



Pension Investment  
Association of Canada

Association canadienne des  
gestionnaires de caisses de retraite

April 20, 2009

British Columbia Securities Commission  
Alberta Securities Commission  
Saskatchewan Financial Services Commission  
Manitoba Securities Commission  
Ontario Securities Commission  
Autorité des marchés financiers  
New Brunswick Securities Commission  
Nova Scotia Securities Commission  
Office of the Attorney General, Prince Edward Island  
Securities Commission of Newfoundland and Labrador  
Registrar of Securities, Government of Yukon  
Registrar of Securities, Department of Justice, Government of the Northwest Territories  
Registrar of Securities, Legal Registries Division, Department of Justice, Government of Nunavut

**Attention:**

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**VIA EMAIL**

**Re: Request for Comment – Proposed Repeal and Replacement of NP 58-201 Corporate Governance Guidelines, NI 58-101 Disclosure of Corporate Governance Practices, and NI 52-110 Audit Committees and Companion Policy 52-110CP Audit Committees**

This letter is submitted by the Pension Investment Association of Canada (“PIAC”) in response to the request for comment published December 19, 2008 by the Canadian Securities Administrators (“CSA”) on the proposed repeal and replacement of NP 58-201 *Corporate Governance Guidelines*, NI 58-101 *Disclosure of Corporate Governance Practices*, and NI 52-110 *Audit Committees and Companion Policy 52-110CP Audit Committees* (collectively, the “Current Materials”) with NP 58-201 *Corporate Governance Principles*, NI 58-101 *Disclosure of Corporate Governance Practices*, and NI 52-110 *Audit Committees and Companion Policy 52-110CP Audit Committees* (collectively, the “Proposed Materials”).

PIAC has been the national voice for Canadian pension funds since 1977. Senior investment professionals employed by PIAC's member funds are responsible for the oversight and management of over \$940 billion in assets on behalf of millions of Canadians. PIAC's mission is to promote sound investment practices and good governance for the benefit of pension plan sponsors and beneficiaries.

## **GENERAL COMMENTS**

While PIAC was aware that the CSA had committed to undertake a review of NP 58-201 *Corporate Governance Guidelines* and NI 58-101 *Disclosure of Corporate Governance Practices* (together, the “Current Governance Materials”), including in relation to their application to controlled companies, we had not expected that the entire existing governance regime would be proposed to be replaced with a new principles-based policy. The CSA state under Alternatives Considered that “both issuers and investors have raised concerns about the current governance regime”, but no details are provided regarding these concerns (other than the effect on controlled issuers) or how the Proposed Materials resolve these concerns.

The request for comments states that the Proposed Materials are intended to enhance the standard of governance and confidence in the Canadian capital markets and that the CSA expect that the Proposed Materials will provide greater flexibility or perceived flexibility, improve the quality of disclosure of corporate governance practices provided to investors and better align with international standards. While we agree that governance has evolved since the Current Materials were published and support the enhancement of governance standards, we do not believe that the Proposed Materials will achieve this or the other stated goals.

We agree with the purpose of the Proposed Materials and that corporate governance practices may differ but be equally good practices; however, we disagree that the

Proposed Materials should not “purport to establish minimum standards or best practices”. Given the extensive consultation that led to the adoption by the Toronto Stock Exchange of “best practices guidelines” in 1995 from which the Current Materials were derived and given the evolution in corporate governance since then, the Proposed Materials appear to be a step backwards.

It is unclear how the Proposed Materials will provide greater flexibility or the perception of flexibility to issuers and their boards of directors than the Current Materials which are only guidelines and clearly state that they are not intended to be prescriptive and which are not enforced or followed by all issuers. It is also unclear how the Proposed Materials will result in improved quality of disclosure of corporate governance when it is not entirely clear what disclosure is expected and what is expected of an issuer who has not put the practices in place. As well there will no longer be easy comparability amongst issuers or an included benchmark against which to measure governance practices.

We agree with the results of the compliance review set out in CSA Staff Notice 58-303 that current corporate governance disclosure by issuers is often inadequate and does not provide clear and complete accounts of governance practices but do not agree that the Proposed Materials will provide improved disclosure. Additional review of and guidance on the disclosure expected would be more helpful to issuers. The reason for the development of the Current Materials was to enable the CSA to include corporate governance disclosure in their continuous disclosure reviews and use their regulatory authority to enforce better disclosure. Regardless of whether the Current Materials are maintained or the Proposed Materials are adopted, the best way to ensure improved disclosure is to conduct more frequent reviews of corporate governance disclosure and issue more notices such as CSA Staff Notice 58-303 which provides issuers with guidance as to what is deficient disclosure and what information should be provided. Providing this guidance, as well as encouraging issuers to go beyond the guidelines with their governance practices and disclosure, would be a preferable and more efficient method of improving practices and disclosure than implementing the Proposed Materials.

We also do not believe that the Proposed Materials better align with international standards which typically follow a rules-based or a “comply or explain” approach. Replacing the current bright-line tests for director independence with a “principles-based approach”, for example, is not consistent with the bright-line tests for independence mandated by the Securities and Exchange Commission and stock exchanges in the U.S. (which are quite similar to the bright-line tests in the Current Materials). We are of the view that it would be onerous for dual-listed issuers to be required to assess significantly different independence tests in Canada and the U.S. It will also be more time-consuming for investors to bring to mind the applicable independence tests for a particular market when reviewing issuers’ disclosure.

In order to enhance the Canadian governance regime and therefore confidence in Canadian capital markets, we suggest that the CSA leave the Current Governance Materials in place and supplement them with the content of new Principles 6, 7 and 9, which provide additional useful information for investors. A CSA Staff Notice could be published to clarify that the Current Governance Materials are not prescriptive, to specifically acknowledge that corporate governance practices of issuers may differ from the guidelines but be equally good practices provided they meet the objectives and to encourage issuers to advance beyond the guidelines.

## **SPECIFIC COMMENTS**

**The following are our comments on certain of the specific questions set out in the request for comments, which are reproduced below in italics and numbered to correspond to the notice.**

***1. Do you think Principles 6, 7 and 9 provide useful and appropriate guidance? Does this guidance appropriately supplement other corporate law and securities law (including legislation and decisions of Canadian courts) relating to these areas?***

These principles do provide useful guidance on areas that are important to be addressed. The principles should refer to the Board and not the issuer.

Some guidance should be provided in principle 9 regarding ongoing dialogue with shareholders. It should be clear that investors should have unfettered access to the Chair or lead director. We suggest the following also be added to the examples of practices:

- directors should be elected individually and not by slate;
- boards should consider implementation of resolutions receiving majority support or provide investors with reasons for the lack of implementation within a reasonable time;
- disclosure of the details and results of each proxy vote should be made public as soon as possible after the meeting.

***2. Does the level of detail in the commentary and examples of practices successfully provide guidance to issuers and assistance to investors without appearing to establish “best practices”?***

As noted in our general comments, we believe the CSA *should* establish some best practices that issuers should follow. We believe that the nine core corporate governance principles proposed are not simply principles that a board should consider as noted in the request for comment but these are basic practices that all boards, including those of venture issuers, must implement. As noted in comment 1 above, all the principles

should refer to the Board and not the issuer (ie – Principle 1 - the Board should establish the respective roles and responsibilities of the board and executive officers).

### *Principle 1*

As noted in the Current Materials, the board is responsible for the stewardship of the issuer. This includes responsibility for the matters listed under “Usual responsibilities of the board”; therefore, the title and the lead in to the list should be changed to delete “Usual” and “usually”.

### *Principle 2*

Considering the increased oversight and regulatory demands facing board members, it is important that directors are not overextended. The commentary on “Commitment” should include a note that boards should consider limits on the number of board seats directors have, in particular CEO’s of public issuers.

### *Principle 3*

A board should have a nominating committee comprised entirely of independent directors. The commentary and practices related to nomination committees should be revised to reflect this.

Shareholders should be able to vote against a director and if a nominee does not receive support of the majority of the votes cast the director should not be elected. The examples of practices should include “adopt a majority vote standard for the election of directors”.

### *Principle 8*

Determining executive compensation is the role of the board and the principle should be revised to make this clear. Directors and officers are required by corporate and common law to “act honestly and in good faith with a view to the best interests of the corporation”; compensation therefore does not need to be structured to “motivate them to act in the best interests of the issuer”. The principle should instead reflect the fact that pay should be linked to performance. Executive compensation should be aligned with long-term shareholder value creation and should be adjusted to take risk into consideration. We believe that the principle should require that all issuers should have an independent compensation committee with access to independent advice.

Despite advances in governance on and increased concerns with executive compensation since the adoption of the Current Materials, the Proposed Materials are more simplistic in respect of the procedures. The general practices should be updated to reflect the language in Form 51-102F6 and in particular Item 2 – Compensation Discussion and Analysis. Compensation needs to be tied to performance and reflect

the business strategy of the issuer. The “Practices related to compensation committee” should include that the compensation committee must oversee the work of the compensation consultant and should approve any service not related to the mandate for which the compensation committee engaged them.

**3. *In your view, what are the relative merits of a principles-based approach for disclosure, compared to a “comply or explain” model?***

As noted above we believe the “comply or explain” model is a better choice for governance disclosure. It is not mandatory or prescriptive and it provides comparability and consistency in disclosure. Arguably, it is also a form of principles-based regulation.

**4. *Is the level of disclosure required under each of the principles appropriate both from an issuer’s and an investor’s point of view? Specifically, do you think the disclosure in respect of Principles 6, 7 and 9 provides useful information to investors?***

As noted in our General Comments above we feel the Current Materials provide better disclosure and frankly clearer instructions for issuers to follow. As with the principles the disclosure requirements should refer to the board and not the issuer (Principle 1(a), 3(a), 5(a), 6(a), 8(a) and 9(a)).

*Principle 1*

The disclosure in the Current Materials focuses on the independence of the board and how it exercises independent judgement in carrying out its duties. We note that in the Proposed Materials the commentary under this principle includes a discussion of independent judgement and we applaud this addition, however, there should be a corresponding requirement to disclose how the directors exercise independent judgement.

*Principle 2*

We support the additional disclosure required by clause (a), (b) and (c) as this reinforces that director qualifications and competencies are of the utmost importance and provides very important information to investors to assist in their evaluation of the board.

*Principle 5*

We believe issuers should continue to be required to file their code of conduct and disclosure should continue to be required on how the board monitors compliance of the code.

*Principle 6*

We believe issuers should continue to be required to describe any steps the board takes to ensure directors exercise independent judgement in considering transactions and agreements in respect of which a director or executive officer has a material interest.

*Principle 7*

In addition to a summary of policies, disclosure should include the framework developed for risk oversight.

*Principle 8*

We support the addition of (b)(iv), since like the auditor, independence of the compensation consultant is very important and this disclosure will assist investors in determining that independence.

*Principle 9*

The disclosure should include a discussion of how the issuer promotes ongoing dialogue with investors.

**5. *Should venture issuers be subject to the same disclosure requirements concerning their corporate governance practices as non-venture issuers?***

Yes, venture issuers should be subject to the same disclosure requirements relating to their corporate governance practices. By their very nature these are higher risk investments and shareholders should receive sufficient disclosure to allow them to assess the risk of investing in a particular issuer. We believe that the “comply or explain” model is particularly suited to venture issuers because they can explain why they don’t comply if that’s the case. Additional guidance aimed specifically at suggested governance practices for venture issuers would be helpful and is not included in the Proposed Materials.

**6. *In your view, what are the relative merits of the proposed approach to independence compared to the current approach. In particular:***

- a. *Basing the determination of independence on perception rather than expectation; and***
- b. *Guiding the board through indicia rather than imposing bright line tests?***

We believe that the current approach to independence with the deletion of clause 1.4(8) and the addition of a guideline regarding conflicts of interest would be the best

approach. We agree with the Alberta Securities Commission's concerns regarding the use of perception rather than expectation.

**7. *Is it sufficiently clear that the phrase "reasonably perceived" applies a reasonable person standard?***

Please see our response to Question 6.

**8. *Is the guidance in the Proposed Audit Committee Policy sufficient to assist the board in making appropriate determinations of independence?***

Please see our response to Question 6.

**9. *The proposed definition provides that independence is independence from the issuer and its management, and not from a control person or significant shareholder. Given this definition:***

**a. *Should a relationship with a control person or significant shareholder be specified in section 3.1 of the Proposed Audit Committee Policy as a relationship that could affect independence?***

**b. *Should such a relationship be solely addressed through Principle 6 – Recognize and manage conflicts of interest as proposed?***

**c. *Is it appropriate to include as an example of a corporate governance practice that an appropriate number of independent directors on a board of directors and audit committee be unrelated to a control person or significant shareholder?***

Please see our response to Question 6.

**10. *Does the required disclosure on director independence provide useful and appropriate information to investors?***

Please see our response to Question 6.

**11. *Do you think our proposal regarding the effective date adequately addresses the needs of both venture and non-venture issuers?***

If the CSA follows our recommendation and simply improves on the Current Materials by adding the three new principles, six months should be sufficient notice.

We appreciate this opportunity to comment on the Proposed Materials. Please don't hesitate to contact me or Eleanor Farrell, the Chair of PIAC's Corporate Governance Committee, at (416) 868-6377 if you would like to discuss any aspect of this letter in further detail.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "G. McDade". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "G" and a distinct "M" and "D" for the last name.

Gayle McDade  
Chair