than having that decision made for me because working full-time at a significant job is more than full-time hours and it doesn't leave a lot of time to do other things.

DORETTA THOMPSON:

[00:22:35.28]

And what's the worst?

BEVERLY HUTNER:

[00:22:37.11]

I don't know whether there is worst. I think the worst would be spending your time with a person that you don't get along with, which is not the case for us or being very isolated, which has not been the case for us either.

SPEAKER**TRANSCRIPTION**

DORETTA THOMPSON:

[00:22:58.17]

Harold, you. Best thing?

HAROLD HUTNER:

[00:23:00.63]

The best thing spending time with grandkids. That's the first thing. Second of all, but equally very important is being able to spend time with Bev and do some of the things that we want to do together. So I put that pretty high. I think the thing that you mentioned about isolation is a real problem for some people who are retired. And I think it's really difficult because if you are focused on work and career, what do you do when that goes away? You're left with isolation.

HAROLD HUTNER:

[00:23:37.82]

And so it takes a lot of effort to get out of that particular trap. So I think that's the risk. I think it takes work. And I think some people do it naturally and some people have to struggle with it. So anyway, that's my thought.

BEVERLY HUTNER:

[00:23:53.96]

If I could add one thing, I think if your whole identity is tied up in your job, then when you retire and that's gone, it's going to leave a big hole. But I think that if your identity as a working person is more balanced and you have other things that are important to you, then when your job goes away, those other things don't go away. So you still have a base to work from in retirement.

DORETTA THOMPSON:

[00:24:20.31]

So here are the things that I'm learning from you that I think are wonderful things to share. It's people, and purpose, and learning, and giving back, and socializing. Are those kind of what you think are the big pillars of a happy retirement?

BEVERLY HUTNER:

[00:24:38.81]

Yes. And I would add good health. So making sure that you're looking after your health because if you don't have that, the rest of it is not going to be very pleasant.

HAROLD HUTNER:

[00:24:49.55]

Absolutely. I think that health is key to the whole thing because in many ways as you retire, you are one event away from a disaster. So I think it's important to concentrate on good health as well.

DORETTA THOMPSON:

[00:25:05.33]

Bev and Harold, thanks so much for joining us today. Living well in retirement is something I think all Canadians aspire to, and your insights can help us get a better understanding, not just of how to approach retirement from a financial planning perspective, but also from a place of meaning and joy.

[00:25:22.69]

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DORETTA THOMPSON:

[00:25:26.25]

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[00:25:43.20]

This season is made possible by the generous support of our national development sponsor, Canada Life. If you'd like to keep the financial literacy conversation going, we invite you to join us as CPA Canada celebrates financial literacy month with two special conferences. For the first time in two years, we're bringing back our in-person conference, Mastering Money. It offers networking opportunities, interactive presentations, and live Q&As.

[00:26:10.66]

We are also continuing with our popular virtual conference, money in the world, exploring how Canada fits into the international financial scene. Follow the links in our resources to register today. Please note, the views expressed by our guests or theirs alone, and not necessarily the views of CPA Canada. This is a recorded podcast. The information presented is current as of the date of recording.

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