

## Who Has the Advantage? - \$150,000 - Updated

During the numerous press conferences the week of October 16<sup>th</sup>, 2017, Finance Minister Morneau announced some revisions to the proposed tax changes introduced on July 18, 2017. When discussing the income splitting and passive investment proposals, he mentioned that current rules gave unfair advantages to business owners.

*“We understand that many, many small businesses are using their corporations to save for the future by making passive investments. For the vast number of corporations, this isn’t a problem. But in a very small number of cases, it gives wealthy people an unfair advantage over and above everyone else.”<sup>1</sup>*

Minister Morneau announced no material changes to the income splitting rules at that time, but did announce a change where business owners would be allowed to own passive investments inside a corporation where the first \$50,000 of passive income would be taxed under the current rules or low rates. Any passive income earned above \$50,000 would be subject to additional tax. In his statements, Minister Morneau stated that the \$50,000 of passive income would allow approximately \$1,000,000 of capital to accumulate assuming a 5% investment return.

The first question is what is the current low tax rate on passive investment income? Depending on the province, the low tax rate is anywhere between 50 – 55% on the first dollar and every dollar irrespective of the size of company and whether it is \$100 of \$100 million in passive income.

The second question is what will the new tax rate be on passive investment income over \$50,000? The new rate will be in excess of 70%.

On December 13, 2017, Finance Minister Morneau provided detail around the income splitting rules. The provisions include the following exemptions from the income sprinkling rules:

- Adult family members who work at least 20 hours per week on average throughout the year
- Adults 25 years of age and older who own 10% or more of a corporation, that is not a professional corporation or a business that derives 90% or more of its revenue from providing services
- Dividends paid to a spouse of a primary business contributor and that primary business contributor is 65 and older

All other dividends would be subject to a reasonableness test to determine whether the “tax on split income” (TOSI) would apply.

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<sup>1</sup> October 18, 2017, CBC News

After the announcement of these changes, Minister Morneau was interviewed and said these income sprinkling measures are “Part of our goal in making sure our tax system is fair.”<sup>2</sup>

In the July 18 proposals, the federal government compared a self-employed business owner to a salaried employee making the same income. However, the federal government only looked at the taxes paid at the personal level at a point in time and ignored other benefits the employee receives that business owners must pay for themselves in addition to their income. These additional expenses are material.

Instead of focusing on the impact of proposed rules on taxes paid at a point time, let’s look at the outcomes of the proposed rules throughout the business owner’s lifetime.

### **Situation**

Alex is an incorporated dentist. His neighbour, Kendra, is an employee. Today is the first day for each of them in their new jobs. They are both 35 years of age, live with their spouses. Up to this point they have no savings as they have been paying off school and other debt. They both plan on working for 30 years until they reach age 65.

Kendra earns a \$150,000 salary, indexed 2% per year. She is a member of a defined contribution pension plan where she contributes 5% and her employer contributes 5%. She will also receive employee benefits including group disability and life insurance, as well as medical and dental coverage. She shares the cost of these 50/50 with her employer. The cost of these benefits to her employer is \$5,000.

Alex owns the voting shares in the company and the common shares are owned by a family trust. His spouse and a holding company are the beneficiaries. The earnings of Alex’s company are \$150,000, indexed at 2%, and before taxes. He has no pension plan and from the \$150,000 he pays \$5,000 towards the same benefits Kendra would receive from her employer. Alex will take a dividend from his corporation to support his family’s lifestyle and the remainder will accumulate inside his corporation until there is \$1,000,000 of passive investments. At age 55 the passive investments inside the corporation reach \$1,000,000. At this time he will take 100% of his income in the form of salary and pay out enough dividends from his corporation in order to keep the passive investments from exceeding \$1,000,000. He will start making contributions to CPP and maximize RRSP contributions and any remaining savings will go into his TFSA.

Kendra will elect to receive her CPP at retirement and it will be 75% of the maximum amount, indexed 2%, which she will split with her spouse. Alex will elect to receive his CPP at retirement as well and it will be 25% of the maximum amount, indexed at 2%, which he will split with his spouse. The CPP percentage is much lower because Alex

<sup>2</sup> December 13, 2017 Canadian Press

chose to take dividends from his corporation as compensation throughout most of his working years. Alex will also be able to split with his spouse any dividends paid from his company once Alex reaches age 65.

Kendra had her financial advisor prepare a financial plan based on the above assumptions. Investment assumptions are 7.5% for equities and 3.5% for fixed income with an asset allocation of approximately 60% equity, 40% fixed income. The plan has determined that she can afford a \$87,000 lifestyle indexed at 2% until death. For comparative purposes, it is assumed that Alex will have the same \$87,000 lifestyle indexed at 2% until death.

## Annual Savings

The chart below shows what will be contributed (saved) in their respective retirement/savings vehicles until retirement. In Alex's situation, at age 56, savings will need to be removed from the passive investments inside the company to ensure the \$50,000 of investment income is not exceeded. This is shown as a negative deposit under the Corporate column. This amount is paid as a dividend to Alex and taxed. The after-tax amount is then reinvested in a TFSA and non-registered investments.

Annual Savings from Age 35 to 64

Equities - 7.5%  
Fixed Income - 3.5%

Age	Business Owner (Proposed Rules)					Salaried Employee									
						Employee Pays				Employer Pays			Combined Total		
						CPP	DC Pension	RRSP	TFSA	Total	CPP	DC Pension		Total	
35				20,542	20,542	2,544	7,500	11,760	2,115	23,919	2,544	7,500	10,044	33,963	
36				21,677	21,677	2,595	7,650	12,000	2,154	24,399	2,595	7,650	10,245	34,644	
37				21,528	21,528	2,647	7,803	12,240	2,197	24,887	2,647	7,803	10,450	35,337	
38				22,406	22,406	2,700	7,959	12,485	2,241	25,385	2,700	7,959	10,659	36,044	
39				23,148	23,148	2,754	8,118	12,734	2,286	25,892	2,754	8,118	10,872	36,764	
40				23,797	23,797	2,809	8,281	12,989	2,332	26,411	2,809	8,281	11,090	37,501	
41				24,502	24,502	2,865	8,446	13,249	2,379	26,939	2,865	8,446	11,311	38,250	
42				25,231	25,231	2,923	8,615	13,514	2,426	27,478	2,923	8,615	11,538	39,016	
43				25,986	25,986	2,981	8,787	13,784	2,475	28,027	2,981	8,787	11,768	39,795	
44				26,769	26,769	3,041	8,963	14,060	2,524	28,588	3,041	8,963	12,004	40,592	
45				27,583	27,583	3,101	9,142	14,341	2,575	29,159	3,101	9,142	12,243	41,402	
46				28,428	28,428	3,164	9,325	14,628	2,626	29,743	3,164	9,325	12,489	42,232	
47				29,305	29,305	3,227	9,512	14,920	2,679	30,338	3,227	9,512	12,739	43,077	
48				30,217	30,217	3,291	9,702	15,219	2,732	30,944	3,291	9,702	12,993	43,937	
49				31,165	31,165	3,357	9,896	15,523	2,787	31,563	3,357	9,896	13,253	44,816	
50				32,150	32,150	3,424	10,094	15,834	2,843	32,195	3,424	10,094	13,518	45,713	
51				33,175	33,175	3,493	10,296	16,150	2,899	32,838	3,493	10,296	13,789	46,627	
52				34,241	34,241	3,563	10,502	16,473	2,957	33,495	3,563	10,502	14,065	47,500	
53				35,352	35,352	3,634	10,712	16,803	3,017	34,166	3,634	10,712	14,346	48,512	
54				36,508	36,508	3,707	10,926	17,139	3,077	34,849	3,707	10,926	14,633	49,482	
55	7,562		12,789		20,351	3,781	11,145	17,482	3,138	35,546	3,781	11,145	14,926	50,472	
56	7,712	38,084	11,395	(20,000)	37,191	3,856	11,367	17,831	3,201	36,255	3,856	11,367	15,223	51,478	
57	7,866	38,845	33,212	(57,000)	22,923	3,933	11,595	18,188	3,265	36,981	3,933	11,595	15,528	52,509	
58	8,024	39,622	33,343	(57,000)	23,989	4,012	11,827	18,552	3,331	37,722	4,012	11,827	15,839	53,561	
59	8,184	40,415	30,872	(53,010)	26,461	4,092	12,063	18,923	3,397	38,475	4,092	12,063	16,155	54,630	
60	8,348	41,223	28,547	(49,299)	28,819	4,174	12,305	19,301	3,465	39,245	4,174	12,305	16,479	55,724	
61	8,516	42,048	26,272	(45,848)	30,988	4,258	12,551	19,687	3,534	40,030	4,258	12,551	16,809	56,839	
62	8,686	42,889	29,094	(50,000)	30,669	4,343	12,802	20,081	3,605	40,831	4,343	12,802	17,145	57,976	
63	8,860	43,746	29,053	(50,000)	31,659	4,430	13,058	20,483	3,677	41,648	4,430	13,058	17,488	59,136	
64	9,036	44,621	28,990	(50,000)	32,647	4,518	13,319	20,892	3,751	42,480	4,518	13,319	17,837	60,317	
Total Deposits					839,407						970,428	407,478			1,377,906

## Savings Assets

The chart below shows the balances of the various retirement/savings vehicles throughout their lifetimes. Even though CPP is not liquid, the income stream has been valued and shown as an asset to ensure a fair comparison. In Alex's situation, the balance of the corporate account balance is maxed out around \$1,000,000. This is to approximate the \$50,000 passive income limit announced by Minister Morneau.

### Comparing Business Owner (Proposed Rules) to Salaried Employee

Age	Savings (Assets) - Owner (Proposed Rules)					Savings(Assets) - Salaried				
	RRSP	CPP^	TFSA	Corporate	Total	DC Pension	CPP^	RRSP	TFSA	Total
35				21,651	21,651	15,885	5,388	12,454	2,240	35,967
36				45,371	45,371	33,025	11,202	25,897	4,653	74,777
37				70,505	70,505	51,500	17,470	40,387	7,255	116,612
38				97,754	97,754	71,396	24,219	55,991	10,056	161,662
39				127,158	127,158	92,803	31,481	72,780	13,071	210,135
40				158,785	158,785	115,816	39,288	90,830	16,311	262,245
41				192,795	192,795	140,539	47,674	110,219	19,792	318,224
42				229,339	229,339	167,077	56,677	131,034	23,529	378,317
43				268,578	268,578	195,547	66,335	153,362	27,538	442,782
44				310,681	310,681	226,068	76,690	177,300	31,836	511,894
45				355,831	355,831	258,770	87,782	202,948	36,441	585,941
46				404,220	404,220	293,788	99,663	230,413	41,372	665,236
47				456,052	456,052	331,268	112,378	259,808	46,650	750,104
48				511,542	511,542	371,361	125,978	291,253	52,295	840,887
49				570,921	570,921	414,232	140,521	324,876	58,332	937,961
50				634,430	634,430	460,050	156,064	360,812	64,784	1,041,710
51				702,329	702,329	509,000	172,670	399,203	71,676	1,152,549
52				774,889	774,889	561,274	190,404	440,202	79,037	1,270,917
53				852,403	852,403	617,077	209,334	483,968	86,895	1,397,274
54				935,176	935,176	676,626	229,537	530,672	95,280	1,532,115
55		8,008	12,789	977,397	998,194	740,151	251,087	580,495	104,225	1,675,958
56	40,331	16,648	24,939	999,819	1,081,737	807,896	274,069	633,628	113,765	1,829,358
57	83,848	25,960	59,623	999,680	1,169,111	880,120	298,569	690,273	123,935	1,992,897
58	130,755	35,989	96,484	998,880	1,262,108	957,096	324,682	750,645	134,774	2,167,197
59	181,268	46,779	133,048	996,381	1,357,476	1,039,115	352,505	814,972	146,323	2,352,915
60	235,619	58,380	169,445	996,284	1,459,728	1,126,484	382,143	883,496	158,625	2,550,748
65	573,968	129,386	228,307	995,334	1,926,995	1,566,086	492,527	1,250,843	188,818	3,498,274
70	615,484	100,549		946,264	1,662,297	1,679,363	382,755	1,341,318	164,712	3,568,148
75	626,803	73,742		416,151	1,116,696	1,710,247	280,710	1,365,986	203,440	3,560,383
80	402,715	48,822			451,537	1,670,872	185,849	1,334,537	279,492	3,470,750
85		25,657			25,657	1,530,962	97,665	1,222,789	406,796	3,258,212
90		4,122			4,122	1,245,775	15,689	995,009	607,475	2,863,948

^ Value of CPP is included as a savings asset, even though it is not liquid. During the employment years, this is valued by taking the employer and employee deposits and investing 60% in equities at 7.5% and 40% in fixed income at 3.5%. During retirement, the value of the CPP equals the present value of the future CPP payments to age 90 using a 3.5% discount rate.

## Conclusion

- We determined that Kendra has the following advantages over Alex:
  - Kendra is able to save \$538,000 more than Alex.
  - Kendra's employer contributed \$407,000 of this excess over and above the salary Kendra received.
  - All of Kendra's savings are in tax-preferred vehicles, thus decreasing her taxes during her employment years
  - Kendra will have almost \$1,571,000 more capital at retirement
  - If Alex maintains the same lifestyle as Kendra, his capital will be gone at age 82.
  - Kendra will have \$2.8 million before taxes to share with her family at death at age 90. Alex will have nothing.

As mentioned earlier, **the federal government has ignored the additional benefits employees receive from their employer over and above their salary.** The above analysis includes the entitlements that Kendra will receive, as an employee,

- Employer's pension contribution up to \$7,500
- Employer CPP contributions \$2,600
- Employee benefits premiums of \$5,000

However, the analysis does not include other entitlements that Kendra will also receive as an employee,

- Employer EI contributions \$1,170
- Vacation, 3 weeks (worth) \$8,600
- 10 statutory holidays (worth) \$4,100
- Up to 15 sick days per year (worth) \$6,150

The dollar value of these above items could top \$20,000 per year. Even if the number is less than \$20,000, the reality is once Alex has to fund these benefits for him and his family, the ultimate future retirement benefits will be dramatically lower than already shown above.

The above in-depth analysis clearly shows that the salaried employee has the advantage over the business owner under the proposed rules. An obvious question is did the business owner have an advantage over the salaried employee under the current rules?

## Comparing Outcomes of Current Rules and Proposed Rules for the Business Owner to the Salaried Employee

	Current Rules*	Proposed Rules^	Salaried Employee
<b>Annual Savings from age 35 - 64</b>	1,336,000	839,000	1,377,000
<b>Savings Assets at Retirement (Age 65)</b>	2,938,000	1,927,000	3,498,000
<b>Age Capital is Depleted</b>	n/a	Age 82	n/a
<b>Savings Assets at Death (Age 90)</b>	1,751,000	-	2,864,000

\* Income split with spouse and no limit on amount of passive investments inside corporation

^ Only split income with spouse starting at age 65 and limit passive investments to \$1 million inside the corporation

If you compare the numbers under the Current Rules to the Salaried Employee in the chart above, the business owner is still worse off.

Then **why** does the federal government feel they need to make these changes?

They made their decision based on incomplete analysis. The federal government only looked at the taxes paid at the personal level at a point in time and ignored other benefits the employee receives that business owners must pay for themselves in addition to their income. These additional expenses are clearly material, as our analysis has shown. If they had done a complete analysis, all of this could have been avoided.

*Owens MacFadyen Group specializes in wealth management, employee benefits consulting and insurance planning. A large part of the work we do is comprehensive wealth management and that includes building financial plans for our clients. As part of building these plans, we spend a lot of time modelling options for our clients, including the issues that make up the topic of this paper. Our clients are made up of business owners, professionals and executives.*

*We have offices located in Halifax, Moncton, Saint John and a recently opened office in downtown Toronto. We would not have been able to open up our Toronto office if these restrictions were in place in prior years.*