



# April 2022

## AFTERWORDS

Newsletter of Active Retired Members



In the last newsletter, I expressed hope that some of the challenges facing our province, our country, and the world would be lessened.

Doesn't look like it!!

So without apology, I present to you

*AfterWords* is the official publication of the Active Retired Members of OSSTF, Chapter 11 Thames Valley (ARM C11). Opinions expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the policies of ARM C11 or OSSTF.

- Notes from the April 6th London Health Care Summit vs. Privatization. So much to learn, so much action needed!
- And teachers can DO IT! - we have energy, we can read cursive, and we can teach people about what they're facing in Ontario if privatization takes over
- Who is better at teaching about political action than our own Joe Wilson? His article on our parliamentary system is encouraging and inspiring
- Got your fourth shot booked? Good advice from the epidemiologist who has never misled us
- The federal budget gets "dropped"- oops! - as I compose this newsletter. Our friends at the CCPA make predictions...
- Will we be welcoming Ukrainian refugees? Will we ever have a world that does not create them?
- And whatever we can insure in life- our RTIP friends have us covered!

## OHC Calls on the Ford Gov't to Stop the Privatization of COVID Testing

### What is Happening?

The Ford government made cuts to public testing while giving contracts to for-profit chains to expand private testing



- The province is trying to direct patients to private for-profit clinics
- A number of the private for-profit clinics are being allowed to violate the Canada Health Act
- Patients are charged for medically necessary services, ranging from \$129 to over \$200

[www.ontariohealthcoalition.ca](http://www.ontariohealthcoalition.ca)

**When Natalie Mehra calls an  
Emergency Meeting—  
I ZOOM in!**

If these meetings on ZOOM to inform us of creeping privatization in our Ontario health care system keep being called, I'm going to need something stronger than a double espresso to attend!

On Wednesday evening at 7:00, the local London Health Care Summit vs. Privatization was hosted by Peter Bergmanis. Our own Bryan Smith, who arranged the Oxford Summit, was in attendance, adding meaningful questions and supplying clear information in the "Chat" pane.

It's serious, my friends, because almost eight years ago to the day, when the Liberals were in power, Ontario reminded our elected reps in a referendum that public health care was the jewel of our public services in this country. And like a jewel, it can be stolen, misused, and devalued by people whose main interest is NOT the well-being of their fellow citizens.

The meeting was a call to action, looking for volunteers to share lawn signs, decals, and flyers, but as always, I was embarrassed by what needed repetition to make me understand the precarious nature of our protections under the 1984 Canada Health Act.

**The OHC reminds us ...**

"The [1984 Canada Health Act](#) is rooted in the core principles of equity and compassion. Its primary objective is "to protect, promote, and restore the physical and mental well-being of residents of Canada and to facilitate reasonable access to health services without financial or other barriers."

The Canada Health Act is like a bill of rights for patients. It requires needed health care to be provided without user fees and extra-billing of patients – needed hospital & physician care must be covered by OHIP. Our hospitals are public and non-profit. They are run in the public interest. Governments have been handing over more services to private for-profit clinics in recent years. Now, the Ford government has announced their intent to bring in new private hospitals.

Privatization threatens these foundational principles of our public health care system."

Dr. Nancy Olivieri: The Canadian hematologist reminded participants that

- Our public health care system, in the hands of Ontario's Conservatives, is in the process of DEFUND, DISABLE, DESTROY
- That Ontario has consistently spent less on health care than any other provincial government

- That Bill 37, rushed into effect during the Omicron surge, paves the way for Ford's Conservative to give BILLIONS to the for-profit nursing home sector– despite the fact that private homes had five times the death rate during our pandemic years.
- We HAD a Long-Term Care Act in place, but Bill 37 amends it with NO improvements demanded for staffing, hours of care, or consequences for dangerous, inadequate treatment. “Next, as anyone who has worked in LTC knows, without staffing there is no care. But Bill 37 does not increase staffing, instead proposing four years from now to implement four hours of daily care as a “target” — not a requirement, but an “average” across homes. It’s unenforceable within any individual home, and hence meaningless “

Another local speaker, Dr. Genevieve Eastabrooks, and ob-gyn expert here at LHSC, spoke about her experience in three provinces of Canada

- She reiterated the knowledge that private clinics DO NOT REDUCE WAIT TIME!!!.
- The backlogs themselves arise from downsizing of public hospitals, closure of operating rooms, and staff shortages. (Ask any RN you know about Bill 124...)
- Ontario has the LOWEST health care and hospital funding of any province.
- That a long list of pain, colonoscopy , endoscopy, and dialysis clinics have failed safety standard testing—unreported for years until the Toronto Star broke the story.
- These millions going to our own London Surgical Centre??? Relatively easy hip and knee replacements get shuttled there, the SAME number of doctors are available to do the work, and those clinics do NOT take on the education of young medical staff or the long-term complications that often result from the initial surgery.
- And Dr. Genevieve ,too, pointed out that when medical folk talk about insufficient “beds” - it’s not the actual hospital furniture piece with wheels and plugs—it’s the staff available to clean, prepare, and attend the bed that are NOT HIRED.
- And the cleaning staff? - well, they’ve had a tough time during the pandemic too– especially with their private company contracted to clean our local hospital: “Staff at Sodexo, the cleaning company hired by London Health Sciences Centre, must use a badge to swipe in and out of hospital areas they are designated to clean, but if they are away from the designated area too long, they are fired, said Maria McFadden, service representative for the Labourers International Union of North America, representing 460 employees. “

**Stop Health Care Privatization & Win Improved Care**

Click here to find out more about our campaign to stop health care privatization & win improved care including:

- Lawn Signs, Window Signs & Car Decals
- Privatization Fact Sheets & Leaflets
- Op-eds on Privatization
- Health Care Privatization Summits & Press Conference Videos
- & more

**Don't PRIVATIZE Our Public Health Care**

**I'm Voting On It**



*Feeling like an unappreciated senior?*

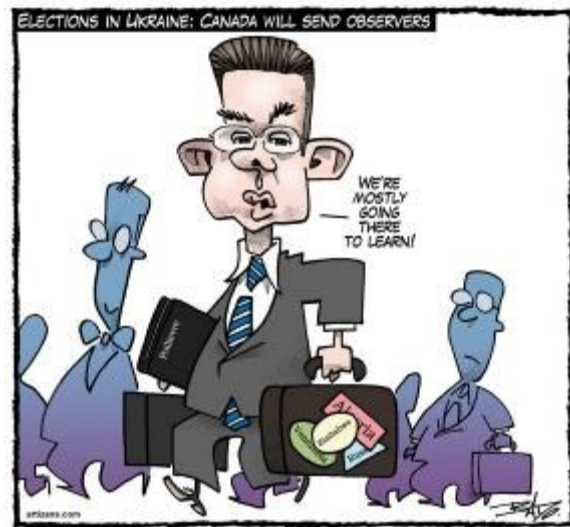
# ADULT MERIT BADGES



@shutupandtakemymoney

ARM Chapter 11      Executive 2021–22  
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By OUR Joe ... Joe Wilson!



I really want the Conservative Party of Canada to choose an effective new leader, one with the potential to be a strong, unifying prime minister. That might sound like a reasonable, if rather mundane, wish if I were a supporter of that party, but I'm a card-carrying member of the NDP! Before my fellow social democrats move to expel me from the party, please let me explain.

Let's try a fantasy scenario. Imagine if, during these trying times – COVID, threatened economy, environmental catastrophes, Ukraine war, etc. etc. etc. – our three principal national leaders were Joe Clarke (Conservatives), Lester Pearson (Liberals) and Jack Layton (NDP). I can't prove it, but I am sure this scenario would ensure Canada would be in much better hands, and we would all be worrying less about our battered present and threatened future. The principal reason: all these leaders were/are passionate parliamentarians strongly devoted to making Canada a more fair, inclusive and better place – for all of us.

It may (unfortunately) surprise many to know we are currently governed NOT by the Liberal Government of Canada but rather by the Parliament of Canada. Justin Trudeau is our prime minister because the Liberals have the majority of seats, not because he was directly elected to that position. The secret to success for a Westminster-style parliamentary democracy is that all of our 338 MPs are part of the government, though the governing party has certain powers and controls over the parliamentary process and the governance of our country.

In a well-functioning Westminster-style parliament each party certainly has its differing policies and priorities, most forcefully voiced when parliament is in session, particularly in question period. But after legislation is put forward, after all the public posturing is over and after all the speeches have been made, multi-party parliamentary committees go to work, behind the scenes, to find the compromises, hash out the details, and arrive at final legislation and government actions that promise to be best for our country. Best because they more closely resemble what all our citizens want. However, this works only if the governing party respects parliament rather than, to ensure partisan advantage, gutting such essential processes as parliamentary committees.



I believe Canada is a centrist country. In former times, newly elected governments tended to move toward the political center. Why? Because even a majority government rarely has over 40% of the vote. It is maddeningly false for any Canadian government to claim it has a strong mandate to do whatever it wishes. In our last election, the Liberals won with **32.6%** of the vote, in a voter turn-out of **62.5%**. The mandate Canadians gave, as always, was to the **Canadian parliament** to do its work to ensure we have fair, effective and inclusive governance.



People are often surprised when I tell them that among my most admired Canadian politicians is former Progressive Conservative prime minister Joe Clark. I had the privilege some years ago of having a brief conversation with Mr. Clarke. What most resonated with me was his comment that in his time in office "all parties worked together for the betterment of our country, but unfortunately this is no longer true". Canadian politics has, sorrowfully, become poisonously partisan, maddeningly negative, reflective of the worst in American politics.

There are many villains to blame for this, but that's for another article.

So, back to the current Conservative Party of Canada leadership contest. Is it too late to bring Joe Clarke back to active politics? Any way we can channel the ghosts of Robert Stanfield or Bill Davis? I would, on a policy and political priority level, work against the election of any of these three. However, I would also not fear doom, division and disaster if they were elected. I hope our poor, battered country can somehow find its way back to its true parliamentary roots. I hope we will elect leaders who will work together for the good of us all, not just for their most extreme partisan followers. No party, including the NDP, has all the answers, but working collectively, in the style of Clarke, Pearson and Layton, we are much more likely to find the best compromises. Surely this is not too much to hope for....

...and in the meantime, does anyone have current contact information for Joe Clarke?







## Fourth Dose Q&A

I'm getting many, many questions about another booster, including from my 90 year-old grandparents. Here are some answers.

### ***What happened?***

This week the FDA and CDC officially recommended the following:

mRNA series: A booster for certain immunocompromised individuals and people over the age of 50 who received an initial booster dose at least 4 months ago

J&J: *All* adults who received a primary J&J vaccine and booster dose at least 4 months ago may now receive a second booster dose using an mRNA vaccine

This is a clearly a proactive move as officials didn't wait for the upcoming FDA meeting on April 6. Maybe because BA.2 is looming in the background? Nonetheless, the scheduled FDA meeting is still important as scientists will openly discuss the science, options, and long-term plan for COVID-19 vaccines in the U.S.

### ***Should I get a fourth dose?***

The original booster continues to do a great job at preventing hospitalization and death. There is some evidence that this is waning over time, though. Your decision should be driven by weighing benefits with risks:

***Benefit:*** There is evidence from Israel (2 studies that shows a fourth dose provides additional protection for older adults. The benefit isn't nearly as drastic as a third dose, but benefit is there. For example, among a sample of 1,138,681 Israelis aged 60+ years, a fourth dose reduced the rate of infection by 2 times and reduced the rate of severe disease by 4 times. Preventing infection will also reduce chances of long COVID.

***Risk:*** The vaccine poses very, very low risks. Some people (like me) do experience side effects, which puts you out of commission for a few days. If you can't miss work or don't have sick time then this may outweigh the benefits for healthy individuals right now. (Although you would have to miss more work if you were infected.)

To me, the benefits of a fourth dose outweigh the risks, so I'm supportive of a fourth dose booster for those who are eligible.

### ***We are clearly in a lull right now. Because antibodies wane, should I wait for the next wave and/or for fall?***

A fourth dose can certainly be delayed. But there are a few challenges with this:

***Timing is difficult.*** I would caution against trying to time a booster right before a wave. Like Dr. Bob Watcher said, it would be like trying to time the stock market. We know that this virus continues to mutate and a variant of concern could pop up. We also know that boosters take time to work to their full potential. Finding a timing sweet spot of boosting before a wave is possible, but potentially risky with not much added benefit.

***Uncertain future.*** The current booster debate eerily reminds me of the booster debate last fall. Many scientists and clinicians said there wasn't enough evidence for boosters. I even said: "I'm not convinced that I (a healthy, young person) needs it (...)" but I will stand in line come September if it's recommended." But, boy, were we lucky to have boosters before Omicron arrived. Just like with last fall, we don't know what the future holds. But we can prepare for the worst and hope for the best.

**Next move after delaying.** We will likely have a fall/winter wave given that coronaviruses thrive in winter. I'm hopeful that fourth dose boosters will be durable. If not, we may need another booster or an updated vaccine formula before winter. If you delay a fourth dose now, what should you do then? There's considerable benefit to sticking to the recommended CDC schedule. The science and future recommendations won't be following any other timeline. If you go rogue, future decisions may be difficult to navigate

### ***Which booster should I get?***

Consider mixing your fourth dose. If you got three doses of Pfizer then get Moderna for your fourth dose. Or vice versa.

While Moderna and Pfizer are both mRNA vaccines, they are not identical and have subtle but meaningful differences. (See my previous post: Moderna vs. Pfizer: Is there a difference?)

This was confirmed yesterday from another peer-reviewed study. Scientists found that while the two different shots have the same impact on neutralizing antibodies, they have a different impact on Fc-functional antibodies, which target the whole surface of the spike protein. They also had a different impact on T-cell mechanisms. If you mix vaccines you have the potential to maximize protection.

### ***Should you wait for an Omicron-specific booster?***

We are still waiting on results from human studies, but two animal studies have shown that Omicron-specific boosters are *not* more effective than the original vaccine formula. One study randomly assigned primates to an Omicron-specific Moderna booster or regular formula booster. They found no difference in the rise in neutralizing antibody levels against any variants of concern. In other words, I wouldn't hold your breath or delay for an Omicron-specific vaccine.

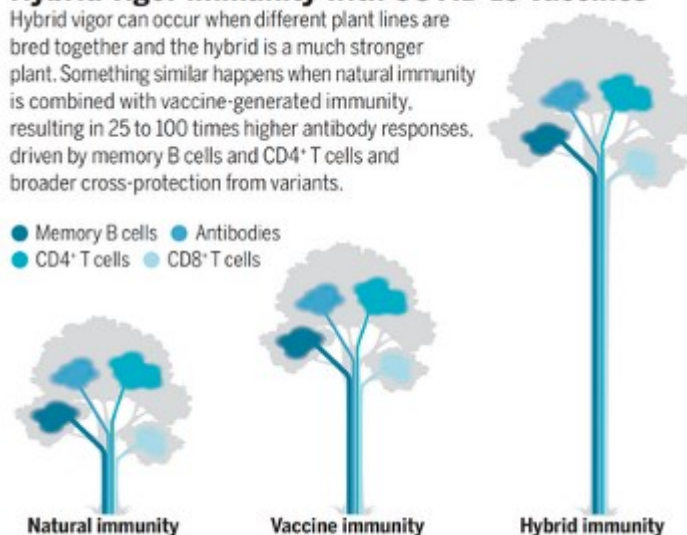
### ***Where can I find a vaccination appointment in my Canadian community?***

<https://covid-19.ontario.ca/>

#### **Hybrid vigor immunity with COVID-19 vaccines**

Hybrid vigor can occur when different plant lines are bred together and the hybrid is a much stronger plant. Something similar happens when natural immunity is combined with vaccine-generated immunity, resulting in 25 to 100 times higher antibody responses, driven by memory B cells and CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells and broader cross-protection from variants.

● Memory B cells ● Antibodies  
● CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells ● CD8<sup>+</sup> T cells



#### **Bottom line**

If you're eligible, get your booster. Does a healthy 50 year-old adult need to rush and get one tomorrow? No. But I would put it on your to-do list. The older you are, the higher priority it should be on your to-do list. The future is uncertain, and the benefits of vaccines continue to outweigh the risks.

Love, YLE





## **Federal Budget 2022: What we're watching for: This budget could herald the beginning of a Pearsonian period of progressive policy making**

David Macdonald April 6, 2022

Although it seems like a long, long time since the federal election last fall, Thursday's federal budget will be the first budget this re-elected government will table—and it's certainly the first budget under the new Liberal-NDP agreement to sustain minority government until 2025.

There isn't wide expectation that this budget will contain many surprises. We can expect the budget to contain promises laid out in the Liberal election platform, with the inclusion of a few NDP policies from their platform, such as dental care.

Of course, we've proposed our own plans for this budget in our Alternative Federal Budget 2022 (AFB) so, where appropriate, we'll also look at AFB details for context.

### **Health care**

#### **Dental care**

The biggest item that will almost certainly be included on the health care front is for dental care. Of all the items in the Liberal-NDP agreement, this one was among the most specific. It would start by covering children under 12 years of age in 2022, then expand in 2023 to cover seniors and people with disabilities.

By 2025, all families with income under \$70,000 will be fully covered under Canada's new national dental care plan and those with income under \$90,000 will be partially covered.

This closely matches the plan costed out by the Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO) two years ago. Given the short implementation period and that it's a key NDP demand in the agreement, this is an item we'll definitely see in this budget. There are plenty of details to be worked out with the provinces, since this is within their jurisdiction, but negotiations on the child care file shows it's possible.

#### **Pharmacare**

Pharmacare played a prominent role in the NDP election platform and it's another key demand in the Liberal-NDP agreement. However, the text in the agreement with the Liberals is more regulatory and doesn't have to involve spending this year, but we're still holding out hope. We've seen how important free COVID-19 vaccines have been during the pandemic and pharmacare has been studied to death. This should be a time for action. We'll see.

#### **Long-term care**

The atrocious COVID-19 death rates in Canadian long-term care facilities were a wake-up call to public policy makers that dramatic, system-wide improvements are needed, stat. While the Liberal-NDP agreement didn't specify new amounts to this end, both the Liberal and NDP platforms addressed this and so it's almost certain there will new money for long-term care in this budget—although its form is uncertain.

The NDP's platform thrust was to push for-profits out of long-term care (those for-profit operators saw big profits in 2020, despite the pandemic).

The CCPA's Alternative Federal Budget (AFB) reiterated that what's needed is national standards of care, with the federal and provincial governments coming together to fund it: here's what this might look like for Ontario.

There will also likely be additional short-term health care transfers to the provinces related to COVID-19. General improvements in health care transfers were mentioned in the Liberal-NDP agreement, but targets weren't specified. We calculated in the AFB that it would take roughly \$20 billion more a year to have the federal government reach the 35% of total health care spending that the provinces are seeking. The federal government got close to that in 2020, with short-term COVID-19 transfers. In 2022, it may look more like a one-time \$6 billion surgery backlog transfer—something that was already in the Liberal platform.

### **Taxation**

There will almost certainly be an excess profits surtax on big corporations in this budget. Something along those lines appeared in the Liberal-NDP agreement and in both party platforms. Such a tax would certainly apply to Canada's big banks and possibly to other sectors that are bringing in excess corporate profits, such as oil and gas. The amounts of excess profits for the banks is \$16.1 billion and for oil and gas sector it's \$24.2 billion. Those excess profits are likely also playing a role in rapid inflation.

While very profitable companies will likely pay an excess profits tax, rich individuals who did well during this pandemic likely won't. That would be a missed opportunity, in our opinion. In the AFB we proposed a new top personal income tax bracket, a wealth tax, and closing tax loopholes for the rich. That did show up in the NDP platform, but not in the Liberal-NDP agreement. There's plenty of public appetite for these sorts of measures to address entrenched income inequality in Canada.

### **Employment Insurance**

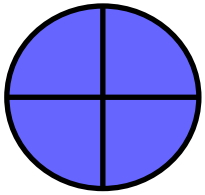
The wholesale replacement of Employment Insurance (EI) with the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) during the first part of the pandemic was an important reminder of how out of date our EI system is. Improving benefits for those who are eligible for benefits and extending the system to self-employed workers were key improvements implemented through CERB. Will the federal government take those lessons learned and build them into EI reforms?

For those who are already eligible for EI, it doesn't seem like there will be much change in this budget, although we've got plenty of ideas in the AFB. We could create a floor on benefits (like \$500 a week), pay higher replacement rates, continue benefits up to 50 weeks, or lower entrance requirements from 420 to 360 hours.

For self-employed workers, one major problem is that many companies should be paying into EI but they pretend their workers are independent contractors. This is relatively easily resolved through legislative changes, although there seems to be little political interest in making those changes. On the broader issue of including legitimately self-employed workers into EI, there will likely be money in this budget to do exactly that, starting in 2023—this was in the Liberal platform and consultations are going on right now.

### **Child care**

Both the Liberals and the NDP seem fairly happy with the child care plan in last year's budget (it was in both platforms). And they should be—it's a good plan, although I suspect that negotiations with the provinces have highlighted the need to rapidly expand the number of child care spaces so that much lower fees don't result in long wait lists. That's something Quebec learned the hard way in the 1990s when it introduced \$5-a-day child care. Look to this budget to spell out new federal infrastructure dollars that child care centres might use to do just that.



## Housing

The cost of housing has gone up by another 30% since last year. These costs are a hot button issue and are one of the more important drivers of inflation in Canada. ***In many major markets, investors are now buying a quarter of all homes, crowding out first-time homebuyers who are priced out.*** We're likely to see some minor new measures, like a house flipping tax. Oddly, the much stronger measures—like requiring substantially higher down payments from investors—seem to be off the table for now.

Affordable housing construction itself often plays second fiddle to home ownership and we may see that again in this budget. The Rapid Housing Initiative, which provided money to buy and convert hotels to affordable housing, was explicitly in the Liberal-NDP agreement and will likely be in this budget. However, a broader push to expand the National Housing Strategy by an additional \$4 billion a year, as proposed in the AFB, likely won't be included in this budget. However, such an investment could drive up the new unit goal from 250,000 to 350,000 new affordable housing units and that would start to make real progress on this front.

## Climate Change

On climate, the budget is expected to deliver on the \$9.1 billion in new investments that were laid out in last week's Emissions Reduction Plan. The biggest ticket items are \$2.2 billion to renew the Low Carbon Economy Fund, which funds various climate action initiatives by the provinces and other institutions, and \$1.7 billion to extend federal purchase incentives for zero-emission vehicles. Another \$900 million is allocated for electric vehicle charging infrastructure.

The biggest omission will likely be details on the highly anticipated oil and gas sector emission cap. The policy, which was promised in the last election, would place a firm and declining limit on emissions from the production of fossil fuels, which currently account for more than a quarter of Canada's overall emissions. Unfortunately, the government announced last month that implementation of the cap will be pushed back until at least 2023 while it conducts more consultations, presumably with the fossil fuel industry.

## Conclusion

The new federal government's first budget in this mandate will set out key priorities for the coming years. With the agreement in place between the Liberals and the NDP, it will hopefully be a more transparent look toward the future than we normally get. The two-party agreement was designed to create sustainability; transparency is critical to that goal. There is also the possibility that the agreement could herald the beginning of a Pearsonian period of progressive policy making. This budget will provide important clues in that regard.



David Macdonald

*David Macdonald (he/him) is a senior economist with the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. Follow him on Twitter at @DavidMacCdn.*

*May we direct our thoughts to the many ordinary people fleeing from Ukraine, running from death or slavery in their beloved homeland, and not knowing what to expect at their destination ...*



The photo was taken in 1948, before bidding the father farewell as he went to Canada for a year of physical labour to get permission to bring his family later ... the littlest one had been born in a basement of a bombed-out town 80 kilometers from Dresden—77 years ago, one month before the Second World War ended. At the Displaced Persons- DP—camps, the older children had joined Scouts, gone to newly created camp schools, and readied themselves to hold down two jobs each in Canada- while learning English at night school. Only the littlest one remains ...living proudly in Canada.

### BĒGLIS

Aiz manis tumsā zud ceļi,  
deg mājas, un sagrūst tilts,  
un visi dzīvie kļūst veļi.

Kā vēju vajāta smilts  
es kļīstu pa svešām vietām  
bez darba, dusas un cilts.

— Velta Toma (1944)

### REFUGEE

Behind, all roads dissolve into the dark.  
Houses are burning. A bridge collapses.  
The trudging file leaves life behind.  
We are become ghosts.

Like windblown sand  
I drift through foreign lands:  
without work, without rest, without home.

{translation: Gundega Korsts}





And now, helpful words from the insurers that take such good care of us!

Still wary of Facebook?

I'm not judging, but you are missing helpful posts about RTIP and other advantages of belonging to ARM as posted by our media guru, Wendy Anes Hirschegger.

